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Language and translation at work:
A grounded theory approach to B2B customer service in an Irish-
based multilingual team

Thesis presented by
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for the degree of
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Declaration

This is to certify that the work I am submitting is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. I have read and understood the regulations of University College Cork concerning plagiarism and intellectual property.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Estefanía', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Estefanía Muñoz Gómez

Abstract

Despite the increased focus on workplace-based research in translation studies, limited attention has yet been paid to the translating carried out in international businesses by multilingual staff or non-professional translators and interpreters (NPIT). Acknowledging the translational nature of multilingual communication, this thesis aims to explore the role of translation as part of the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic practices of a multinational corporation and offer new insights on language management and language use in such a setting from a translation perspective. Motivated by policy calls for greater alignment between language provision and industry needs in the Republic of Ireland, this work investigates how staff resolve the multifaceted communication situations they encounter in their daily work within a multilingual B2B customer service unit of an Irish-based international organisation in the IT sector. A grounded theory approach is used as a systematic method of analysis to make sense of qualitative data from interviews, field observations, and text samples. Through constant comparison and abstract conceptualisation of incidents in the data, the theory of *BALANCING BELONGING* is proposed as an integrated explanation of variations in participants' behaviour encompassing the diverse activities, roles, and positions taken on by NPIT as well as the norms, values and beliefs that inform them.

In addition to serving as an example of grounded theory for the interdisciplinary exploration of under-researched translation practices in today's complex multilingual environments, the study brings to light the lack of a common language to recognise NPIT's inter- and intralingual practices as a demonstration of strategic competence in exchanges with a range of audiences and purposes, which in turn accentuates a view of language as a discrete, transparent resource, possessed rather than developed, and conceals the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural nature of interactions. The findings underscore the need for the explicitation and critical assessment of language management strategies in multinational organisations to facilitate the deployment of effective and sustainable language policies which acknowledge the role of NPIT in shaping business communication, as well as to shed light on the human ability to translate and its developmental potential by promoting the investigation of the social and scholarly understandings of translation and translating in an ever-evolving professional landscape.

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“New discoveries are always the result of high-risk expeditions into unknown territory” (Suddaby 2006, 633)

To my little lady, who has made the journey worthwhile.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis sets out to gain a better understanding of translation in an international business setting in the Republic of Ireland, and to develop our knowledge of this setting through the lens of translation. Informed by recent research into non-professional translation and interpreting (NPIT), as well as by policy and debates around multilingualism in the workplace in Ireland, this study takes a grounded theory approach to investigate a customer service unit within an Irish-based multinational company in the IT sector through the analysis of qualitative data from interviews, observations, and text samples. This introduction offers an initial contextualisation of the project within the wider trends of workplace-based and NPIT scholarship in translation studies and provides background to current discourse on language skills needs in Irish enterprise, before detailing the aims and objectives of the work and outlining its structure.

Globalisation has unequivocally transformed the nature of business and trade. Technological advances and the rise of transnational political agendas have enabled the decentralisation of the value chain by reducing barriers to the movement of human and financial capital across borders, leading enterprise models in more developed economies to experience a shift towards knowledge and services. In an increasingly interconnected world, English reigns as the undisputed lingua franca of commerce, but as markets expand, so do consumers' requirements for products and services in their own languages. The motto "Can't read, won't buy" (DePalma et al. 2020) encapsulates the need for firms facing global competition to distinguish themselves by offering solutions that suit the cultural and linguistic expectations of diverse audiences.

This continuous demand for language services, both in terms of volume and complexity, is not only driving growth in the translation and localisation industry, estimated to reach the 100 US billion-dollar mark by the end of the decade (MultiLingual Media LLC 2023), but also shaping the translation research landscape. Through its multiple turns (Snell-Hornby 2006), translation studies has widened its scope from products, to processes, to people. The actors involved in the translation supply chain and the contexts in which they operate have gradually become the focus

of a growing body of research, with the figure of the translator taking centre stage. Symptomatic of this trend is the increase in popularity of workplace studies amongst scholars looking to investigate translators “in their authentic, personal, historically embedded environments and translation situations” (Risku 2014, 335).

Over the past two decades, workplace-based research has provided valuable insights into translation in institutional contexts (Hébert-Malloch 2004; Koskinen 2008; Schäffner, Tcaciuc, and Tesseur 2014), the translation practices and policies of international NGOs (Tesseur 2015; 2017; 2018), the working conditions and occupational status of translators (Katan 2009; Dam and Zethsen 2012), their professional identity and self-image (Sela-Sheffy 2010; Sela-Sheffy and Shlesinger 2011) and the impact of translation technology on aspects such as cognitive and organisational processes (Désilets et al. 2009; LeBlanc 2013; Risku, Rogl, and Milošević 2017), patterns of human-computer interaction (Olohan 2011; O’Brien 2012), and ergonomic issues (Ehrensberger-Dow and Hunziker Heeb 2016; Teixeira and O’Brien 2017).¹ Often using qualitative approaches like surveys, interviews and observational studies, but increasingly relying also on quantitative methods traditionally employed in process research for the purpose of triangulation, translation researchers have entered the offices of private language service providers, government units, and freelancers to study individual professionals, the wider processes of production, and the relations between the individuals and their organisational context (Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey 2019).

The common thread connecting these studies is an interest in translation as a professional activity, with some authors going as far as proposing the concept of Language Industry Studies as “a deliberate broadening of scope beyond translation and interpreting studies in research endeavours pertaining to today’s multifaceted language industry” (Angelone, Ehrensberger-Dow, and Massey 2020, 5). This focus on the profession has clear links to the institutionalisation of translation, its establishment as an independent academic discipline, and the concomitant proliferation of training programmes taking on the herculean task of preparing

¹ See Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey (2019) or Risku, Rogl, and Milošević (2020) for an overview of the field.

students for their transition into the ever-changing labour market. The fragmented nature of the language industry, however, stands in the way of any efforts at delimiting translation-related commercial activities and developing a common professional identity.² Translators do of course do much more than (just) translate, but they are also not the only ones who translate.

Indeed, not all language needs are (or can be) dealt with by professional providers. In the absence of a shared first language, choices may range from translation to language learning in its many varied forms (Pym 2008). Since it commands higher costs, translation as a paid-for service is arguably a luxury option, better suited to short-term relationships than alternatives such as adopting the other party's language, using a third common language, developing a pidgin, code-switching, or acquiring passive competence (Pym 2008, 71). In turn, translation as a linguistic and cultural mediation activity can be employed in conjunction with any of these potential solutions and is therefore worthy of consideration as a fundamental condition of ever more linguistically diverse societies.

From a disciplinary perspective, the broader social and commercial uses of translation cannot be ignored if we are to develop our understanding of translation as a cultural, economic, communicative, and cognitive practice which not only impacts the flow of information, products and services across the globe but also has direct repercussions for democratic access, social integration, and linguistic and cultural diversity. In the words of Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva (2012, 149):

Translation studies finds itself today at a stage where its traditional focus on translator and interpreter training and on the advancement of the status of translators and interpreters as professionals is no longer sufficient to address the complexity of real-life situations of translating and interpreting.

² A 2018 study by the language industry intelligence agency Slator identified over 600 unique job titles, while the company's 2020 market report listed more than 200 core and related services. These figures refer to language service providers (LSPs) alone and do not consider independent subcontractors, nor positions and services within the buyer-side or in organisations that carry translation and interpreting work in-house, which highlights the difficulty of measuring the scope and size of the market and adjacent activities.

As more and more non-professionals engage in translation and interpreting in a wide variety of settings to respond to the unprecedented increase in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication requirements, their work has been gaining the attention of researchers who recognise it as a distinct phenomenon with the potential to increase our understanding of multilingual and multicultural environments. Given the prevalence of diversified mediation practices over professional services in many sites of language contact, non-professional translation and interpreting (NPIT) has developed as a unique field of inquiry with its own international conference series and multiple dedicated publications.³

Traditionally motivated by the consequences of strong migration waves, NPIT research tends to concentrate on child language brokering (Orellana, Dorner, and Pulido 2003; Hall 2004; Angelelli 2010; Antonini 2010) and interpreting by bilingual staff or family members in healthcare, educational, and legal settings (Bühning and Meyer 2004; Elderkin-Thompson, Cohen Silver, and Waitzkin 2001; MacFarlane et al. 2009; Schouten et al. 2012). Other notable areas of interest include wartime, disaster relief (Baker 2010; Rogl 2017), and religious contexts (Hokkanen 2012; 2017), news translation (Harding 2012), or more recent digital phenomena such as crowdsourcing and fansubbing (Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006; O'Hagan 2009; McDonough Dolmaya 2012).⁴

In their mapping of the field, Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva (2012, 152-156) distinguish two main spaces for the proliferation of NPIT. The first one lies at the interface between international mobility, distribution of capital, and political narrative frames, which is manifest in NPIT occurring in institutional settings (e.g. police stations, schools, hospitals, churches). The second can be found at the confluence of technological development and the production and dissemination of media content, as is reflected in examples of collaborative, community-based, user-generated translation

³ Key examples are volume 18, issue 2 of *The Translator*, published in 2012, the special issue on the *European Journal of Applied Linguistics* released in 2016, and the monograph edited by Antonini et al. (2017) and published as part of the Benjamins Translation Library.

⁴ As noted by Angelelli (2020, 119), much of NPIT scholarship stems from the work of researchers in various disciplines such as bilingualism, cognitive psychology, education, and sociolinguistics, along with translation and interpreting studies, who were studying communicative situations where NPIT occurred without it being their original focus.

practices, whether as part of corporate structures (e.g. crowdsourcing) or as a form of resistance (e.g. fansubbing).

NPIT is most commonly characterised in opposition to professional translation as “the study of unpaid translation practices” (Evrin and Meyer 2016, 1) or the practices of “individuals not only without formal training in linguistic mediation but also working for free” (Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva 2012, 151). For Angelelli (2020, 115), the term depicts “an occupational group whose members are perceived as not possessing the required qualifications or skills to do the job generally performed by professional interpreters/translators”. Professionals, in turn, are “individuals who (1) hold a degree or certification, and (2) earn a living performing translation/interpreting (T&I), or both” (Angelelli 2020, 115). They describe themselves as translators or interpreters and are recognised by others as part of a profession for which they are specifically recruited, and which commands a certain degree of pay and status.

The practices associated with NPIT are also referred to as ad hoc, spontaneous, bilingual, volunteer, informal, paraprofessional or, in a somewhat provocative manner, unprofessional translation.⁵ Each of these labels has its own connotations, but they all tend to stress one or more of the following: a lack of formal education in translation, a lack of remuneration, or a lack of expertise vis-à-vis professional translators. The term NPIT is nevertheless not intended to imply a quality evaluation: “the focus of the adjective non-professional is thus on the who, rather than the how” (Antonini et al. 2017, 7). A careful examination of the dominant NPIT discourse highlights another common denominator for the practices that have attracted most interest: the explicit need for a translator or interpreter. The bulk of NPIT research addresses contexts where professional services are not a viable option, even if their need can be anticipated, but where a professional translator or interpreter would have been employed had it not been impeded by resource constraints. In these situations, the volume of NPIT carried out shows an inverse correlation to financial capacity and

⁵ *Unprofessional Translation* is the title of a blog on the topic started by Brian Harris in 2009. The term “paraprofessional translation” has since become a label for the specific phenomenon of NPIT in business organisations addressed in this study and will be discussed further in Chapter 1.

NPIT may be resorted to as a cheaper alternative (Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva 2012, 153).

This may go some way towards explaining why NPIT remains a relatively under-explored area in translation studies despite the claim that the field cannot be considered its poor relation anymore (Antonini et al. 2017, 2). Practitioners and scholars often decry NPIT due to its potential impact on market prices, working conditions, and the social perception of the translation profession. Translation, professional or otherwise, is likely to receive most public visibility when deficiencies are obvious, and it is more than reasonable to raise quality concerns when it comes to guaranteeing equal access to public services. As a result, some may deem controversial any attempts at giving recognition to an activity that appears contrary to the professionalisation efforts associated with the formal establishment of the discipline.

Such a view assumes a common market for professional and non-professional translators, and therefore that NPIT has the potential to disrupt and substitute an established occupation. As is the case with machine translation and other technological developments, however, NPIT is not always in direct competition with professional services. Not only does NPIT often fill gaps that would not otherwise be covered, but it also features in contexts where the explicit need for a translator does not ever surface. In this sense, there are many forms of what Brian Harris labels “unrecognised translation”, i.e., translating and interpreting that goes undetected, “because it’s given another name or it constitutes just one part, whether explicit or implicit, of another job or function” (Harris 2010). Investigating these practices can shed light on the management of multilingual needs in diverse environments, as well as on the ways in which translation may be commonly (mis)understood.

As the field grows in popularity, there is an underlying risk that research concerned with NPIT as an essential activity of interlingual and intercultural mediation becomes obscured by approaches to the practice which see it predominantly as an issue of professionalisation and accreditation (Harris 2016). A welcome widening of the scope of NPIT could be glimpsed in the 6th edition of the International Conference on Non-Professional Interpreting and Translation (NPIT6), which took place in May 2023. The call for papers opened up the definition of NPIT to “a ubiquitous social practice [...]

provided by non-professionals of any age and background, with or without remuneration, under a variety of circumstances, and for a wide spectrum of reasons” (University of Cyprus 2023). The organisers further acknowledged the value of investigating NPIT “not merely as an opposite, and perhaps problematic, or even renegade, pole to professional mediation, but as ‘unstated’ mediation” (University of Cyprus 2023). Although the call included for the first time a reference to broader professional contexts such as “teaching, journalism, and business communication”, a cursory look at the conference programme shows that researchers’ main interests still revolve largely around interpreting in public service settings.

The focus of NPIT scholarship on non-professional *interpreters and translators* acting in the place of professionals, instead of on non-professional *interpreting and translating* as an often invisible but widespread phenomenon, has left a gap for translation researchers to investigate ordinary practices of linguistic and cultural border crossings in overlooked contexts like multilingual business settings, where translation (whether explicit or unrecognised) is commonplace as part of the daily tasks and interactions of staff in a variety of sectors and roles. In these cases, the traditional three-fold definition of NPIT as untrained, unskilled, and unpaid translation shows its limitations. While still lacking formal training, individuals engaged in unrecognised translation practices are not necessarily unskilled and, although they are not seen as translators or employed in that capacity, they may be recruited specifically for their language competence.

Following Emily Apter’s (2006, 5) concept of the translation zone as a “broad intellectual topography”, contemporary international business organisations can be described similarly to urban landscapes as “areas of intense interaction across languages, spaces defined by an acute consciousness of cultural negotiations and often host to the kinds of polymorphous translation practices characteristic of multilingual milieus” (Cronin and Simon 2014, 119-120). Among the ongoing shift towards “Translator Studies” (Chesterman 2009), clearly evidenced both in workplace and NPIT research, there is a dearth of studies devoted to the translating that takes place in multilingual workplaces without dedicated resources.

Understanding how businesses resolve cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication needs and the role of NPIT in this process is of particular relevance in the Republic of Ireland, where the imbalance between the offer and demand for staff with language expertise has long been considered a threat to the country's economic success in the international marketplace. The requirement for businesses is clear: "If you don't speak the language, you need to: learn it, hire it (someone who has it), or buy it (in the form of translators) - but you can't do without it" (Sinnamon 2015).

Having English as the *de facto* first language places Ireland in a paradoxical position. On the one hand, this has helped the country become an attractive destination for international businesses. Without a language barrier to entry, Ireland's competitive corporate tax regime, skilled workforce, and geographic location as a gateway to the EU have acted as a magnet for entrepreneurial activity and well-established multinational companies in the life sciences and information and communications technology (ICT) sectors, particularly from the US (Gunnigle and McGuire 2001). Often dubbed the "Silicon Valley of Europe", the country is now home to many of the world's tech giants and their Europe, Middle East and Africa operations, which are responsible for a notable share of Irish service exports (EGFSN 2005, 1-2). On the other hand, over-reliance on English can become a serious obstacle for the development of a multilingual workforce to "support Ireland's winning abroad agenda" (DETE 2014, 16), limiting opportunities for indigenous companies and hampering the development of the foreign-owned sector (EGFSN 2005, 41).

After a decade of unprecedented economic growth supported by foreign direct investment for high-value manufacturing, the increasing role of internationally-traded services in the national economy at the turn of the millennium highlighted the need for Irish enterprise to get closer to customers' needs and build a sustainable competitive advantage through market expertise with "the ability to negotiate, transact business and develop customer relationships in languages other than English" (Enterprise Strategy Group 2004, 62). In a study on languages and enterprise carried out in 2005, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) found that indigenous firms did not place high value on foreign language skills given their focus on English-speaking markets, and it was in multinational contact and services centres within the foreign-owned sector where demand concentrated, with positions being filled

primarily by non-nationals (EGFSN 2005, 39-40). Despite not noting a critical shortage of language skills at the time, the EGFSN warned against complacency towards potential future skills deficits, and the promotion of multilingualism for both individuals' professional development and national competitiveness has since been a feature of public discourse, in line with the country's stated commitment to the European Union linguistic goals.

However, Ireland has a long way to go before reaching the EU's Mother Tongue plus Two aspiration for citizens with "meaningful communicative competence in at least two other languages in addition to their mother tongue" (European Commission 2003, 4). Figures from the 2016 adult education survey (AES) placed the Irish population aged 25-64 who reported to know one or more foreign languages just under 51%, ahead only of Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and the United Kingdom.⁶ High degrees of multilingualism in the EU are linked to aspects such as geographical and linguistic proximity, the existence of co-official languages, the prominence of language learning in the education system, and the share of the resident population born in a different country (Eurostat 2019). Although officially a bilingual country, Ireland has strong historical ties to the Commonwealth and stands out among EU members as the only nation without compulsory foreign language teaching in primary education and the highest proportion of students not taking any language in lower secondary education (European Commission 2023). Lack of motivation due to the global dominance of English is arguably a key factor behind this (DES 2017a, 17), but other practical considerations should be taken into account. For example, while foreign language learning in most European countries is synonymous first and foremost with English learning (Eurostat 2019), Ireland is faced with the challenge of determining which languages to offer in an already resource-constrained curriculum. As a result, the language offering in the Irish public education system, long

⁶ Respondents were asked to identify the language(s) they used as their mother tongue and provide information on any other languages they knew. In the survey, mother tongue was defined as "the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual" (Eurostat 2019). In Member States with more than one official language like Ireland, those not considered by the respondent as mother tongue(s) were counted as foreign languages. As such, it is important to interpret the data in light of the likely position of Irish as the first and only "foreign language" for a number of participants. Indeed, a breakdown of the data by CSO in 2017 showed Irish to be the best-known second language of 41.6% of respondents, with almost two thirds possessing only a basic level of competence.

monopolised by French, “has arisen in an ad hoc manner and owes more to historical factors than any analysis of the needs of learners and the State” (EGFSN 2005, ix).

Migration flows are nevertheless having an impact on Ireland’s multilingual profile. The 2022 Census shows an increase of 23% in the number of Irish residents speaking a language other than Irish or English at home, compared to the 2016 numbers (CSO 2023), which in turn represented a 19.1% increase from the 2011 data (CSO 2017).⁷ This upward trend mirrors the AES data, with the share of Irish adults reporting to know one foreign language at almost 21%, 30% and 33.8% in 2011, 2016, and 2022 respectively, and that of those with two foreign languages growing from 5.2% in 2011 to 15.4% in 2016 and reaching 21% in 2022 (Eurostat 2024).

While these figures reflect an increasingly diverse linguistic landscape, language competence continues to be highlighted in reports of occupational gaps. The National Skills Bulletin,⁸ which provides an annual overview of the Irish labour market across a wide range of employment profiles, has recorded language skills shortages every single year between 2009-2022 for technical support roles as well as sales, marketing and customer service occupations linked to the ICT sector.

Around a quarter of respondents to the first National Employer Survey, published in 2015, reported having “a specific requirement for foreign language proficiency skills in their organisation” (Insight Statistical Consulting 2015, 10) and close to 40% cited languages among the skills that were not available at the time but were expected to be required in the future. The demand was greater among foreign employers, who also indicated a need for higher levels of competency, with 60% requiring at least “full professional proficiency” across a wider range of languages (Insight Statistical Consulting 2015, 43-44). Foreign organisations, particularly large and service-oriented ones, were more likely to recruit abroad too, citing among other arguments a

⁷ The question on foreign language use at home was first introduced in the 2011 Census.

⁸ The National Skills Bulletin is published annually by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) in SOLAS, an agency of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science in charge of funding, coordinating, and monitoring Further Education and Training provision in Ireland. The Bulletin compiles data from various sources, including the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Labour Force Survey, the Online Vacancy Analysis Tool for Europe (OVATE), the Public Employment Service (PES) vacancy data, employment permit data, and the Recruitment Agency Survey of difficult-to-fill vacancies.

need for local knowledge in export markets and limited availability of language proficiency in Ireland (Insight Statistical Consulting 2015, 45-46). Indeed, both the 2015 and 2018 surveys show that foreign language capability was the least positively rated workplace attribute of graduate recruits, most notably again among foreign-owned companies (Fitzpatrick Associates 2019, 33-37).

The withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union has only stressed the key role of foreign language competence and intercultural awareness for Irish trade. Ireland's position as one of the two remaining officially English-speaking EU Member States (along with Malta) may continue to increase its appeal for businesses looking to gain direct access to the single market, but Irish-based enterprises will have to diversify their customer base in order to mitigate the potential negative effects of Brexit and take advantage of new opportunities in non-English speaking countries. In a study published in 2018, the EGFSN cautioned that "languages and the ability to adapt practices based upon a customer's or business' cultural background are set to become increasingly desirable business skills" (EGFSN 2018, 26), along with global management, marketing, sales, and customer support. To address these gaps, the report recommended several immediate actions, such as increasing industry awareness of skills needs and carrying out targeted campaigns to attract overseas talent (EGFSN 2018, 126-127). While Brexit was expected to draw some EU/EEA nationals away from the UK to Ireland, the EGFSN acknowledged the need to strengthen Ireland's own foreign language capability in the long run by facilitating the retention of skilled individuals for high proficiency needs, making better use of the multilingualism of current residents, and ensuring the implementation of the national language policy.

Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026 saw the light in November 2017, but the push for the first foreign language policy in Ireland started over a decade earlier. A discussion paper commissioned by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in 2003 proposed "formulating a language policy on the basis of a thorough investigation of Ireland's language needs" (Little 2003, 3), and in 2005 the EGFSN recommended the introduction of a policy "driven by the cultural, social and economic needs of learners and the state" and "cognisant of the future requirements of the enterprise sector" (EGFSN 2005, 41). The development of an integrated policy position was also

highlighted as a key action in the Language Education Policy Profile produced in 2008 by the Council of Europe after a joint review process with the then Department of Education and Science, and a language policy linked to further investment in language education was established as a priority in the National Development Plan 2007-2013 (Department of the Taoiseach 2007, 198).

Following the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019, which calls for “greater diversity and take-up of foreign languages” in the Irish curriculum (DES 2016, 14), the language strategy aims “to strengthen provision, to increase the diversity of languages on offer and to raise general awareness of the importance of foreign languages” (DES 2017a, 8). Key actions to realise its vision of moving Ireland away “from ‘an official but lame bilingualism’ to become a truly multilingual society” (Council of Europe 2008, 51) include improving teacher training and supply, increasing mobility and immersion opportunities, providing support for immigrant languages, and incentivising the uptake of languages in Higher Education (DES 2017a, 8-11). In order to ensure graduate supply and address current and emergent needs in both enterprise and education, a crucial aspect of the implementation plan involves collaboration between the two sectors. As a result, *Languages Connect* seeks to promote employer engagement with higher education institutions to highlight the personal and professional benefits of language learning and to increase alignment of curriculum and programme design with industry needs (DES 2017b, 21-22).

“English is not enough” has been the mantra for stakeholders in government, enterprise agencies and education for the past several decades, and a great deal of public discourse on language needs has proliferated in this time. The keywords are awareness, diversification, strengthening and alignment, and the fundamental message is one of “more and better”. Resolving the perceived imbalance of supply and demand of language skills in the country, so goes the argument, requires more people with more languages at a higher level of proficiency, as well as a curriculum that is more in line with business needs. But what does industry actually require? According to Ibec, Ireland's largest business organisation, for many employers “it is a question of not knowing what they don't know” (Ibec 2014, 4). This is particularly true for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which are more likely to remain unaware of missed business opportunities resulting from language or cultural barriers (EGFSN 2005, 19).

However, even in the case of larger, service-oriented multinational corporations (MNCs) where there is a more explicit requirement for language skills, needs tend to be discussed solely in terms of the range of languages and inconsistent or ill-defined levels of proficiency.⁹ In other words, “many employers... know neither how to identify and articulate language skills needs correctly nor how to deploy the existing skills of their employees effectively” (European thematic working group, cited in DES 2017, 36).

The focus of both research and public discourse on language skills needs in Ireland is typically on the supply side with the purpose of informing policy and educational practices, often driven by general statements about the importance and desirability of foreign language knowledge.¹⁰ Empirical investigations of language in enterprise are limited to high level overviews in employment and industry reports which rely on quantitative data from standardised employer questionnaires. How languages are actually put into use in Irish companies therefore remains an unanswered question to which translation studies can make a valuable contribution by highlighting the interlingual nature of many MNC’s practices and the role of translation in the configuration of business communication.

Motivated by the lack of research on language use in multilingual workplaces from a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspective, my PhD aims to advance translation studies scholarship on NPIT by investigating how management and staff resolve cross-linguistic communication situations in a customer service unit within an Irish-based MNC in the IT sector. Using qualitative data from unstructured interviews, field observations, and textual material, this research project sets out to shed light on the what, how, and why of NPIT in a business setting illustrative of the large foreign-

⁹ The 2005 EGFSN study, which used data from interviews and questionnaires with executive, senior human resources, and technical managers, used the label “native” in addition to the CEFR levels to survey existing language ability in respondent companies. However, the fact that one of the key target outcomes of the language strategy is the “adoption of the CEFR in education and by employers” suggests that the European descriptors are still far from informing discussion on language needs. Interestingly, the 2015 National Employer Survey employed the Interagency Language Roundtable (IRL) scale instead, which is the standard in the US Federal Service. An almost identical version of this scale is currently in use in the professional social network LinkedIn. As of 2022, a cursory review of language-related vacancies in Ireland posted on the network shows that MNCs rarely refer to the CEFR or the IRL scale to describe language requirements on their job advertisements.

¹⁰ See Gallagher (2021) for an overview of initiatives at national level.

owned services centres where language demand concentrates in Ireland. In doing so, my work also engages with the wider debates around language skills needs in the country and taps into key conceptual and methodological issues arising from the articulation of multilingual workplaces as translation zones.

In the face of an under-explored phenomenon caught between disciplinary fault lines, my thesis takes a grounded theory (GT) approach to let the data direct the investigation and highlight any unexpected synergies between previously disconnected areas. Since the use of GT is currently uncommon within the field of translation studies, a further objective of my PhD is therefore to assess GT as a methodology to promote interdisciplinary responses to the complexities of modern multilingual environments. From a GT perspective, my research addresses how the substantive population can resolve a key concern for them by generating a theory directly from the data through the identification and conceptualisation of patterns of behaviour without initial guidance by any set theoretical model.

As shall be shown based on the GT analysis, the multilingual customer service teams in this study deal with the diverse communication situations they encounter in their daily job by BALANCING BELONGING¹¹ via strategic linguistic and pragmatic decisions which regulate perceived degrees of legitimacy of self and others as part of cultural, organisational, and ideational groups. Their behaviours are based on normative expectations around language use, language competence, and language hierarchies. This theory then serves as a springboard from which to respond to the overarching goal of enhancing our understanding of NPIT. In this sense, my research is both exploratory and explanatory in nature. It is exploratory as it provides new insights into the work of a customer service multilingual unit from a translation perspective, but it is also explanatory in so far as it proposes an interdisciplinary theory to help understand variation in staff behaviour.

While contextually driven by the current discourse on language skills needs in Ireland, this research offers a number of broader contributions to theory and practice:

¹¹ I will use small caps throughout my work to refer to the emergent theory and its constituent categories.

1. To gain a better understanding of translation in business settings, and to develop our knowledge of these settings through the lens of translation.
2. To help “translate” expectations of language competence and language use in enterprise which shape policy and education efforts.
3. To provide a unique perspective into the practices of a multilingual customer support unit with practical suggestions for language management strategies.
4. To serve as an example of grounded theory in translation studies for a sociological approach to the exploration of under-researched areas.
5. To put forward a theory with interdisciplinary application that explains participants’ behaviour in the resolution of communication situations.

After this introductory chapter, which aims to contextualise the study within translation studies and the specific national context of Ireland, Chapter 1 elaborates the theoretical framework underpinning the research by reviewing the points of confluence in the literature between translation studies and international business management, while critically engaging with the key concepts of natural (Harris 1977) and assumed translation (Toury 1995) that ground the overall approach taken to the discussion of translation throughout my thesis.

Chapter 2 presents an overview of grounded theory and discusses its potential for sociological, exploratory research. After detailing the steps followed for my data elicitation, analysis, and theory development process, the chapter considers the advantages and limitations of this methodological approach. Chapter 3 introduces the fieldwork setting and examines translation and multilingual communication practices in the customer service unit, while Chapter 4 analyses the relationship between language choice, competence, and identity in light of the underlying management and recruitment norms and perceptions of language value. Chapter 5 describes the theory of *BALANCING BELONGING* that emerged from the analysis, connecting the conceptual categories derived from the diverse instances in the data and offering an integrated explanation for staff choices in the resolution of communication situations. This is then linked to relevant studies in international business as well as scholarly works on positioning theory.

Chapter 6 assesses the findings with regard to their wider social and economic significance. After outlining practical recommendations to support work in the unit, drawing on insights from professional translation processes, the chapter goes on to reflect on the implications of my study for enterprise, policy, education, and scholarship. The concluding chapter outlines the role of translation studies in informing research on international business communication and suggests potential avenues for future research.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“Translating activity is undoubtedly highly diverse. But dwelling on these demarcations would mask the important similarities that exist between all types of translating. It is the task of the theorist to discern regularities and patterns of behaviour where these exist, to incorporate diversity of function within an overall model of the translation process” (Hatim and Mason 1990, 1)

This chapter serves as an introduction to the overarching theoretical approach that underpins the understanding of translation in this study. Given the innovative and interdisciplinary nature of the research, the chapter reflects the need to position my work within different fields, negotiating a range of perspectives. It opens by considering the confluence of business and translation within translation studies through an overview of the concept of “commercial translation” and two models for its investigation. The chapter then examines the treatment of language and translation in the management literature, as well as the main interests and research priorities of language-sensitive international business scholars. Following a reflection on the emergence of paraprofessional translation as an area of research at the interstices between translation and organisation studies, the chapter ends with a discussion of the challenges associated with the operationalisation of “translation” and its links to the notions of bilingualism and competence from a pedagogical perspective.

1. TRANSLATION AND BUSINESS RESEARCH

“It is a different creature, it is translation in the wild” (Koskinen, forthcoming-a)

The workplaces of professional translators are increasingly receiving scholarly attention within translation studies, but the discipline has not typically concerned itself with the broader translation work happening in business organisations. Similarly, management research has been slow to pay attention to the role and impact of translation in business operations. However, translation and organisational scholars are starting to come together to study the multiple facets of this under-explored phenomenon.

1.1 Business in translation

When mapping an area of study, it is useful to peruse popular reference works for an overview of the internal organisation of the discipline in which it is inscribed. Handbooks and readers in translation studies¹ are generally structured along two prongs, with entries referring to types of *translating* (i.e., theoretical approaches and concepts) and types of *translations*, based on different subject domains, text types or genres. Translations are commonly divided first between literary and non-literary, not only because of their association with particular textual characteristics or functions, but because of their perceived value (Hermans 2007). Under the broad umbrella of “pragmatic” translation (Casagrande 1954, 335) then, legal and scientific/technical translation are often presented as forms of specialised practice that are linked to specific areas of knowledge and assumed to have distinctive features, conventions, and constraints.²

Claims about the unique nature of these forms of translation serve to justify scholarly and pedagogical attention and grant them independent status, but classifications of translation are not so straight forward when it comes to the commercial sphere and the wide range of text types, functions, purposes, specialised terminologies, intended audiences, and quality requirements that can be encountered in this context (Olohan 2009, 40). Scholars refer to translation practice in the area of business in multiple ways.³ Mayoral Asensio (2007, 33) describes commercial translation as that which is generated by trade activities, with reference to particular text types (e.g. transport documents, guarantees, invoices, etc.) and subjects such as finance, economics, accounting, marketing, and commerce. Lie (1995, 95) defines it as “any translation work undertaken and required directly or indirectly for any commercial purpose”. However, outside of volunteer or student translation, many instances of translation can be said to have a commercial purpose, whether the

¹ Some popular examples include Kuhiwczak and Littau (2007), Munday (2009), Baker and Saldanha (2009), Malmkjær and Windle (2011), Millán and Bartrina (2013), Gambier and van Doorslaer (2010-2013).

² See, for instance, Cao (2013) on legal translation and Aixelá (2013) on scientific and technical translation.

³ For a more detailed review of definitions of commercial translation in the translation studies literature, the reader may refer to Gallego Hernández, Koby, and Román Mínguez (2016).

translation is a product in and of itself (from literary works to commodity reports) or it is meant to support the sale of another product or service. In the digital age, even translations that are not rendered for payment can be considered to have a commercial purpose by contributing to the monetisation of content. For Olohan (2009, 41) then, the term is “one of convenience, intended to cover the translation of all texts used in business contexts, excluding technical and legal texts”.

As Olohan explains, research on commercial translation tends to take the form of case studies looking at the features and strategies of specific text types (e.g. advertising, tourism, financial reports) in a particular language combination, but does not typically attempt to conceptualise the activity from a theoretical standpoint. As a corrective, she proposes an approach to the “translation carried out in the commercial or business sphere [...] from the perspective of the business activities or functions themselves in which translation figures” (Olohan 2010, 42). Translation becomes in this sense an integral part of the product lifecycle, linked to the data and documentation that may be generated and used by both internal and external business functions at any stage of the production workflow:

It is clear that a company operating internationally in any way – whether manufacturing its products abroad, or seeking international patents for its designs, or marketing its products beyond its national or linguistic borders, or collaborating with international partners for distribution, maintenance or customer service – is likely to require translation of at least some of its product data (unless it operates within a single linguistic community or a *lingua franca*). (Olohan 2010, 43)⁴

Another proposal for the study of commercial translation is that of Sager (1994). In his model, translation is an industrial process comprising (i) the input material, (ii) the operations performed on it —whether human, automatic or both— based on the given specifications, (iii) the capabilities of the operators (translators or other writers and readers with different levels of skill, as well as machines of various degrees of sophistication), and (iv) the possible end products (Sager 1994, 151). Depending on the status of the source text, the relationship between the source and the target, and the

⁴ In fact, as will be seen later, translation is still present in corporations that adopt a *lingua franca*, since the use of a common language does not negate the multilingual nature of multinational corporations.

new status of the target, the end products can be classified as autonomous, interdependent or derived (Sager 1994, 177-184). Autonomous texts are created from drafts (in the form of notes or complete texts) which have no status once the translation is completed. Interdependent texts, in turn, co-exist in parallel as bilingual or multilingual versions, where source and target documents are presented as having the same function and status. Finally, derived texts are those whose production “neither enjoys the freedom of autonomous documents nor the extreme restrictions of dependent documents” (Sager 1994, 180). Translations in these cases may be further classified as full, selective or reduced, and they may have the same or a different function to the source.

Sager’s (1994, 151) model is one “in which human translation is extremely diversified and variously assisted by tools of the language industry or, in special cases, replaced by other modes of communication”. Like Olohan’s (2010) view of translation as embedded in business functions, not only does this approach allow for the inclusion of non-prototypical products and processes, recognising the multiplicity of practices which take place in professional settings and are often neglected in translation research and education, but it also brings to the fore relevant situational and personal considerations such as time, cost, expertise, and users’ expectations (Sager 1994, 173-177). Both Sager’s (1994) and Olohan’s (2010) takes on commercial translation place the activity at the core of the international dimension of business operations and highlight its significance in the process of globalisation:

There is considerable scope for future research on commercial translation to consider critically, not just what this activity entails and how students might be trained to undertake it, but also how and why it is done, its impact on society, and what roles the translator and his or her translations play in shaping economic, cultural, societal and political developments. (Olohan 2009, 43)

Olohan’s (2007) proposed research agenda for scientific translation, which calls for the detailed study of the contexts in which translation is commissioned, produced and received, as well as the profile of translators and the conditions which influence their activities, is therefore also applicable to commercial translation. This suggestion, yet to be embraced by the discipline with regards to corporate settings, serves as the

starting point for my research, which focuses on an individual business unit as a microcosm of the broader landscape when it comes to the often-overlooked impact of translation and multilingualism on organisational practices, social relations, and policy decisions. In the next section I turn to business research and its approach to language and translation.

1.2 Translation in business

The impact of multilingualism in contemporary workplaces has not received as much attention as the growing diversity stemming from globalisation would suggest. Sociolinguists have focused more on education and community settings, while the business and management literature has considered culture and communication without always recognising the role of language. For example, although the discipline of international business (IB) is concerned with cross-border operations in multinational corporations (MNCs), the *Journal of International Business Studies*, the top-ranked publication on the field, only published its first special issue on language in 2014 (Mughan 2023). The cross-disciplinary nature of the subject, the dominance of Anglophone research centres, and the influence of concepts such as Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions, which do not fully consider linguistic issues, may help explain why language was for decades an area ignored by IB (Harzing and Feely 2008). In addition, language has typically been seen as a relatively straightforward issue of selection that must be decided on a case-by-case basis, with all other aspects considered to be technical or operational matters better left to experts in their respective fields (Maclean 2006, 1378).⁵

Nevertheless, language is no longer “the forgotten factor” (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, and Welch 1997) in the international business and management scholarship, with more and more authors drawing insights from language-related disciplines (Tenzer, Terjesen, and Harzing 2017) and shifting the status of language from “both too complex and too simple an issue” to “a question of strategic importance” (Maclean 2006, 1379). Existing research tends to focus on large, private, for-profit multilingual

⁵ To this we could add the weight of the English language in international business and the general lack of awareness of language issues across all areas of society, often including education and academia, which is tied to a perception of language as not needing specialist attention or expertise.

MNCs, considering mostly internal communication from a managerial perspective. This rests on two assumptions: (i) that as companies grow in size and increase their internationalisation, language diversity becomes a more pressing issue compared to smaller domestic businesses, and (ii) that the strategic importance of language diversity grows in the higher levels of the organisation in contrast to entry-level or low paid jobs (Angouri and Piekkari 2018, 14-17). Many studies also centre on contexts where English is used predominantly as a second language, based on the expectation that they will demonstrate greater awareness of language challenges than Anglophone firms, which “are likely to suffer from certain ‘blindness’ to the language problem due to the current dominance of English as the *lingua franca*” (Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen, and Piekkari 2006, 411).

Janssens and Steyaert (2014) use sociolinguistics and cosmopolitan theory to identify three research approaches to the study of language in IB based on different interpretations of the relationship between universality and particularity in globalisation processes. The first approach gives precedence to universality and hence the use of a *lingua franca* to address linguistic diversity, seeing cosmopolitanism as a form of “world citizenship over local affiliation” (Janssens and Steyaert 2014, 625). Much of the IB literature takes this “monological *lingua franca*” point of view (Janssens and Steyaert 2014, 630). Grounded in a “monolingual worldview” (Brannen, Piekkari, and Tietze 2014, 501) IB research often looks at languages as independent systems divided by a barrier that hampers communication and decision-making (Hanson and Mellinger 2021, 85). The significance of the language barrier is contingent on three dimensions: diversity (the number of languages to be managed), penetration (the number of functional areas that operate across languages), and sophistication (the complexity of the skills required) (Feely and Harzing 2003).

According to Feely and Harzing (2002), language can pose problems for both second language (L2) and first language (L1) users. L2 users may fear losing face regarding their level of fluency or regret the sense of diminished control over the relationship that may crop up if their communication partner is able to work in their L1 instead. Even proficient users may feel that their interpersonal and rhetorical skills are constrained when operating in a second language. L1 users, in turn, may face instances of miscommunication because of their own ability and preconceptions when

dealing with L2 users. They may also feel excluded if L2 users switch to their own language in their presence.

From this perspective, language is discursively framed as a faultline in organisational cohesion, “a lightning rod [...] attracting and conducting the tensions” in global teams (Hinds, Neeley, and Cramton 2014, 537), or a “reconfiguration agent” which exerts influence on various knowledge transfer factors such as cost, medium, teams, social networks, trust, staff movements and motivation (Welch and Welch 2008). Language not only alters or transforms information flows, but filters, distorts and deforms them. It is a management issue that puts business strategy in MNCs at risk, with potential consequences for inter- and intracompany relationships, market expansion, joint ventures, and staffing (Feely and Harzing 2003), and as such its negative impact must be minimised.

In contrast, the second research approach identified by Janssens and Steyaert (2014, 627) underscores particularity and the coexistence of a plurality of languages connected to local environments, seeing cosmopolitanism as “openness to other cultures”. Studies that follow this approach favour contextualisation over standardisation based on the fact that a mandated company language “is not the integrative measure that companies hope” and “it is often complemented by more complex language practices and performances” (Janssens and Steyaert 2014, 632). As a result, language-sensitive research in IB concentrates on the impact of language policies in MNCs, with a particular interest in the possibilities and limitations of using a common corporate language, the position of English as a lingua franca, and the interaction between English and local languages in headquarters-subsiary/inter-subsiary relationships where language proficiency appears as a factor for power and control.⁶ This perspective is nevertheless described as “monological multilingualism”, since “in challenging the monolingual order imposed by one dominant language, languages are also represented as clearly bounded systems” (Janssens and Steyaert 2014, 628).

⁶ For overviews of the literature on workplace multilingualism and language in international business see, for example, Gunnarsson (2013); Brannen, Piekkari, and Tietze (2014); Mahili and Angouri (2015), or Tenzer, Terjesen, and Harzing (2017). Relevant works are reviewed in Chapter 5 in connection to the findings of the current study.

As an alternative, Janssens and Steyaert (2014) propose a third option, a “multilingual franca” approach based on the interconnection of universality and particularity, the global and the local.⁷ In this case, assumptions about the specific cultural or linguistic characteristics of groups give way to an approach that “privileges language as social practice, speakers as social actors and boundaries as products of social action” (Heller 2007, 1). Central to this view is a focus on “the ‘doing’ of language” and the way users mobilise their varied linguistic resources (Janssens and Steyaert 2014, 633).⁸

The notion of a “multilingual franca” points towards an understanding of language performance as a translanguaging activity, and therefore alludes to the critical role of translation in shaping organisational reality. However, despite the growing interest in the consequences of crossing language borders arising from the so-called “multilingual turn” (Tenzer, Terjesen, and Harzing 2017) in organisational and international management, translation is still rarely explicitly investigated as a linguistic practice:

In the study of multinationals and global businesses, social and cultural differences have been identified as a significant boundary to be crossed [...] It is much rarer to find studies that would take the linguistic understanding of translation seriously and engage directly with textual translatorial data. (Koskinen 2020, 68-69)

Rather than a process of “reverbalization of meaning in another language” through which individuals influence the discursive construction of organisations (Piekkari, Tietze, and Koskinen 2020, 2), translation is often construed as a metaphor to describe

⁷ The three research approaches to the study of language in global workplaces uncovered by Janssens and Steyaert (2014), i.e., monological lingua franca, monological multilingualism, and multilingual franca, mirror the different business models that international corporations may adopt and the way each of them deals with language. According to Perlmutter (1969), ethnocentric companies apply the cultural values and assumptions of the home country across the organisation, while polycentric companies allow for operations to be adapted to the cultural contexts of subsidiaries. In both cases, language use is a relatively uncomplicated matter determined by the countries involved. Geocentric companies, in turn, are characterised by complex structures as they aim to develop “global reach and local responsiveness at one and the same time” (Maclean 2006, 1381).

⁸ This is also in line with the concept of translanguaging in applied linguistics, which refers to “the multiple discursive practices in which multilingual speakers engage, as they draw on the resources within their communicative repertoires” (Martin-Jones, Blackledge, and Creese 2012, 10).

organisational change and the movement of management practices across institutional contexts. For example, Røvik (2023) approaches knowledge transfer challenges as a question of translation across organisational borders. Drawing parallels between the processes through which business units exchange and receive knowledge and interlingual translation, he conceptualises knowledge transfer in organisations as translation acts requiring “translation competence” on the part of the “translators” (managers, consultants, expatriates, and other employees) who are involved in identifying and “translating” representations of source practices into new practices in the recipient units. This involves keeping the essential elements of the original practice which is to be recreated (“foreignising”) while making the necessary adaptations for the receiver context (“domesticating”).

Another example of this understanding of translation as the adaptation and modification of practices within organisations can be seen in Gutierrez-Huerter et al. (2020). The authors consider the sequence of micro-processes deployed in the “translation” of organisational practices as they are transferred between HQ and its subsidiaries and identify three types of translation: filtering, coupling, and repurposing. Filtering involves erasing features of the practice that may be considered unappealing in the new context, repurposing implies a change of meaning or application, and coupling takes place when new aspects are added to the new practice to increase acceptability (Gutierrez-Huerter et al. 2020, 392). “Translators” in decision-making positions work through three key stages, which include making sense of and assessing the practice, reconciling any incompatibilities or ambiguities, and anchoring the practice in the new setting. From the perspective of the translator, the transfer may be blocked or enabled by the translator’s own fidelity to the practice, as well as their position, temporal orientation, and autonomy over the related resources (Gutierrez-Huerter et al. 2020, 399).

When considered as an interlingual practice, translation is commonly treated as a methodological concern for authors reporting on the linguistic context of their research (Chidlow, Plakoyiannaki, and Welch 2014; Holden and Michailova 2014). Depending on the scope of the study (single or cross-country) and the linguistic profile of participants (monolingual or multilingual), however, a key decision researchers are faced with is “not just how but whether to translate at all” (Chidlow Plakoyiannaki,

and Welch 2014, 569). The more diverse the sample, the more prevalent the use of English, which reveals the common overarching assumption that participants are generally competent English users. When IB researchers do have to translate their instruments for data collection and reporting, they do not usually discuss their translation decisions explicitly or only do so as an issue accounted for through back-translation, which serves to check for accuracy and therefore to maintain the validity of the study (Chidlow Plakoyiannaki, and Welch 2014, 572). Through the analysis of cross-language studies in key IB journals, Chidlow and colleagues show the prevalence of an approach to translation as straight-forward lexical transfer and advocate instead for the recognition of translation as a process of intercultural interaction embedded within a broader communicative context:

Once conceived as a situated process of (re)constructing meaning, translation is no longer just a hurdle to overcome when collecting data – the process also becomes data and a potential source of theoretical insight. [...] In this way, translation needs to be recognised as more than a concern to be addressed in the methodology section, but rather as an act of knowledge production to be reflected on in the findings of the study. (Chidlow Plakoyiannaki, and Welch 2014, 576)

Towards the turn of the millennium, Steyaert and Janssens (1997, 150) called for an interdisciplinary approach to reconsider the role of language and translation in business contexts, suggesting a number of research questions at the interface of management and translation studies.⁹ Although their research agenda was not fully taken up by IB scholars at the time, partly perhaps due to the rise of English as a *lingua franca* minimising the perceived need for translation (Hanson and Mellinger 2021, 79), the theoretical works produced by these authors and colleagues over the following two decades stand out as the building blocks of translation-oriented research in IB.

In their 1997 paper, Steyaert and Janssens identified two perspectives regarding culture and language in the management literature and discuss their implications for translation and language learning in business contexts. The first perspective, the most

⁹ These include issues such as the position of translation and translators in multilingual companies, the existence and nature of feedback processes, the requirement for organisational knowledge, the impact of the corporate language policy, the relevance of language competence for performance and recruitment, and the effect of power relations amongst language groups.

prevalent within management, presents language as a vehicle for the transfer of information and translation as a “neutral act”. The coexistence of multiple languages is a problem that translation can solve. Language learning is a technical skill, a tool to make communication easier. The second perspective highlights the interactive relation between producer and receiver, with language as a social action that gives shape to reality, and translation a complex “management act”, a cultural production that offers added value (Steyaert and Janssens 1997, 137-143).

In later work, Janssens, Lambert, and Steyaert (2004) draw on broad theoretical developments in translation studies to formulate three approaches to language and translation use in MNCs and how they lead to different strategies for organising language diversity. A language strategy from a mechanical perspective is likely to rely on a lingua franca and view translation as a straightforward matter of code-switching, like “walking through dictionaries” (Janssens, Lambert, and Steyaert 2004, 418). A cultural perspective takes language diversity into account and sees translation as an intercultural activity embedded in a particular sociocultural context, akin to “traveling across cultures” (Janssens, Lambert, and Steyaert 2004, 420). Finally, a political perspective emphasises questions of status and power relationships connected to language use, with translation as a performative act “maintaining dominant positions or empowering new voices [in] a context of language competition and language hierarchy” (Janssens, Lambert, and Steyaert 2004, 424).

Some authors have since started to deal explicitly with the distinction between interlingual and metaphorical translation. Piekkari, Tietze, and Koskinen (2020) identify various ways in which the interplay between these two forms of translation manifests itself, focusing on “agentic translation”, i.e., situations where there is a high degree of both metaphorical translation (the transferring of practices to a new organisational context) and interlingual translation (the crossing of linguistic boundaries). Through the analysis of published case studies, they show how creative, accommodating, and resistant approaches to interlingual translation may align with or contradict the purpose of metaphorical translation. Tietze, Piekkari, and Koskinen (2022), in turn, review how organisation studies have so far tentatively drawn from concepts in the translation studies literature, calling for further interdisciplinary work that brings together the full range of translation resources in MNCs and integrates

translation data into organisational research to help understand meaning-making processes in multilingual organisations.¹⁰

A subset of researchers refer to notions such as equivalence and ambiguity, as well as Venuti's (1994) concepts of domestication and foreignisation as glimpsed earlier, to study how the translation of management terms and concepts presents challenges for the implementation of imported organisational practices.¹¹ Other scholars engage with translation as a way to explain language use in HQ-subsidiary relations. In these studies, interlingual translations are not viewed as neutral processes but hidden acts of power, balancing between various pressures and interests to generate specific responses. As an example, Ciuk, James, and Śliwa (2019) analyse the way new corporate values from a US-based MNC were translated into the language and context of a subsidiary in Poland by a group of local managers. The corporate values reflected North American views, raising unwanted connotations in the local context which the local managers addressed through four interrelated processes: purposing (adjusting the intent in light of the particular context), reframing (reorienting the original meaning to suit the objectives of local management), domesticating (ensuring acceptability by anticipating the recipients' reactions), and inscribing (directing responses based on behavioural expectations). This translation exercise shows how managers adjust the message to "localise" it without fully disregarding the HQ perspective and how interlingual translation was used "as a forum for the exercise of power and micropolitics and a management tool aimed at promoting desired behaviours and attitudes among staff, and pre-empting resistance" (Ciuk, James, and Śliwa 2019, 933). Their findings echo those of Piekkari, Welch, and Welch (2014, 45), who show

¹⁰ In this vein, Koskinen (2020) suggests the use of "translational linguistic ethnography", combining ethnographic methods with detailed textual data, for an integrated approach to translatoriality in multilingual organisations with a particular focus on the linguistic/translational repertoires and resources of its members, as well as the ways text is generated and travels across the organisation for various purposes in the hands of different actors.

¹¹ For instance, Holden and Michailova (2014) analyse fragments of a key management textbook translated into Russian, while Outlila, Piekkari, and Mihailova (2020) look at the translation of "empowerment" as a Western management concept by managers in a Russian subsidiary, and Westney and Piekkari (2020) present a historical case study of how Japanese organisational practices were made intelligible and acceptable to US managers through two types of translation: (i) direct translations by employees of Japanese companies bringing their experiences into the American subsidiaries and therefore translating practices into specific organisations, and (ii) indirect translations by consultants, academics and practitioners who address wider audiences in management textbooks, business press reports, etc.

how subsidiary staff can use translation to deliberately alter the content and intent of HQ messages, and even filter information, to make it more “culturally appropriate” for local staff, despite running the risk of “compromising” it from the point of view of central management. Similarly, Logemann and Piekkari (2015) demonstrate how translation (re)defined power positions in a European MNC undergoing strategic change. The study reveals how HQ exercised power by mandating English as the common corporate language and how a particular subsidiary resisted this by “localising” mission-critical communications into the local language to protect its interests. Language-based power then shifted over time with English first reserved to top management and later empowering subsidiary managers by enabling bottom-up and horizontal communication.

Underscoring the strategic importance of translation, Hanson and Mellinger (2021, 79) see the challenges in multilingual organisations as a matter of cross-language communication in a situation of asymmetric information. The authors provide a framework that connects how companies respond to information asymmetry (whether by mitigating or maintaining it) with their target audience (whether it is external or internal), in order to identify four types of communication goals and potential solutions. In many cases, the aim is to reduce information asymmetry. When communication is internal, the goal is mutual understanding, and a company may promote language training and staff mobility or adopt a common corporate language. When communication is external, the goal is to provide a target-appropriate version of the company’s message, and a potential strategy is the hiring of language service providers or multilingual employees. In other cases, a company may wish to maintain or exploit information asymmetry instead. If communication is internal, a lingua franca or a controlled language can help standardise the company’s message. With external partners, the need to maintain information asymmetry may arise in merger negotiations or interactions with suppliers and competitors, which would require specialised language services (Hanson and Mellinger 2021, 88-91).

On the back of a sample case study, Westney et al. (2022) highlight the value of integrating three different but complementary approaches to translation that focus on different types of boundaries. First, organisational translation concentrates on how management models and practices cross inter- and intra-organisational boundaries and

are incorporated in the new context. Second, knowledge translation pays attention to the horizontal boundaries between expert domains, with their own specialised languages and ways of generating and organising knowledge.¹² Third, interlingual translation deals with language and culture borders, which are still present even in businesses that have an official corporate language and become more and more relevant as the complexity of the task increases. From a translation studies perspective, IB researchers are therefore encouraged to engage with new questions: for example, whether all communications are routinely translated and, if not, how selections are made and by whom; who provides translations and how skilled they are; or what translation strategies and processes are like and how they affect organisational practices (Westney et al. 2022, 5).

1.3 Paraprofessional translation

Despite little historical engagement between translation and business scholarship, recent years have seen a move towards the study of organisations as “translation ecosystems” (Westney and Piekkari 2020, Westney et al. 2022) by a subsection of researchers in translation studies, IB, and management and organisation studies, who recognise translation as a factor in the routine operations of firms within the knowledge economy. The notion of an ecosystem enables scholars to make connections between language ideologies and local dynamics, “*zooming in* [on] the practices of employees around specific processes and *zooming out* on the wider context within which this takes place” (Angouri and Piekkari 2018, 19) [emphasis in the original]. From this perspective, Westney et al. (2022, 1) argue for further multi-level research “integrating the micro perspective of translating agents, the meso perspective of organizational units, and the macro perspective of the larger social and

¹² This approach draws from Carlile’s (2004) work on knowledge management across domain boundaries in contexts of innovation. He describes three types of boundaries, in order of complexity (syntactic, semantic, pragmatic) associated with three related processes (transfer, translation, transformation). These represent different perspectives on boundaries: “an information processing approach that focuses on knowledge as a thing to store and retrieve, an interpretive approach that emphasizes the importance of a common meaning to share knowledge between actors, and a political approach that acknowledges how different interests impede knowledge sharing” (Carlile 2004, 555). Organisations deal with a syntactic boundary when knowledge can be transferred and managed efficiently through a common lexicon. A semantic boundary arises with new dependencies, which requires a process of translation of domain-specific knowledge. If this response is insufficient, a pragmatic boundary then necessitates negotiating and transforming past knowledge.

linguistic contexts that influence translation [...] to identify important but invisible boundaries in cross-border business”.

Work following this call is currently starting to come together under the umbrella of “paraprofessional translation”. Research on paraprofessional translation looks at translation at work by professionals other than translators. Borrowing from Tuylenev’s (2014) distinction between professional, non-professional and paraprofessional translation, Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke (2017, 466) define paraprofessional translators as those working in multilingual environments “who are not trained or paid for their translation or interpreting services” but nevertheless take them on as part of their job. Paraprofessional translation is therefore a cross-linguistic practice that is carried out in a work environment by “individuals in a professional capacity other than translating/interpreting” (Koskinen, forthcoming-a). Indeed, they need not have been hired specifically to deal with language differences or even devote most of their time to this activity (Harzing, Köster, and Magner 2011, 9), but they often become default communication channels for companies, maintaining knowledge flows across cultural and linguistic divides:

Paraprofessional translators are, in other words, located in spaces where different structures, forms, values, groups and languages overlap. It is through their work and micro-acts of translation that meanings are received, made, unmade and changed. (Piekkari and Tietze, forthcoming)

Also referred to as “language nodes” (Feely and Hazing 2003, 46), “bridge individuals” or “linking-pins” (Harzing, Köster, and Magner 2011, 16), these staff members are examples of what the IB literature calls “boundary spanners”, i.e. “individuals who are perceived by other members of both their own in-group and/or relevant out-groups to engage in and facilitate significant interactions between two groups” (Barner-Rasmussen et al. 2014, 887). In this role, they work between and across different types of organisational, functional, and knowledge boundaries, both internal and external (Westney et al. 2022), in addition to linguistic ones. In their study of knowledge transfer between four Finland-based MNCs and their Chinese and Russian subsidiaries, Barner-Rasmussen et al. (2014, 888) identify four boundary spanning functions in order of complexity: exchanging information, linking actors

through personal networks, facilitating interactions, and intervening to create positive outcomes (e.g. taking an active role to resolve misunderstandings, manage conflicts, or build trust). Their study shows that boundary spanners hold different degrees of cultural and language skills—whether this is a national, organisational or professional culture/language. Those with both cultural and language skills perform more functions than those who possess only cultural skills, and those with high language skills perform the most complex functions, independently of their position in the organisational structure (Barner-Rasmussen et al. 2014, 897-899).

The boundary spanning work of paraprofessional translators is unconstrained by professional translation norms, codes of conduct or definitions of competence, but leaves “a paper trail of values, attitudes and ideologies of cultural mediation, documented in their translations”, which makes understanding their translatorial behaviour highly relevant for translation studies (Koskinen 2020, 75). From an IB perspective then, “by integrating insights from translation studies, we can explain how organizational practices change in translation, bring into light language resources of translators, as well as the power positions and hierarchies created by these resources, and render the consequences of multilingualism in organizations visible” (Piekkari, Tietze, and Koskinen 2020, 14).

As Koskinen (forthcoming-b) points out, some of the existing research on paraprofessional translation does not explicitly employ this term but is covered under “non-professional translation”. This is the case in my PhD.¹³ While recognising that paraprofessional activity is likely to differ from unpaid non-professional work (e.g. volunteer translation or language brokering) in terms of practical processes, functional orientation, organisational roles, labour relations, and contextual constraints (Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke 2017, 466), I am choosing the NPIT label in this project instead for two reasons. First, to respond to the overarching aim of stressing (inter)disciplinary connections in the face of growing fragmentation. And second, to accurately reflect

¹³ The aforementioned work by Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke (2017), where they present paraprofessional translation as a distinct area of research, was only published shortly after the beginning of my project. Indeed, my study was recognised as being “among the first within translation studies to deal with the phenomenon [of paraprofessional translation], despite not naming it as such” (Koskinen, personal communication) and some of its findings are set to appear in the first edited volume explicitly proposing a research agenda for paraprofessional translation, in progress at the time of writing (Koskinen, forthcoming-b).

the original conceptualisation of the study. Since paraprofessional translation as an area of research at the point of convergence between TS and IB started developing in parallel to the evolution of my research, the project was conceived without an awareness of the incipient formalisation of the field, which helps explain its particular theoretical and methodological direction. By situating the study under the broader umbrella of NPIT (in and of itself an area in a state of flux) and placing the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic practices of participants under the even wider remit of “translation”, the emphasis is shifted from what makes paraprofessional translation unique *vis-à-vis* professional and other instances of non-professional translation, and it is rather set on what they all share as legitimate translation acts.

2. TRANSLATION AND TRANSLATING

“It is not the label that counts, but the concept it applies to” (Toury 1995a, 135)

Invisibility is a common topic for translation scholars, but it is particularly prevalent in paraprofessional contexts due to the porous nature of boundaries between translation and other phenomena (Koskinen, forthcoming-b). Indeed, one major reason why translation in business contexts remains an under-explored area is arguably the limited acknowledgement of translingual practices in these settings as “translations”, and of those who perform them as “translators”. This section examines the concept of “translation” as it applies to the study of “translating” by NPIT.

Naming a phenomenon invokes certain (more or less) fixed characteristics which separate it from others and are gathered in formal definitions that can serve as a starting point for research. The boundaries of translation, however, are far from clear-cut, given the number of practices under consideration, the variety of theoretical perspectives underlying their study, and their historical and cultural situatedness (Hermans 2013). Approaches to translation have evolved through time from positivist stances looking to find a “true” definition towards more self-reflective empirical and descriptive work that shares the stage with a wide range of postmodern views (Halverson 2010). As seen in previous sections, the term “translation” and related metaphors are in fact growing in popularity beyond translation theory into the humanities and social sciences, contributing to broaden its scope (Dizdar 2009).

Translation is therefore an object of study without a single definition but multiple potential understandings. In Neubert's (1994, 418) words:

It is an almost futile attempt to give a precise definition of what translation is and what it is not, or to state succinctly where 'normal' monolingual communication ends and translation, i.e. bilingually mediated communication begins.

Rather than establishing fixed definitional criteria to describe "an object which is characterised by its very variability" (Toury 1995b, 31), which would restrict the field and overlook real-life phenomena, Toury (1995a, 136) suggests that "translations be regarded as facts of the culture which hosts them", i.e., that it is the target culture which determines what is recognised as a translation. As such, "when a text is offered as a translation, it is quite readily accepted *bona fide* as one", and even if it is presented as having been created in the target language, there may be some features that the "persons-in-the-culture" associate with a translation (Toury 1995a, 137). In other words, every target culture has a particular perception of what translations and translating are and how they are executed. Toury (1995a, 142) uses the concept of "assumed translations" to refer to "all utterances which are presented or regarded as translations within the target culture, on no matter what grounds". This notion hinges on three interconnected hypotheses: (i) a source-text postulate, (ii) a transfer postulate, and (iii) a relationship postulate. Considering a text as a translation implies the presumed presence of a preceding source text (whether there actually is one, more than one, or a different one from that which was originally assumed), some process of transfer (whatever its specific linguistic and cultural characteristics), and a relationship that links the outcome to its assumed source (Toury 1995a, 143-144). An assumed translation is therefore "any target-culture text for which there are reasons to tentatively posit the existence of another text, in another culture and language, from which it was presumedly derived by transfer operations and to which it is now tied by certain relationships, some of which may be regarded —within that culture— as necessary and/or sufficient" (Toury 1995a, 145).

In response to this proposal, Komissarov (1996, 371) emphasises "the intention or the pretension of the translator rather than the acceptance of the text as translation by the users". In his opinion, "the representatives of the target culture cannot accept a text

as a translation unless and until it is offered to them as such” (Komissarov 1996, 371), pointing to the existence of many translations which are not recognised by the readers. Toury (1995a, 142), nevertheless, accounts for this possibility when he states that “items of this kind can of course be studied too, but an account will have to be given precisely of the fact that they were not presented/regarded as translational within the culture which hosts them; and as part of the study itself”.

There are pseudotranslations, or “texts which have been presented as translations with no corresponding source texts in other languages ever having existed – hence no factual ‘transfer operations’ and translation relationships” (Toury 1995b, 40). And there are also “covert translations” (House 1977/1981), not identified as such in the target culture, as well as translations which are “unrecognised” (Harris 2010) by both producers and receivers, but still adhere to the postulates of there being an assumed source to which they are connected, independently of the type of transfer relationship between input and outcome, the role of the “translator”, or the perceived degree of communicative success. Both instances tell us “about the notions shared by the members of a community, not only as to the status of translated texts, but also as to their most conspicuous characteristics” (Toury 1995b, 46). The key in these cases is to study the reason behind this lack of acknowledgement, which would shed light on the dominant understanding of translation acting pertinent within the context in question.

A case in point is Komissarov’s (1996, 369) argument that a definition of translation should separate it from “other means of linguistic transfer such as abstracts, precis, reformulations and the like”. What is most relevant from this statement is not whether those examples of interlingual communication should be called translation or not, but the fact that, in making such a distinction, the author shows to be operating from a particular (culturally-embedded) assumed understanding of translation that remains unquestioned. Given the practices listed in contrast to translation, it seems that the implied criterion for categorisation is a notion of “fullness” or “completeness” that presumes a high degree of similarity to the source.¹⁴

¹⁴ Although the author admits that definitions bearing a qualitative judgement are too restrictive, his own proposal describes translation as “a plenipotentiary representative of the source text in all respects — functionally, semantically and structurally” (Komissarov 1996, 370), which enters into conflict with many real-life cases of translation. Halverson (2004, 347) provides an in-depth critical analysis of this

As Chesterman (2006) points out, the words for “translation” in many languages include the notions of similarity, difference, and mediation, although, in his view, the European tradition typically stresses the idea of “similarity” (in Pym 2014, 74).¹⁵ Indeed, translation is often seen “as a more constrained mode of transfer associated with equivalence or invariance requirements” (Göpferich 2010, 374). For example, according to Mossop (2017, 331), although translators may introduce changes in meaning to make their work usable, at the point of production they typically operate with the intention of maximising invariance. Translators’ overarching pursuit of meaning invariance is therefore at the core of Mossop’s (2017) understanding of the object of study in translation studies, which places the work of professionals and training institutions at the centre of the discipline. The author points out how the discipline grew in tandem with the development of higher education training programmes “that prepare students for professional life, during which most of them will work principally with texts calling for invariance-orientation” (Mossop 2017, 335). However, this idea is currently being challenged by the reality of an increasingly technology-driven language industry. In addition, it is highly contextual. Not only is it implicitly tied to a particular understanding translation that is not general but historically bound (Pym 2017, 339), it is also reflective of the author’s extensive career as a professional translator in Canada (Mossop 2017, 337). When it comes to training, the needs and constraints of the local environment may differ from professional ideals, which suggests that trainers should “look critically at their own institutions, at the social actors they have to negotiate with, and at the various market segments with which they and their graduates will have to deal with [sic]” (Pym 2002a). Considering

definition and brings Toury’s (1995a) and Komissarov’s (1996) perspectives together by positing that the status of a text as a translation is dependent on both their creators’ identifying claims and the institutional and target culture’s acceptance of the fact.

¹⁵ Sager (1994, 117) highlights these very notions in his definition of translation as “a derived document which maintains a certain degree of similarity of content with its source document while being clearly dissimilar in language from its source”. In fact, Toury’s (1995a) source-text postulate is already intimated in Sager’s (1994, 116) work, when he states that “a document for which we cannot postulate some sort of source language text, cannot be considered a translation. Therefore, the ultimate criterion for identifying a document as a ‘translation’ is its derivation from a document in another language”. Nevertheless, this approach still accommodates a wide range of textual manifestations (e.g. instructions, abstracts, gists, paraphrases) “because they are written in a ‘target language’ on the basis of texts in a ‘source language’ and because they maintain a certain similarity with their source language text” (Sager 1994, 116).

the national context of Ireland presented in the introduction to this PhD, Mossop's view of translation might appear to be rather restrictive.

The centrality of professional translation within translation studies permeates other approaches to categorising translation and therefore defining the disciplinary object of study. Halverson (1999, 8) presents "translation" as a prototype concept instead of relying on classical categories, which "necessitate a clear boundary between 'translation' and 'non-translation' and the equality of all category members".¹⁶ Given their status as "norm masters", able to produce texts that best fit the dominant concept of translation, professionals are seen as the key concern in the investigation of translation (Halverson 1999, 21-22; 2004, 351).

Krings (1986) also considers the activities of professionals as more fundamental to the discipline over those of other individuals engaging in translation, criticising Harris' (1977) suggestion that translation studies should first look at natural translation or "the translation done by bilinguals in everyday circumstances and without special training for it". As Harris (1992, 99) points out, however, the issue boils down to semantics: "It all depends [on] what one means by the term 'translation'". Admitting that definitions are always shaped by researchers' own context and interests, he favours the inclusivity of the following one by Rabin: "Translation is a process by which a spoken or written utterance takes place in one language which is intended and presumed to convey the same meaning as a previously existing utterance in another language" (Rabin 1958, 123; in Harris 1992, 99-100).¹⁷

This study considers "translations (as entities)" as well as "translating (as a kind of text-generating activity)" (Toury 1995a, 135) beyond that which is "executed by

¹⁶ Classical categories imply a link to objective reality based on a list of "necessary and sufficient conditions, which match directly with the essential features of the object in question" (Halverson 1999, 5), while a prototype allows for a "pattern of graded membership" in terms of degree of conformity to set norms (Halverson 1999, 15). Scarpa (2017, 346) also supports a prototypical view of the concept of translation that, although centered around a "sameness relation between source and target texts, it also addresses more peripheral areas such as the less typical ways of translating provided by paraphrasing, summarizing, adapting, giving a commentary, or composing multilingual promotional texts".

¹⁷ The idea of meaning invariance appears here too, although it does not presuppose any particular status of the translator or the resulting translation. It is also interesting to compare Toury's (1995a) three postulates to Harris' underscoring of the presence of (i) two languages and (ii) a process of transposition between them as the basic features without which "the concept of translation would be shattered" (Harris 1992, 100).

professional translators, for complete and final documents, labelled as translations and ordered from the in-house translation department or translation agencies” (Koskinen 2020, 60). The translation concept adopted here encompasses “verbalizations within or in-between languages (i.e., intralingual and interlingual types)” (Koskinen, forthcoming-a) and it is therefore akin to the concept of “translatoriality” (Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke 2017; Koskinen 2020; Koskinen and Kinnunen 2022), which includes “all kinds of parallel movement from one language to another, whether they are labelled as translation by the actors themselves or not” (Koskinen 2020, 61).

The notion of “translatoriality” draws on the model of translatorial action by Justa Holz-Mänttari (1984), which sees translation as a goal-oriented and purposeful action enabling the crossing of cultural and linguistic borders. Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke (2017, 469-470) define “translatorial action” as “all types of action by anyone who takes the role of the translator in a bi- or multilingual situation with the purpose of delivering spoken or written content in one language by expressing related content in another language to receivers with potentially different needs and uses of translation”. For Koskinen and Kinnunen (2022, 8), translatoriality is intended “to capture not only instances of reverbaling full texts and complete utterances in a new language, but also the more fragmentary reiteration of the already said or written in a new way, either by the same person (i.e. self-translation) or someone else”.

The concept “carries no value judgement about who does the translation and how” (Koskinen, forthcoming-a), which avoids preconceptions regarding expected behaviour or quality definitions, and it accounts for different processes, functions, outcomes, and relationships of similarity: “Translatoriality presupposes that something is repeated, reworded, revoiced, or recommunicated. In other words, there is a pre-existing communicative element that gives rise to a new one, either in full or in part, and either aiming to recommunicate the same intent or not” (Koskinen and Kinnunen 2022, 9). The value of the concept lies in its potential to serve “as a new tool for identifying and appreciating flexible and goal-oriented translation practices”, highlighting the presence of translation in areas that may have otherwise been neglected. In addition to showing “how overwhelmingly translatorial life is” (Koskinen and Kinnunen 2022, 8-9), the term forces authors to question and be explicit about their own conceptualisation of translation, helping them “to keep an open mind

and ear to micro-moments of translation that neither the participants nor the researcher may necessarily immediately perceive as translating” (Koskinen, forthcoming-a).

Using the term “translatoriality” calls attention to a broad understanding of translation, covering “the non-prototypical end of the translation continuum” (Koskinen and Kinnunen 2022, 11) against the prototypical view of translation which is often unquestioned in research, or the mechanistic and reductionist view which may be found in lay contexts.¹⁸ Translatoriality is proposed to “account for the muddy everyday life of dealing with multilingualism amidst organizational practices” (Koskinen, forthcoming-a) in a way that the concept of “translation” may sometimes seem unable to. Indeed, “translatoriality as a term arose from a very pragmatic need to define the object of study in contexts where the traditional ‘translation’ and ‘interpreting’ did not work” (Koskinen and Kinnunen 2022, 10). However, by distinguishing translatoriality from translation, the unintended consequence may be reinforcing the narrower view of translation which led to the search for a new term in the first place. If translatoriality is more than translation, then translation remains limited to instances of prototypical “translation proper” (Jakobson 1959). Harris’ (2010) notion of “unrecognised translation” is therefore preferred here. Like translatoriality, it highlights the multiplicity of everyday operations across languages, but does so by unapologetically referring to them as translation.

3. TRANSLATION COMPETENCE

“By intuition and habit, all bilingual people can translate in some way or other”
(Lûdskanov 1969)

How the notion of translation is understood has consequences for the way in which the skills it entails are constructed. The view of translation in this study as a general

¹⁸ In their analysis of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), Koskinen and Kinnunen (2022) show how “translating” appears only linked to notions of accuracy and faithfulness in written texts, although there are many other “translatorial” practices implicitly subsumed under the category of mediation. The Irish *Languages Connect* (DES 2017a) policy, in turn, does not include any reference to translation, which is only mentioned in passing in the implementation plan. And in a study of good practice amongst European companies (European Commission 2011a), translation is listed only as a service to be bought externally. These examples are a reflection of the dominant restricted understanding of the concept of translation, not only in terms of the source-target relationship, but also in terms of the actors involved and their role.

ability “to move back and forth between languages and also to adapt and adjust to different environments” (Angouri and Miglbauer 2014, 159) is informed by my own profile, which combines an academic background in translation studies with experience in professional translation, translator training, and language teaching. This four-pronged perspective offers a privileged vantage point from which to critically consider the articulation of both translation and language skills as it pertains to the perceived offer and demand imbalance of multilingual staff in the local context. In this sense, it would be remiss to ignore the confluences in the goals of third level education for trainee translators and language learners. In Carreres’s (2014, 124) words:

By any account, the competent translator and the competent L2 user have a great deal in common. They both possess the ability to understand and produce L2 utterances; they both need to be sensitive to the pragmatic constraints of the L2 and are expected to have, to varying degrees, a good level of intercultural knowledge.

Accepting that language learners become able multilingual individuals rather than defective native speakers means acknowledging the translational nature of multilingual communication. Translation, it follows, is “a key skill that any language learner wishing to achieve well-rounded competence in the L2 should aim to develop” (Carreres 2014, 130). A clear dichotomy is nevertheless often established between translation as a means for second-language acquisition and the teaching and learning of translation as an end in itself (Cook 2010; Carreres 2014), which is said to require a unique set of skills calling for different mechanisms of activation and selection (Shreve 2012) compared to the spontaneous translingual activities of bilinguals.

The notion that “bilingualism is co-extensive with the capacity to translate” has been blamed for the obstacles in the professionalisation of translation and interpreting and their recognition as highly skilled occupations (Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva 2012, 150). In response to this, some scholars defend that “translators and interpreters are made rather than born” (Valdés et al. 2000, in Angelelli 2020, 119). However, others acknowledge that although not all bilinguals may become translators, they can still translate. For example, according to Whyatt (2017, 46), “any person conversant in two languages can act as a mediator and might provide an essential

communicative link in a wide spectrum of social situations, with each requiring a different level of specificity and/or accuracy”.

The apparent contradiction is resolved by probing further into how “translation” and, by extension, “bilingualism” are understood. Bilinguals are “rarely equally, or completely, fluent in the two languages in all domains” (Grosjean 2002, 2), but neither are translators, nor do they need to be. As Robinson (2003, 98-99) questions:

Is it enough to have profound and extensive experience of one or more foreign languages? If so, is it enough to have been exposed to that language or those languages in books and classrooms, or is it experience of the culture or cultures in which it is natively spoken essential? [...] One answer to *all* of these questions is: Yes, in certain cases.

Bilingualism is not “a monolithic construct” (Angelelli 2020, 116) and therefore “bilinguals range from being very poor to being very competent translators” (Grosjean 1982, 257). From a cognitive perspective, however, “is not a poor translation still a translation?” (Komissarov 1996, 369). The claim that “translation and interpreting are not by-products of bilingualism” (Angelelli 2020, 116) typically implies a qualitative positioning that betrays an understanding of translation as “a high-quality communicatively and formally flawless translation” (Whyatt 2017, 56).¹⁹ It is not translation which requires more than the knowledge of two languages, but “successful” translation:

Just as everyone can sing, be it badly or well, so everyone who knows more than one language can translate, to some degree. However, not everyone is paid to sing opera, and not all translators are at the pinnacle of the translation profession. The difference between the various levels may partly be due to training—we train people not just to translate, which they can already do, but to translate well, perhaps for a specific purpose, market, or technological environment. (Pym 2011, 313)

Indeed, translation at its very core is based precisely on (some) knowledge of two languages. The cultural and contextual aspects that translators need to account for are

¹⁹ For example, Angelelli states that “not all bilinguals can *successfully* translate or interpret” (2020, 116) and that “being bilingual does not necessarily encompass the ability to process and analyse information, or render it *appropriately*” (2020, 119) [emphasis mine].

not skills “other than language”, but an intrinsic part of strategic language use. In this sense, bilingualism and translation are necessarily connected: “Regardless of when and why translation skills emerge, they arise from individuals who have acquired linguistic competence in two languages” (Shreve 2012, 2).

The relationship between translation and bilingualism is most commonly contested by scholars concerned with the development of professional translation competence or, in Shreve’s words (2002, 154), the “motley set of academic understandings about what one has to know (and by implication what one has to learn or be taught) to become a translator”. Most theoretical competence models take language skills as one of the key elements in the mix of procedural and declarative knowledge, skills, abilities, and aptitudes required to translate, although they differ in the number and nature of the subcompetences proposed by their authors.²⁰ Such multicomponential models are valuable in guiding curriculum design for translator training, but their summative approach results in potentially ever-expanding lists of subcompetences that represent “a transcendental ideal translator” (Pym 2003, 487).²¹ The question becomes one of degrees of competence. Can we calculate an overall competence level based on each of the different subcompetences? At what level does each subcompetence need to be placed for a translator to be deemed competent? As Kussmaul (1995, 21) points out, “you cannot enlarge competence until a stage of completion”.

In this regard, the distinction proposed by Kiraly (2000) between *translation* competence (producing acceptable texts) and *translator* competence (joining different communities like users of languages and new technologies or experts in technical fields) becomes meaningful. Since purposes, markets and technological environments are in constant flux, what seems to be common to all scenarios is ultimately the ability to successfully negotiate meaning. A view of competence based on decision-making

²⁰ See, for example, Neubert (2000), Schäffner (2000), PACTE group (2003), Kelly (2005), and Göpferich (2008).

²¹ With the changing nature of the industry, especially in terms of collaborative work and information technology, it is clear that a model of competence that aims to account for everything that translators need to know and do (or even what seems reasonable to predict at a given time) is inexorably bound to lag behind developments in the market. And although awareness of market needs is essential, it is arguably pedagogically unsound to follow them very closely. Following Bernardini’s (2004) distinction between training and education, the objective at higher education level should be to promote awareness, reflexivity and resourcefulness, not just specific potential short term technical skills.

and problem-solving seems better suited to respond to this objective and the fragmented reality of the practice. Pym (2003, 489) puts forward a minimalistic approach to competence consisting just of two joint elements: “The ability to generate a series of more than one viable target text (T1, T2... Tn) for a pertinent source text (ST); the ability to select only one viable TT from this series, quickly and with justified confidence”. This can be considered above all a concept of *translating* competence. Even with no clear source text present, this model could be still applied to a view of communicative language competence from a translational perspective. The value of this definition is in its holistic, top-down take on competence that allows for a wider understanding of translational activities, making it more suitable for the current context of constant technological advances, but also more adaptable to future changes and needs and the range of tasks and situations of cross-linguistic mediation that language users are expected to negotiate in the modern world. Without rejecting the need for developing more specific skill areas like subject domain knowledge or the use of tools and resources, this alternative understanding of competence highlights the more instrumental role that these aspects of the curriculum play in the core ability to translate (Pym 2003, 494).

Translation studies, and research into translation training, in particular, typically targets “professional instances of linguistic and cultural mediation undertaken by individuals who designate themselves as ‘translators’ or ‘interpreters’ and are recognized (and paid) as such by their commissioners” (Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva 2012, 150). Alongside this, the proliferation of translation and interpreting training programmes has led to an association of formal qualifications obtained through specialist education with the provision of high-level professional services. The notion of professional translation is therefore usually linked to the work of individuals with a combined profile as (i) expert translators, who can produce quality translations, (ii) qualified translators, who are graduates of third level training programmes, and (iii) translators by trade, who earn their livelihood by offering their services. Other than nominally working as “translators”, however, non-professionals such as volunteer and paraprofessional translators, as well as other bilingual individuals, may produce successful translations and even hold formal qualifications

in translation.²² While formal training plays a key part not just in the development of transfer skills but other competences in demand in the language industry,²³ in the current landscape it is important to question the automatic coupling of professional status (service provision) and expertise (quality expectations):

What makes a translator a professional if education is not available? [...] Is it simply a matter of experience in the field? What is the difference between a gifted bilingual and a professional interpreter? Is it education in the field, or is it just membership in a professional organization? Can passing a test guarantee professionalism? Or is a professional an individual with a degree who can demand higher fees? (Angelelli 2020, 125)

Not all sectors, language combinations, and areas of specialisation can be covered by training programmes, associations, or certifying organisations, but successful translation still takes place. Bilinguals can indeed acquire relevant expertise, achieve high standards of translingual competence and display notable metalinguistic awareness without the guided practice provided in formal training. Learning can happen in many ways, and there is no one fixed level of attainment that signifies expertise. This is not to say that translator training programmes and the collective professionalisation efforts of scholars and practitioners are irrelevant, quite the opposite. The point being made is rather that, from a theoretical perspective, translation ability should be viewed as a developmental continuum, “a kind of evolutionary space” where “movement within the space is not automatic or necessary and the end point is not a single cognitive set shared by all translators who arrive at professionalism” (Shreve 1997, 125).

The expert translator that has undergone specialist training and possesses advanced knowledge of a specific field which allows them to work professionally by providing quality translations for publication represents only a fraction of the scope of *translation* in the current global reality, leaving out much of the *translating* that takes

²² The relevance of considering the local context in which research is inscribed is made obvious again in this regard. Given the prevalence of multilingual support and service roles in Ireland, it is not surprising to see many highly qualified language and translation graduates in positions where they act as paraprofessional translators rather than pursuing a career as “translators”.

²³ See, for example, the competence framework from the European Master’s in Translation (EMT) network, which serves as the reference standard for translation training in the European Union.

place in the broader social and professional spheres. Understanding translation in all its manifestations requires “exploring the processes that enable bilingual individuals to develop meta-linguistic awareness and hone their intuitive ability to translate and/or interpret” (Pérez and Susam-Surajeva 2012, 150), i.e., investigating how they may evolve from natural to expert translators.

The notion of “natural translation” is defined by Brian Harris as “the translation done in everyday circumstances by bilinguals who have no special training for it” (Harris 1977, 96). This is reflective of a developmental view of translation as a “quasi-universal human ability” (Harris 2017, 32) and therefore “an activity which is not confined to trained or highly experienced experts” (Harris 2017, 29), continuously demonstrated in a myriad of mediation contexts with varying degrees of sophistication. Natural translators develop into “native translators” after exposure to examples of translation, and it is then through training and mentorship that they may become professional and/or expert translators, with a relevant distinction made between those who translate for a living (whether qualified or not) and those who may possess the expertise but may not be translators by profession (Harris 2017, 34).²⁴

Harris’s natural translation hypothesis sees translation as an innate human predisposition that can be refined and progress from an untrained ability into complex skill, professional competence and expert performance, given the necessary “favourable external circumstances (i.e. the need for translation services) and internal conditions (i.e. the translator’s conscious effort to develop)” (Whyatt 2017, 50). From a cognitive perspective, this suggests there is a common fundamental capacity put into practice in any operation between two languages, i.e., that any person with knowledge of more than one language has the ability to overcome communication barriers through translation. Ability, of course, implies potential and does not guarantee competence (Whyatt 2017, 49). The question of quality has to do with “the stage which a translating individual occupies on the developmental continuum of translation as a

²⁴ The concept of natural translation is related to Toury’s (1986) “native translation”, which also acknowledges “the capacity of individuals to pick up translation skills unconsciously from their cultural environment in the same way as they develop their monolingual competence” (Pérez and Susam-Surajeva 2012, 150). However, Harris posits an intuitive competence which goes hand-in-hand with all bilingualism at any age and whatever the degree of proficiency in the two languages, whereas Toury emphasises the weight of socialisation processes in the emergence of translation skills.

human skill” (Whyatt 2017, 56). Proficiency then may develop through training and experience to achieve “results that conform to normative criteria laid down for professional translators a priori” (Lûdskanov 1972, in Harris 1992, 101).²⁵

Translation research may involve the investigation of (i) translations (products) and their purpose, genres, typologies, audiences, etc., but also (ii) translators (people) and their profile, expertise, status, or agency, and (iii) translating (processes), including not only translation strategies, but workflows and different mediation practices. Beyond the examination of “translations” as bearing a close, discernible relationship to their originals, with “an observable source input and an observable output” (Harris 2011), this study looks at “translating” as an everyday cross-linguistic and cross-cultural problem-solving activity, and “translation” then serves as a frame to address the complexities of multilingual communication in increasingly diverse landscapes. Following Jakobson’s (1959) tripartite definition, “intersemiotic, intralingual and interlingual translation can all be used to fulfil the human need and desire to communicate” (Whyatt 2017, 47), not just when looking to overcome the barriers that may arise from a lack of a common language or even a shared conceptual understanding, but also for managing roles and relationships.

²⁵ This links to Section 2 and the discussion on the concept of translation as reflective of a general, often implicit, translation culture that shapes how it takes place, what values and beliefs inform it, and how these emerge.

SUMMARY

Within translation studies, the investigation of business practices through and in translation has typically been connected to the notion of “commercial translation”, an umbrella term rarely considered from a theoretical standpoint beyond the analysis of textual, pragmatic, and terminological features of prototypical text types. Management research, in turn, has been slow to engage with questions of language and translation in multilingual corporations. With language often perceived as a barrier and translation treated mostly as a mechanical operation or a metaphor for knowledge transfer in organisations, few studies see language performance as a translingual activity. Nevertheless, a growing number of researchers in both fields are now collaborating to gain insights into the boundary spanning work of “paraprofessional translators”, i.e., staff who carry out translation alongside or as part of their main job. Studying these commonly unrecognised practices requires pushing the boundaries of the prevalent understandings of translation and translation competence to consider activities beyond “translation proper” and acknowledge the heterogeneity of the practices and agents that may be involved in translating as part of business processes.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

“Initially I set out, on what I thought was a well-travelled path, to find empirical evidence of what I knew to be true. I soon realized that conducting research centering on what matters to research participants — grounded theory research — means there is no path and, certainly, there is no way of knowing what you will find”
(Brown 2012)

This chapter presents the methodological approach taken in this investigation. The opening section describes the initial research design and its evolution from an ethnographic-oriented case study to a grounded theory study. This is followed by a brief introduction to grounded theory as a general methodology and an evaluation of its fit for the project’s aims and objectives. The chapter then reports on the methods and stages of data collection, discusses the analytical strategy and key ethical considerations, and ends with a reflection on how grounded theory shaped the research process, taking into account the challenges arising from its implementation.

1. INITIAL RESEARCH DESIGN

“So, what do you want to know?” (Research participant)

Given the lack of previous research on non-professional translation and interpreting (NPIT) in multilingual workplaces in Ireland, it made sense for this study to be (i) exploratory in nature, seeking to generate new knowledge and formulate rather than test existing hypotheses, and (ii) sociological in approach, with a combined focus on the what, the who and the where in order to gain an understanding of the how and the why. As such, a mixed-methods case study originally seemed a suitable choice to address translation as part of the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communication decisions in a business setting and provide answers to the following questions:

1. What does translation look like in a large, private multilingual organisation in Ireland?
2. What values and beliefs do non-professional translators hold about their role and skills?

3. How is the organisational context reflected in translation processes and outputs?

A case study can be defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin 2009, 18). Driven by contextual conditions, case studies present qualitative analyses characterised by an open-ended and flexible design, and are strengthened by the inclusion of various sources of evidence (Susam-Sarajeva 2009, 39). To paint as complete a picture as possible, an ethnographic approach stood out amongst the sea of qualitative research methods as a fitting methodological option to describe the roles and practices of non-professional translators in an organisational setting, and to complement the analysis of translation data.

While ethnographic fieldwork typically requires protracted periods of immersion, focused and short-term studies with a functional purpose are not uncommon in applied research (Asare 2015, 214). Within translation studies, ethnography has seen relatively limited use, but the sociological turn highlighted its potential for the exploration of translation practices in under-researched contexts (Flynn 2010).¹ One of the most notable examples of ethnographic research on translation is Koskinen’s (2008) exploration of the Finnish translation unit of the European Commission, which follows what she describes as a nexus approach to the “study of both texts and people in their institutional habitat” (Koskinen 2008, 6). Her aim is to investigate how translators identify with the institution, how the institutional context shapes translation processes and translators’ perception of their role, and whether this is evident in their translations. She uses a three-level design for the study of (1) the institutional framework through institutional ethnography and observations, (2) the role and identity of translators through focus groups, and (3) translated texts via the analysis of translation shifts.

¹ Examples include Angelelli (2000) on medical interpreters, Inghilleri (2003) on asylum seeking procedures, Flynn (2007) on literary translation and Asare (2011) on the use of translation tools. Koskinen (2006) offers an overview of ethnographic methods in translation studies, and Buzelin (2022) presents a critical literature review of translation studies and its relationship with the concept of ethnography as an object and a research methodology.

Following Koskinen's (2008) model, the original research design for this study also relied on a variety of qualitative and ethnographic methods to consider three levels: place (the organisational setting), people (the multilingual employees), and practices (translation products and processes). Observations and interviews with staff would be complemented by the analysis of available written sources, such as style guides or policy documents, in order to uncover the values underpinning the normative framework in which translations are performed. An online questionnaire would be used to gather demographic and attitudinal data with the purpose of mapping existing language assets and collecting preliminary responses on beliefs surrounding the use of language and translation at work. The employees' views of their professional role would then be further investigated with a focus group, and a representative sample of authentic translated material would help examine the extent to which previous findings were reflected in translation outputs. This was an ambitious design that aimed at gathering as much data from as many different sources as possible, so it did not take long for challenges to arise.

The first challenge was a practical one. After obtaining the necessary ethical approval and reaching an agreement with a large IT multinational based in the Cork city area, the project was set in motion, but getting the firm on board meant redefining the scope of fieldwork to assuage concerns around confidentiality and the potential disruption to operations. With limited access not only to the site itself, but also to staff and their work, the data collection methods had to be adapted to strike a balance between what was possible with the organisation's permission, what was viable to ensure participants' ease, and what was relevant to the overall research objective. Focus groups and questionnaires were swiftly removed from the research plan, leaving interviews and observations as the main sources of data. The first participant's welcome then came with an unassuming but acute question which set the tone for the rest of the stay: "So what do you want to know?". The change in data collection strategy, which hampered triangulation, started casting doubt over the expectations set by the initial questions. The second major challenge became therefore a theoretical and methodological one.

While the flexible nature of case studies means researchers cannot afford to be too precious about their initial design (Susam-Sarajeva 2009, 39), the quantity and quality

of data available does have implications for the questions that can be addressed and therefore the definition of the case, which requires as clear boundaries as possible. Indeed, a case study should start with the application of a broad concept or categorisation to concrete phenomena by identifying and defining the distinguishing features of similar activities (Meyer 2015, 179). The concept creates theoretical expectations for the analysis of the phenomena and, in turn, is studied through the lens of said phenomena (Meyer 2015, 177-178). However, this process of prior identification and categorisation that is crucial to case study research posed a challenge for the investigation of NPIT and “unrecognised translation” (Harris 2010) since, by definition, these refer to practices that may not typically be considered under the label of translation: “Many products of transfer remain partly invisible and hence only partly observable, which is why they may also escape the scholar’s grasp” (D’hulst 2013, 10). The issue was not one of settling on one particular understanding of translation. For example, both Olohan’s definition of “commercial translation” (2010) and Sager’s (1994) industrial model of translation provide working operational frameworks for instances of inter- and intralingual transfer processes that foreground a wide range of tasks.² But focusing the data collection on a set case study categorisation of translation presented the risk of limiting the analysis to predetermined conceptual models and therefore overlooking relevant phenomena: “Commitment to pre-conceived hypotheses may limit the kinds of observations, information and insights that the researcher makes and actually may have access to. He finds himself subject to a non-strategic, fixed and immovable research design” (Glaser 1978, 38). In a space where translation remains mostly unstated, too fixed an approach to the object of inquiry could mean a lost opportunity to draw out the full richness of the available data.

The unrecognised translatorial nature of many workplace activities poses a challenge in terms of effectively communicating the object of study and interpreting responses due to a potential mismatch between the internalised translation concepts of both researchers and participants: the reality of the field may put into question researchers’ ideas of translation while making it hard to capture the complete spectrum of translation practices in participants’ reports (Koskinen 2020). The main barrier for

² See Chapter 1, Section 1.1.

the proposed study was ultimately one of access; not just physical access to the type of empirical data initially expected, but access to a shared “language” that allowed all parties to discuss translation as a broad manifestation of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural practices. Understanding translation in this context, it became clear, required understanding the wider network of beliefs and behaviours underpinning multilingual communication.

As arrangements for fieldwork commenced, it was soon manifest that the study could not rely on a significant selection of aligned source and target texts for linguistic evaluation, comparable responses for meaningful statistics, or a corpus of consistently recorded participant interviews for detailed discourse analysis. But there was certainly not a lack of data, and while not focused or homogeneous at first sight, the data did speak to a multitude of issues beyond that which a traditional descriptive translation analysis could illustrate. Every interaction, direct or observed, was a piece of a complex puzzle that slowly revealed a web of behaviours shaping cross-linguistic and cross-cultural practices, as much as the articulation of language needs and functions at the unit. The data collected showed not only how translation featured in the resolution of different communication situations, but how participants’ linguistic and pragmatic choices reflected processes of identity building and negotiation, both their own and that of others, based on underlying perceptions of language use, competence, and hierarchy. To understand what was happening in the unit, the value of what participants had to share could not be dismissed because of its apparent incongruity with the scope of the study as was first conceived.

Keeping with the true exploratory nature of the research required an even more open-ended approach than originally envisioned. Rather than selecting data that responded to fixed questions, the questions widened to account for all instances in the data. Letting the data speak in this way, however, meant that the main issues and concerns were not chosen by the researcher, they were emerging from the data. This, in turn, necessitated accepting that the core object of analysis would only become apparent as the research process advanced. While translation remained the driving force behind the study, when looking at the data the true unknown was not simply “what does translation look like?”, but “what is going on?” and “how can it be best studied?”. As a methodology focused on the identification and conceptualisation of

patterns of behaviour for the generation of a theoretical explanation, grounded theory appeared then well positioned to balance the interdisciplinary demands of these questions with the overarching goal of advancing NPIT research. The following section takes a closer look at the principles and procedures of grounded theory.

2. A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH

“All is data” (Glaser 1998)

Grounded theory (GT) is “a general methodology of analysis linked with data collection that uses a systematically applied set of methods to generate an inductive theory about a substantive area” (Glaser 1992, 16). The term “grounded theory” is therefore used to refer both to the research method and the output of the research process, i.e., a theory which is empirically grounded in the data (Scott 2009).

Grounded theory was developed in the 1960s by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss and formalised in their seminal work *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Glaser and Strauss 1967) as a way to bridge the gap between theory and empirical qualitative research in the study of social phenomena. After Glaser and Strauss parted ways in the late 1980s, Glaser continued elaborating the original methodology in numerous publications to distinguish it from the multiple versions that spawned from different approaches to knowledge generation.³ It is this classic grounded theory which the present study is based on and will subsequently be referred to.

GT follows a bottom-up approach to data collection, coding and analysis, with the purpose of developing a multivariate theory of how the population in an area of interest attempts to resolve or process a main concern (Glaser 1978). Instead of starting from a set framework, hypothesis or theoretical coding frame, GT operates inductively to

³ The two main alternative strands to Glaserian grounded theory are those posited by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) and Charmaz (2000, 2006, 2009). Strauss and Corbin proposed more rigid and structured coding procedures, while Charmaz adopted a constructivist approach. A review of the various versions of GT and their divergences in philosophical positioning and methodological directives is beyond the scope of this work, but the reader is directed to Holton (2008), Kenny and Fourie (2015) and Rieger (2019) for an overview of key debates. By way of simplification, it can be said that Glaser’s approach places greater emphasis on theory generation over verification, and abstract conceptualisation over detailed description.

identify latent social patterns through a rigorous and systematic process of constant comparison and abstract conceptualisation of incidents from the data. Conceptual categories that emerge during data collection and analysis are then related and organised into an interconnected theory that provides a coherent explanation of participants' behaviour.

GT is “a comprehensive, integrated and highly structured, yet eminently flexible process that takes a researcher from the first day in the field to a finished written theory” (Glaser and Holton 2004, 4). To begin with, the researcher enters the field in a general area of interest, but without defining a specific research problem. The next steps of data collection and analysis inform one another, with the initial analysis helping determine the direction of the data collection. As the researcher starts gathering the data, coding is done line-by-line by comparing and grouping incidents into concepts that name patterns. During this first stage of open coding, constant comparison is used, forcing the researcher to deal with “similarities, differences and degrees in consistency of meaning between incidents” (Glaser and Holton 2004, 17). The method is described as follows:

Incidents are compared to incidents to establish underlying uniformity and its varying conditions. The uniformity and the conditions become generated concepts and hypotheses. Then, concepts are compared to more incidents to generate new theoretical properties of the concept and more hypotheses. The purpose is theoretical elaboration, saturation and verification of concepts, densification of concepts by developing their properties and generation of further concepts. Finally, concepts are compared to concepts. (Glaser and Holton 2004, 15)

Further data collection is directed by theoretical sampling based on the criteria of theoretical purpose and relevance: “Only as the researcher discovers codes [...] do the successive requirements for data collection emerge. By identifying emerging gaps in the theory, the analyst will be guided as to the next sources of data collection and interview style” (Glaser and Holton 2004, 14). Concepts then continue to be compared to each other to form conceptual categories, which will become the basis of the theory. When further data collection and analysis do not affect the emerging categories, they are considered to have reached theoretical saturation. This leads to the

identification of the core category which is said to “encompass the chief concern of the study, interact with most of the other categories in a significant capacity, and be sophisticated enough to account for the complexity and nuances within the data” (Kenny and Fourie 2015, 1273). At this point, coding is selective and focuses on the categories that are of direct relevance to the core one. Theoretical coding then takes place at the conceptual level to find relationships and integrate categories into a grounded theory, and the literature linked to the core category is addressed to add to the theory and help situate the work.

Throughout this process, the researcher must engage in the writing of theoretical memos to record ideas about codes and categories and the potential connections between them as they arise. This is an essential constituent of theory generation, since “memo writing is a continual process that leads naturally to abstraction or ideation — continually capturing the ‘frontier of the analyst’s thinking’ as he/she goes through data and codes, sorts and writes” (Glaser and Holton 2004, 18). The final step involves the sorting of these memos as they relate to the core category and its properties, moving back and forth to build an outline of the integrated theory before it is formulated through writing: “Theoretical sorting forces the ‘nitty gritty’ of making theoretically discrete discriminations as to where each idea fits in the emerging theory. [...] Without sorting, a theory lacks the internal integration of connections among many categories. With sorting, data and ideas are theoretically ordered” (Glaser and Holton 2004, 19). The end goal is to arrive at “theoretical completeness” (Glaser 1978, 125). However, this is not meant to be understood as an absolute ideal but to imply “coverage as far as the study can take the analyst” (Glaser 1978). As Glaser clarifies, theoretical completeness means that the analyst “explains with the fewest possible concepts, and with the greatest possible scope, as much variation as possible in the behaviour and problem under study” (Glaser 1978).

2.1 Methodological principles

The GT methodology requires that the researcher trusts in emergence, takes all as data, and avoids preconceptions. These controversial and demanding principles are explained below, along with some common misconceptions and worthy criticisms.

2.1.1 Trust in emergence

GT is underscored by “the principle of the natural *emergence* of a theory to be *discovered* from the content of the data” (Kenny and Fourie 2015, 1274) [emphasis mine]. The stress on “discovery” and “emergence”, along with the assumption of objectivity, has led many authors to characterise grounded theory as naive and marred by an implicit positivist epistemology. From a constructivist perspective, “the viewer creates the data and ensuing analysis through interaction with the viewed” (Charmaz 2000, 523). Proponents of classic grounded theory, however, situate it “between extreme empiricism and complete relativism” by rejecting notions like falsification and accuracy in favour of relevance and fit (Suddaby 2006, 634).⁴ Indeed, any grounded theory is just one amongst other possible theories: “the aim is not to discover the theory, but a theory that aids understanding and action in the area under investigation” (Heath and Cowley 2004, 149).

Another contested aspect is the extent, impact or applicability of the theory resulting from emergence:

In actuality, the most common outcome from a GT study is greater conceptual clarity, or a conceptual framework, which is short of theory in the sense of a comprehensive system of ideas intended to fully explain and predict something. [...] In our view, claiming that application of the GT method always can, and must, result in theory is incorrect, misleading, and unnecessarily intimidating. [...] We contend that significant progress toward constructing categories, and spelling out links between them, with the view to achieving conceptual clarity, is a sufficient (if not necessarily the ideal) outcome for a GT study. (Timonen, Foley, and Conlon 2018, 4)

This disagreement may in fact be attributed to how the word “theory” is understood. For Glaser, “the theory is to explain some variation in a problem as it is processed, thus achieving some theoretical coverage. The goal is not to cover all possible theoretical possibilities nor explain all variation” (Glaser 1978, 122). For Timonen, Foley, and Conlon (2018, 4), the theory is a coherent group of suggested explanatory propositions which can be further refined and modified; it is neither proven findings nor “a fully elaborated theory that covers all aspects, stages,

⁴ See Section 2.2 in this chapter.

consequences, and likelihood of a process of phenomenon”. In other words: “The result of a grounded theory study is not the reporting of facts but the generation of probability statements about the relationships between concepts—a set of conceptual hypotheses developed from empirical data” (Glaser 1998, 3).

Despite presenting clear methodological instructions, Glaser’s ambivalence regarding the theoretical positioning of GT is still the root of many debates (Kenny and Fourie 2015, 1274). In my study, the theory of BALANCING BELONGING that emerged from the existing data is put forward as consisting of “*plausible* relationships proposed among *concepts and sets of concepts*” (Strauss and Corbin 1994, 278) [emphasis in the original]. In addition, the principles of emergence and discovery are not taken to be so much a claim of neutrality as they are a reminder that it is through participants that the focus of the theory is determined, and that the researcher must remain flexible and open-minded while dealing with the data in a rigorous and systematic manner.

2.1.2 All is data

GT offers a methodical approach to theory generation, but it is very flexible when it comes to data. GT is not bound to qualitative data, and it does not place any constraints on the type of data or the methods of collection. As Simmons (2009) explains, “everything relevant to the general topic is considered data that can be analyzed using the constant comparative method of analysis”. Since the intended outcome is abstraction rather than description, the researcher need not have uniform data but the ability to lift these data to a conceptual level (Glaser 2007). This goes beyond the acceptance of multiple sources to signify a particular stance that takes the common differences between what participants do and say as another form of data to consider rather than a threat to control for. Glaser (2007) explains this further:

For the GT researcher the issue is all is data, whether private or public, revealed or concealed, words or behavior. It all bears on generating concepts for the core variable or basic social process being studied. The talk is data, the behavior is data and the gap between them and its sources is data. [...] Distortions are just more variables to conceptualize and make a part of the analysis.

At the same time, data points that are often considered of relevance automatically in many qualitative studies, such as gender, ethnicity, or education need to emerge as significant variables through the analysis to earn their way into the theory: “GT is not the participant’s voice, it is the patterns of behavior that the voices of many indicate. These patterns fit, work and are relevant to the behavior the voices try to represent” (Glaser 2007).

The scholarly literature itself is also treated differently in GT. Rather than offering a framework of analysis to lead the approach to the data, the literature acts as additional data to integrate into the theory and further elaborate and modify it, or at least situate it after it has emerged (Glaser 1978, 31). For this reason, the GT researcher is advised to limit their reading of the literature on the substantive area early on in their study. This is directly linked to the final GT principle, which calls for avoiding preconceptions.

2.1.3 Avoid preconceptions

A basic premise of GT is that theory emerges from the data, not from existing theories that predetermine possible relationships between concepts (Glaser and Holton 2004). A GT study begins with a general area, instead of pre-established goals or research questions. The researcher needs to be prepared to put professional inclinations aside when it comes to the analysis in the interest of participants identifying their own concern. That is not to say that the outcomes cannot then be applied to the researcher’s field of interest, but rather that the researcher’s interests should not be used to drive the theory development process:

The specific topic is what the data indicates is relevant to participants, not the researcher. Once an explanatory theory emerges from the data, it will provide a theoretical foothold that individual scholars can explore within their own professional and personal interests. (Simmons 2009)⁵

⁵ In this study, what translation looks like in a multinational organisation is only of concern to the researcher, not the participants. However, that does not preclude the potential of the emergent theory of BALANCING BELONGING to inform and enrich a discussion on translation. Indeed, the fact that translation (and even language) is not an explicit concern for participants represents a key finding in the particular national context of Ireland, as further discussed in Chapter 6.

Nevertheless, avoiding preconceptions does not actually mean that the researcher should be seen as a blank slate. Researchers always bring with them their own previous knowledge, perspectives, and experiences, and all research is inevitably motivated by a particular issue, but Glaser insists on the corrective power of GT when carefully applied (Glaser 2002). Avoiding preconceptions means that the researcher must not focus solely on that which speaks directly to their pre-established questions. In Glaser and Holton's (2004, 12) words:

The mandate is to remain open to what is actually happening and not to start filtering data through pre-conceived hypotheses and biases, to listen and observe and thereby *discover* the main concern of the participants in the field and how they resolve this concern. The forcing, preconceived notions of an initial professional problem, or an extant theory and framework are suspended in the service of seeing what will emerge conceptually by constant comparative analysis [emphasis in the original].

Minimising preconceptions is also a call to the researcher to focus on the data before engaging with the literature, although deferring the literature goes against standard requirements to produce a literature review to justify the research questions (Timonen, Foley, and Conlon 2018, 4). Suddaby (2006, 634-635) clarifies this:

Grounded Theory is not an excuse to ignore the literature [...]. The real danger of prior knowledge in grounded theory is not that it will contaminate a researcher's perspective, but rather that it will force the researcher into testing hypotheses, either overtly or unconsciously, rather than directly observing.

For Glaser and Holton (2004, 12), the issue with extensive engagement with the literature prior to data collection is that "it runs the risk of clouding the researcher's ability to remain open to the emergence of a completely new core category that has not figured prominently in the research to date". In practical terms, an early literature search may result in the researcher concentrating on an area that may result in bearing little direct connection to the theory (Glaser and Holton 2004, 12). The literature must still be reviewed, but only when the theory is nearing completion, to be used as a source of secondary data, situate the work's contribution, and make connections with other fields (Glaser 1998, 77-79).

Engaging with literature in other areas during the process is nevertheless advisable to develop theoretical sensitivity, i.e., the researcher's capacity to generate concepts and identify relations between them (Glaser 1998, 68). From this perspective, Timonen, Foley, and Conlon (2018, 4) declare that "the key premise of GT is remaining open to the portrayals of the world as encountered and not forcing data into theoretical accounts: this can be done with awareness of existing theories. Indeed, we argue that this can be done more productively with such awareness".

When it comes to exploring data with or without relying on pre-existing concepts, both approaches have their advantages: the former can help test and expand existing knowledge, while the latter can encourage original theorising. But there are also limitations. On the one hand, researchers may "fail to see what is in front of their eyes because they have already decided where to look and for what to look. On the other hand, data-led approaches produce a vast range of concepts, with little or no consistency from one piece of work to another. [...] Put simply, one approach leads to similarity being overstressed, the other to difference being overstressed" (Randall, Harper, and Rouncefield 2007, 124). For Charmaz (2006, 166), "the trick is to use [the literature] without letting it stifle your creativity or strangle your theory". As discussed in the opening section of this chapter, the richness of the data took my study in unexpected directions which meant that the relevant secondary literature only became clearer as the analysis reached its conclusion, so the literature served as a support rather than a guide.

2.2 Evaluating GT

Research quality is typically measured against the criteria of validity (the extent to which the data can answer the research questions), replicability (the extent to which similar conclusions can be reached), and generalisability (the extent to which findings can be extrapolated) (Saldanha and O'Brien 2014). In qualitative research within the social sciences, concerns around validity and replicability are usually addressed by ensuring that the methods are transparent, and the analysis is robust, ideally combining a variety of data sources. Generalisability nevertheless remains a much-debated issue. Since the focus tends to be on in-depth exploration of a specific situated phenomenon

through naturally occurring data, the scope of the case(s) under investigation and the possibility of generalising results and observations to the larger population are considered limited (Meyer 2015, 178). This raises questions regarding the expectations from qualitative studies, particularly for postgraduate research:

For instance, are the postgraduate students to ‘contribute to’ theory with the cases they are examining? How should they go about doing so? What sort of approaches can they adopt in relation to arriving at generalizations? And, most importantly and frustratingly, how are they to generalize from ‘only’ one or two cases when it comes to writing up their much-dreaded conclusion chapters? (Susam-Sarajeva 2009, 44)

From a GT perspective, however, generalisability is seen in a different light given that the research goal is a theory that operates at a conceptual level and therefore is not linked exclusively to individual participants or a specific setting. The object of study is the concepts rather than the individuals:

Thus apples can be compared to oranges if the comparison is the kinds of vitamins found beneath and in the skin. Apparent non-comparability is often seen by people, unaccustomed to grounded theory, as a problem. [...] Actually apparent non-comparability is irrelevant, if the variable to be compared has value in each group. [...] We are not comparing populations, we are comparing ideational characteristics of groups that in turn delineate behavioural and attitudinal patterns. (Glaser 1978, 42-44)

The key is in explaining observable behaviour and the outcome is abstraction, not description: the question is not whether data is true or not, but what behaviours do the data indicate.⁶ As such, while no claims may be made outside the substantive area, the theory can still prove to have general implications or applications.

⁶ The notion that “all is data” (Glaser 1998) includes vague or properline responses, i.e., what participants feel they are supposed to say. For example, in their discussion of translation decisions, some participants provide what appear as conflicting post-rationalisations for their choices (e.g. “everybody speaks English” but “customers do not always understand”). However, these apparent contradictions can be conceptualised as indicators of a VALIDATION-seeking behaviour in response to perceived normative expectations of translation and language use. This and other examples from the theory interspersed throughout the current chapter are presented merely with the purpose of illustrating the GT process and will be further elaborated later on in my thesis. The reader is directed specifically to Chapter 5 for a full outline of the resulting grounded theory.

It should be noted at this point that the traditional notion of generalisability based on sampling method and sample size has not just been questioned by grounded theorists, but also by scholars in the social sciences more concerned with richness and depth of understanding than with “methodologically unattainable” generalisations (Risku, Rogl, and Milošević 2020, 44). In the context of case study research, Susam-Sarajeva (2009) outlines three alternative approaches to generalisability: (i) naturalistic generalisation and transferability, which focus on highlighting the case’s intrinsic value; (ii) analytic induction and logical inference, which prioritise the theoretically relevant characteristics of the case over typicality or representativeness; and (iii) the deriving of conventional generalisations through multiple case studies or aggregate studies.

Naturalistic generalisation highlights people’s innate capacity to generalise, which mirrors GT’s basis on our natural inclination to find patterns, while the notion of transferability and its valuing of difference are congruent with GT’s transcending nature and search for explanations that account for variations in behaviour. However, this kind of generalisability is achieved through thick descriptions and detailed contextual information, while GT concentrates on theoretical development through conceptual abstraction. The latter is more in line with the proponents of analytic induction (e.g. Mitchell 2000), for whom the main objective should be “generalizing *into theory*” rather than onto other settings (Susam-Sarajeva 2009, 49) [emphasis in the original]. The aim of “theoretical replication” (Yin 2009, 54) nevertheless assumes the comparison of empirical results to an existing theory, which is incompatible with GT’s emergent design. As a result, GT uses its own evaluation criteria. Instead of relying on the somewhat contested concepts of validity, replicability and generalisability, GT studies are evaluated against four specific criteria: fit, work, relevance and modifiability (Glaser and Strauss 1967, 237-250).

- Fit: The conceptual codes and categories that make up the theory must be derived from the data. “Data should not be forced or selected to fit pre-conceived or pre-existent [sic] categories or discarded in favor of keeping an extant theory intact” (Glaser 1978, 4). Existing categories from the literature may fit the data with concepts that are closely connected to the

incidents, but they cannot be borrowed in advance. They need to earn their way into the data through the process of constant comparison.

- **Work:** The theory must explain behaviour in a substantive area and its variations. Although it is just one theory among other possible theories, it “should be able to explain what happened, predict what will happen and interpret what is happening” (Glaser 1978, 4).
- **Relevance:** The theory deals with a concern or process grounded in the data. It must capture a main concern of participants and the core category that explains how this is processed.
- **Modifiability:** The theory can be altered and adapted as relevant data give rise to new categories. “Generation is an ever modifying process and nothing is sacred if the analyst is dedicated to giving priority attention to the data. [...] The theory can never be more correct than its ability to work the data —thus as the latter reveals itself in research the former must constantly be modified” (Glaser 1978, 5).

Glaser (1978, 4-5) summarises the expectations for a grounded theory as follows:

A grounded theory must fit the data from which it is generated, be able to explain ‘what is happening’ in the substantive area (i.e. the theory must work), represent the core problems and processes of the substantive area (i.e. be relevant), and be capable of adapting to ‘surprising or new variations’ within the substantive area (i.e. be modifiable).

A theory that fulfils these criteria becomes transcending, able to be taken beyond the substantive area under study for further exploration (Glaser 1978, 6).

2.3 Choosing GT

The necessary changes to the original research design presented in the opening section of this chapter did not preclude the study from remaining as an ethnographic case study or adopting a different method for investigating the data such as thematic

analysis. Indeed, there are a number of similarities between case studies, ethnography, thematic analysis, and GT, but there are also some key distinctions leading to different research outcomes and placing different demands on the researcher.

2.3.1 GT and case studies

Like GT, case studies are characterised by being exploratory, employing a variety of methods, and following bottom-up procedures (Hammersley and Gomm 2000, 2). Both GT and case studies, particularly outlier cases, “allow insights into social realities that are otherwise not accessible and yet unknown” (Meyer 2015, 178). However, a major concern of case study research is the social context in which the phenomenon is embedded, and key steps include the prior analysis of the field and the categorisation of the object of study (Meyer 2015, 179). In GT, the focus is on the abstract concepts that lie within the data rather than descriptive detail (Holton 2008). The particulars of the context are not necessarily relevant for the emergent theory unless they prove themselves to be; they are just another variable (Glaser and Holton 2004, 9), and the core category cannot be determined beforehand but must arise from the data.

2.3.2 GT and ethnography

Ethnography is the study of cultural groups to understand, describe, and interpret a way of life from the point of view of its participants (O’Leary 2017). Both ethnography and GT are inductive, iterative, and analytical, and share an interest in understanding patterns of behaviours that structure situations. They favour broad questions that allow the study to evolve as the research progresses instead of testing pre-existing hypotheses, and they are amenable to various data sources and methods for collection, although they tend to rely on field-based interviews and observations. As such, researchers involved in either of these methodologies face the challenges associated with accessing the research population in situ and must be aware of the danger of “homogenisation that can give minimal recognition to divergence” (O’Leary 2017). Ethnography deals with this through detailed description, while GT does so through constant comparison that aims at “raising the empirical level of the data to a conceptual level suitable for theory generation” (Glaser 1978, 59).

Ethnography goes beyond the textual and ideational to consider a more material and physical notion of context (Saldanha and O’Brien 2014, 205) to investigate a

social situation as “a stream of behaviour (activities) carried out by people (actors) in a particular location (place)” (Spradley 1980, 86) and describe the confluence between these elements. Core to ethnographic research is the engagement with the actors and the “descriptions of routine practices, processes, and roles that form part of the culture of the actors in a setting” (Asare 2015, 214-215). Therefore, the main outcome of ethnographic research are “thick descriptions”: what ethnography achieves “grows out of the delicacy of its distinctions rather than the sweep of its abstractions” (Geertz 1973, 25, in Gambier and van Doorslaer 2010). GT concentrates precisely on abstract conceptualisation over careful description instead.

2.3.3 GT and thematic analysis

Some similarities may also be seen between GT’s process of constant comparison and thematic analysis as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke 2006, 79) that allows researchers to summarise the salient features of qualitative data through the description of thematic repetition. While thematic analysis leaves space for the unexpected, GT can make it easier to capture what is there but goes unmentioned. New, unforeseen insights in thematic analysis may only be relevant in so far as they speak to the research questions, but conceptual categories in GT must fit and work together to offer a coherent and integrated explanation that can account for apparently contradictory behaviour.⁷ GT looks at behavioural patterns rather than themes, and presents concepts rather than keywords or descriptive summaries. More than anything, GT is a methodology, not just a method of analysis. GT is the research design, and therefore it imposes a particular way of thinking about and doing research from beginning to end, including specific guidelines for data collection and analysis, engagement with literature, and the writing process.

Given the lack of a shared language to approach the research object, the need for exploratory data that avoided an evaluative perspective while accounting for a

⁷ By way of illustration, and as shall be discussed in more detail in the coming chapters, participants make linguistic choices to both eliminate and create barriers. While these could be identified as two distinct themes in the data, the constant comparison of incidents shows these behaviours as manifestations of an overarching tendency towards regulating ACCESS. Admittedly, thematic analysis can provide richer insights than just themes as labels for brief summaries of the areas discussed in the data by ensuring that ideas are compared and related (Bazeley 2009). However, this process of integration is more clearly embedded in the GT methodology as its core outcome.

multitude of actors and practices, and the broader motivation to allow for an interdisciplinary response, GT offered an attractive alternative for my project:

The only rational decision is to choose either doing conceptualization or description. CGT [classic grounded theory] generates a substantive theory to be used to explain and abstractly account for a pattern of behavior. It is to be modified based on comparative data, not proven. [...] GT is not superior, just complementary to in-depth description. (Glaser 2014, 11-13)

GT is therefore just one of the many valid ways of looking at processes within data, with its own distinct outcome: “All research is ‘grounded’ in data, but few studies produce a ‘grounded theory’” (Grounded Theory Institute 2008). GT’s particular value is in “its ability to provide a conceptual overview of the phenomenon under study” (Glaser 2014, 13) and to empower the researcher to play with “the fine balance between procedural rigour and creativity” (Partington 2002, 136). This was ultimately also a deciding factor in my choice of methodology.

A researcher’s personal inclinations and worldview towards the scholarly endeavour, while often not discussed, cannot be underestimated not only when it comes to their research interests, but also their approach to research practice. The appeal of GT lies in its promise of autonomy and discovery, drawing in those with a natural affinity for abstraction, the search for patterns, and a high degree of tolerance for the unknown (Glaser 2014, 7). Glaser goes as far as describing the choice of GT for a dissertation as a “fateful life choice” (Glaser 2014, 4) and “a personal way of life” (Glaser 2014, 16): “So choosing CGT [classic grounded theory] becomes a matter of fit. The researcher reads about the CGT method and recognizes a fit with his/her way of thinking about how to work scientifically” (Glaser 2014, 5).

GT provided a different outcome that matched the overarching research aims, the type of data available, and my own natural predisposition towards research as a discovery process. This choice was not without significant consequences, and the chapter will delve into the challenges arising from the implementation of GT in its final section. Next, the steps for data collection and analysis will be described.

3. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

“From the ground floor of raw data to the penthouse of conceptualisation”
(Gummesson 2002)

This section reports on the final research design. It starts with a description of the data collection procedures and the instruments employed, followed by an account of how the GT methodology was implemented in the data analysis, and a discussion of key ethical implications. The research process is presented as sequential although the GT journey is far from linear. While systematic, the stages were overlapping and iterative, with periods of quick progress in between long hiatuses.

3.1 Data collection

Given the study’s overarching interest in NPIT within multilingual workplaces and going by the data on language skills needs from national reports and bulletins, the decision was made early on to contact three large, foreign-owned multinationals with IT support and services centres in Cork, the second largest city in Ireland. After receiving a positive response from a cloud computing and data storage business, permission to carry out the research at the premises was secured in writing and non-disclosure, data protection, and confidentiality agreements were signed by all parties.

To host the research, the company identified an administrative unit in charge of scheduling upgrades for the data storage devices of their institutional and corporate clients in Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA). A direct employer of multilingual staff acting as points of contact between international customers and remote engineers or project managers in the local markets, the unit was seen as representative of the general area of interest for the investigation. At the time of data collection, which took place over a three-week period in December 2017, the unit comprised fifty-six employees and four managers, divided into five regional teams working with eighteen different languages.⁸

⁸ See Appendix A.

The first day in the field served as a scoping exercise. Completion of the necessary authorisation procedures and health and safety requirements was followed by a tour of the office and a brief introduction to staff members, which had previously been briefed about the research stay. The research plan was refined in a subsequent meeting with the unit's management, and a schedule was then designed to allow for the shadowing of at least two employees in each of the five teams and therefore cover as many languages and markets as possible within the organisational constraints. In the end, there were a total of twenty participants, including three managers (MNs), three shift leads (SLs), and fourteen team members (TMs) of varied ages, gender, nationality, educational background, work experience, and length in the role. The managers were Irish nationals and first language (L1) users of English. All other participants bar two were L1 users of languages other than English. In four cases, the language associated to their role was not their L1.⁹ After the changes to the initial design discussed in the opening section of this chapter, data was gathered from three sources: observations, interviews, and textual materials.

3.1.1 Observations

Observation is a key method in grounded theory research because it provides direct access to participants and their behaviour in their habitual environment: "Participant observation yields insights that cannot be easily obtained solely through interviews and maximizes a researcher's chances of making valid statements" (Bernard 2006, 356). Observational data was gathered from a combination of naturalistic observation and contextual inquiry throughout the period of fieldwork. The unstructured character of naturalistic observation allowed for the flexible identification of categories of behaviour in a relatively unobtrusive manner across the unit, offering insights into the actions and interactions of participants during the working day and highlighting practices that may otherwise have gone unnoticed or remained implicit in work processes and group dynamics. Contextual inquiry, in turn, provided an opportunity to observe participants while engaging in their tasks and asking about their actions (Saldanha and O'Brien 2014, 145-146). Under the GT dictum that "all is data",¹⁰ while not every detail made its way into the theory, team composition, practical processes,

⁹ See Appendix B.

¹⁰ See Section 2.1 in this chapter.

technology use, group dynamics, internal and external interactions and correspondence, general atmosphere, pace of work, schedules, and even the physical environment were all aspects to note initially for their potential relevance.

3.1.2 Interviews

While there were periods of shadowing where contextual inquiry was used as participants carried out their work tasks, many of these instances developed into conversational interviews. The interview schedules prepared beforehand were abandoned before data collection started in favour of an unstructured approach that was more in line with the GT methodology and enabled participants to guide the conversation. Starting with general questions about their daily work and routines, as participants shared their opinions and experiences, probing and clarifying questions were used to explore and understand their comments. This open-ended interviewing style brought to light issues other than language and translation that mattered to participants but may have otherwise not arisen, such as internal relationships, cultural identity, customer expectations, organisational procedures, knowledge management, or recruitment, progression, and training practices.

Interviews lasted between 30 to 60 minutes and were conducted in breakaway rooms (in the case of MNs) or at staff's workstations in the open plan office occupied by the unit. Participants were required to provide permission in writing for the audio recording of the interviews. Eight out of the total twenty interviews were audio recorded using a basic voice recorder and later transcribed for ease of processing, while field notes were taken for the remainder either because of participants' explicit choice or as a result of the researcher's informed decision not to break rapport by introducing a more intrusive data collection method.

3.1.3 Textual materials

Text is a key form of communication for institutions and therefore "their corporate identity and the degree of positive identification by the citizens largely depend on how successful the written documents are in creating the desired effects" (Koskinen 2008, 50). This is not only relevant for national and supranational public organisations but may also influence private companies' efforts of differentiation and institutional identity building both externally and internally. Texts are both discursive and social

practices (Fairclough 1992, 4), so an analysis of their linguistic features and their process of production in context can contribute to the unveiling of the regulative, normative, and cultural cognitive systems of institutions, i.e., the explicit rules, social values, and symbolic frameworks which demonstrate shared definitions and taken-for-granted behaviours (Scott 1995, 35-40).

As interviews progressed, TMs were asked to share examples of the documents they referred to where possible. With MNs' agreement, copies of files that were not labelled confidential and did not contain identifiable customer information were collated. These included an email template used as a translation test for recruitment, as well as two further templates employed to notify customers of the steps needed to perform an upgrade on one of the company's products, along with their translations into French, German, and Spanish. During the course of the interviews, those responsible for the translations were also asked to comment on their approach to the texts. In addition, the recruitment text was pre-edited in English and lightly post-edited after being machine translated into French and German so that results could be shared with the corresponding SLs as a way of gaining a better understanding of their criteria when assessing a candidate's production. Job postings for vacancies in the unit were also consulted independently.

Text is unsurprisingly the main type of data used in translation studies, although interviews and observations are also popular in sociological approaches, particularly for the investigation of interpreter-mediated situations, process research, and more recently in workplace-based studies. Access to textual data was very limited in this study, which was arguably a decisive factor in defining the final research direction. The collection methods employed, however, produced rich and fecund data. And while the combination of sources led to data that was initially unwieldy, hard to manage, and not directly comparable, GT offered a method to make them conceptually so.

3.2 Data analysis

The analysis was broken down into several stages. Data was first coded line-by-line by asking the key questions outlined by Glaser (1978, 57) to guide the process and maintain the focus on conceptual patterns: (i) What is this data a study of?, (ii)

What category does this incident indicate?, and (iii) What is actually happening in the data? As part of this initial stage of open coding, indicators of behaviours were grouped and named with keywords that worked as syntheses of fragments of data (whether a phrase, a few sentences, or a paragraph). *In vivo* labels were originally applied. These are defined as “verbatim quotes from the participants’ words and are often used as the labels to capture the participant’s words as representative of a broader concept or process in the data” (Birks and Mills 2015, 6). The original labels were not definitive and while some were maintained because of their illustrative power, some evolved throughout the analysis as they were developed, modified, merged and reorganised to form higher-level categories.¹¹ Each incident was analysed to see the extent to which it supported the emergent concepts, with differences and similarities identified through constant comparison. Whenever new ideas arose during the coding process, they were documented in memos that served as a record of initial theorising.

Open coding was completed with the help of NVIVO, a popular computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) developed by QRS International. CAQDAS like NVIVO facilitates the managing, querying, retrieving, and visualising of the data, since the text from various data sources can be easily dragged into different nodes for categorisation. These nodes can then be searched, moved, modified, interconnected, as well as linked to memos and annotations at the click of a button. While NVIVO made the process of dealing with unstructured data considerably more manageable to begin with, it was soon found unsuitable for the later stages of analysis. Just like statistical analysis tools, CAQDAS offers multiple types of analysis, comparison matrices, charts and diagrams, and it is up to the researcher to select those which better match the research questions. However, these automatic features can prompt the researcher to interrogate the data in pre-established ways, setting expectations of the kind of data to focus on (e.g. keywords or demographic variables).

¹¹ GETTING THINGS DONE, the category that represents participants’ main concern of successfully resolving communication situations, is an example of an *in vivo* label established early on in the coding process. While the category grew conceptually to incorporate both a task-oriented and a goal-oriented dimension, a decision was made to keep the original name due to its explanatory potential. Other initial concepts such as ENABLING DEPENDENCY and INHIBITING DEPENDENCY, however, were subsumed in the wider conceptual category of CONTROL as the analysis advanced. This is elaborated further in Chapter 4, Section 1.3.

Two main risks became obvious. First, the software nudged me as researcher towards a tree structure where nodes were clustered hierarchically as files within folders, directing the way data was accessed and queried and creating the temptation to smooth out any fuzzy edges. Second, although the frequency counts associated to each node helped highlight salient incidents, it did not seem wise to rely on numerical measures as indicative of the weight of different categories. NVIVO expedited the coding and facilitated data management at the beginning, but the analysis was soon felt to be too mechanical, leading to over-coding and making it difficult to move from rearranging codes and connections to conceptualising.

Despite being more cumbersome and time consuming, data continued to be compared and categorised manually.¹² Incidents started to arise as interchangeable indicators of the emerging categories and did not yield additional properties, which signaled saturation and led to the identification of the main concern (GETTING THINGS DONE) and some of the categories that were meaningful in its resolution (e.g. CONTROL, TRUST, SELF-VALIDATION, AFFILIATION).¹³ Nevertheless, the core category was not fully defined at this stage, so coding continued selectively in order to refine it. As categories took more shape in the last stages of the research journey, the coding was done on existing codes rather than on the data and assumed the form of visual diagrams and mind maps. Theoretical codes and their associated memos were sorted by reviewing repetitions, ordering ideas, looking for conceptual connections and relations, developing the properties and dimensions of categories, and questioning, correcting, and verifying the fit, relevance, and work of each hypothesis. This generated new memos, increasingly less descriptive and more conceptual and condensed, until the process of theoretical coding, sorting and memoing led to an outline for the integration and articulation of the theory.

¹² This took several forms, from marginal annotations and coloured markers to sticky notes and cut-outs from copies of transcripts and field notes. Along with the traditional technologies of pen and paper, index cards and cork boards are also typical weapons of choice for grounded theorists. Rather than capricious neo-Luddism, their general stance against CAQDAS stems from trust on GT's generative power.

¹³ See Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of these categories and Chapter 5 for an overview of the theory emerging from the analysis.

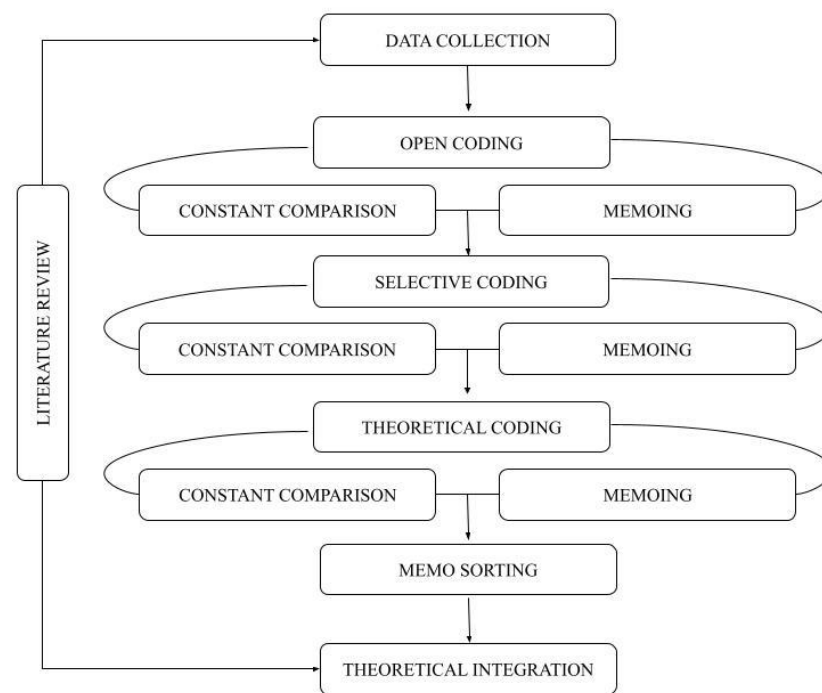


Figure 1. The grounded theory process

3.3 Ethical considerations

Workplace research requires and enables researchers “to explore a variety of factors that only become visible and accessible for research through coming into contact with practitioners and stepping into the field” (Risku, Rogl, and Milošević 2020, 50). Whatever their focus, their reliance on human participants means that these studies share a number of methodological challenges with relevant ethical implications which are not restricted to the data collection and dissemination stages but may also affect data analysis and research outcomes (Mellinger 2020, 26).

3.3.1 Gaining access

Data access is typically the main barrier to research in organisations. As Risku, Rogl, and Milošević point out (2020, 43):

To be able to implement such studies, researchers must first have the possibility to approach the respective workplaces and obtain permission to study them. Accordingly, the first hurdle is to find individuals,

organizations, companies and/or institutions who are willing to participate in workplace studies and who are also relevant to the actual research. Time and effort may well need to be put into communicating the research goals and gaining the trust of the target participants in order to gain access to authentic work situations [...]. Even when this has been achieved, there still might be parts of the work reality in an organization or a team that the researcher(s) can and will (not) be granted access to.

While potential challenges may be identified and planned for before the study starts, it is only as the researcher gains familiarity with the workplace in question that the feasibility of the data collection methods becomes clear and, even then, there is very little control that the researcher can have over the variability in the types and quantity of data available (Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey 2019, 362). In this case, not only were some data collection instruments abandoned prior to the fieldwork commencing, but further compromises needed to be made as the research stay progressed, since it was not possible to interview additional staff or observe certain forms of communication like internal meetings and training sessions.

Flexibility on the part of the researcher is key, but this raises questions regarding how traditional academic ethical approval processes can best account for and adjust to emergent research designs, which can take projects in new and unexpected directions:

The challenges lie in addressing the expectations of ethics committees to know all that the researcher intends to have happen during the study; managers are expected to know all that is going on in their organisation whereas the CGT [classic grounded theory] researcher is expected not to know what is going on until it emerges from empirical data collected during the course of the study. (Carey 2010, 24; cf. Potrata 2010)

Since this study was designed to be exploratory from the beginning, the proposal was developed to be transparent but ensure the starting point for the research was a broad area of interest rather than specific, hypothesis-testing questions. From the ethical point of view of protecting participants and allowing them to provide informed

consent, the methodological changes did not affect the overarching stated aims, the purposes of data collection, or the protocols for data processing.¹⁴

The issue of defining aims and objectives for ethical approval in exploratory and emergent studies extends to communicating research plans to potential industry partners, and this has also important repercussions for obtaining access to the field. Finding an appropriate organisation does not just hinge on the relevance of the context for the research, but also on the perceived relevance of the research for the firm. Language skills were the basis for recruitment for multiple vacancies in the companies contacted for the study, but limited engagement indicated that the potential returns from the insights offered by the study were not deemed to outweigh the resource investment required from hosting a researcher. If a company does not recognise the object of study as a need which requires attention, both physical access and data access once on site will be compromised. As shall be shown, the fact that languages were considered important but largely unproblematic within the unit under investigation not only impacted the research design but was a telltale symptom of underlying perceptions later confirmed by the data.

3.3.2 Minimising impact

Once access has been confirmed, a fundamental step in minimising the impact of the research and the researcher on the researched involves providing clear communication about the aims of the study, the role of the investigator, and the plans for dissemination. Before any interviews took place, research objectives and procedures were carefully explained orally and in writing. All participants were provided with information sheets detailing the purpose of the research and their involvement, guaranteeing the right to withdraw and have identifiable information deleted within a specific time frame.¹⁵ Special emphasis was placed on the voluntary nature of participation and on the non-evaluative character of the research to address potential fear of consequences. Participants were assured that their choice to either be

¹⁴ The project was granted preliminary ethical approval by the Social Research Ethics Committee at University College Cork in April 2017. Final approval was sought then in November 2017 after the inclusion of the signed agreements with the company but before the changes to the original research design were implemented as a result of the first meeting with management on site. The transition to the GT approach at that stage meant less rather than more intrusive collection methods, so the application did not require further reviews.

¹⁵ See Appendix C.

part of the study or not would not directly affect in any way their relationship with the organisation. They were also encouraged to communicate any queries arising throughout the data collection process and were given relevant contact details to do so before being asked to provide individual consent with their signature. All project data was then processed and stored in adherence to the written agreements with the company as well as UCC's Code of Research Conduct and Research Management Data Policy to ensure the adequate treatment of sensitive customer, employee, and business information.

Some researchers carry out multiple field visits during an initial familiarisation phase (Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey 2019, 360), but this is not always possible as it places an additional burden on all parties. Indeed, arrangements for workplace-based research may take several months but still allow for limited time in the field. Researchers must therefore be judicious with the use they make of that time: "The very real challenges associated with deploying various data collection methods [...] have to be carefully evaluated and balanced against the anticipated benefits" (Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey 2019, 360). In this study, building rapport, maintaining trust, and ensuring participants felt comfortable to share their views freely meant favouring unobtrusive methods that would not create significant disruptions to work routines at the expense of more directly comparable data.

Reducing interruptions to daily operations nevertheless does not resolve other ways in which the researcher's presence may impact on the context of study. The researcher's own personal characteristics may influence responses, and participants may consciously or unconsciously adjust their behaviour for acceptability reasons or in anticipation of the information the researcher is looking to obtain (Saldanha and O'Brien 2014, 29-31).¹⁶ The GT methodology aims to deal with these influences by pushing the researcher to remain open and identify incidents for what they are as part of the data. Since these factors can never be fully controlled for or filtered out, special awareness and self-reflexivity is necessary to avoid over-interpretation, to reach a

¹⁶ Incidents from the data reveal how participants can have their own expectations and assumptions regarding the overall practice of research, not just the particular study, as demonstrated by a participant's parting question ("You don't need me to fill in a questionnaire with my age and all that?") or another one's humorous warning to a colleague after reading the consent form ("Careful with what you sign!").

balance between engagement and critical distance, to limit bias deriving from personal expectations, experiences and motivations, and to account for potential power relations and cultural differences (Saldanha and O'Brien 2014, 45).

3.3.3 Maximising anonymity

When it comes to the dissemination of results, researchers must ensure that the data collection protocols respect confidentiality and consider the risks to which participants in workplace research are exposed (Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey 2019, 362). One of the greatest challenges in dealing ethically with the data came from the anonymisation of participants and their responses after collection. Given the relatively small size of the participant sample and context-dependency of the study, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed, and identification cannot be fully prevented under all circumstances. The first decision taken was to anonymise the research site, although the organisation did not request to have their name removed from the study.

Another way this was addressed was by restricting the general demographic data recorded where factors did not emerge as directly relevant categories in the analysis. Working languages, however, posed a particular challenge. To ensure more anonymity, references to the specific languages of each participant could have been obscured.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the analysis shows how participants' behaviour is informed by assumptions of language hierarchies and therefore knowledge of participants' main languages provides helpful contextual information for the reader as these patterns of behaviour are unfolded throughout the research reporting. As a result, participants have been anonymised using a combination of letters representing their role, followed by a reference number, and the two-letter ISO code that indicates the main language in their market (for example: MN1-EN is manager #1, an L1 user of English; SL2-DE is shift lead #2, covering the German market; TM3-PL is team member #3, who works with Polish). The choice of GT added to the anonymisation efforts, too. Since the focus is on behaviours rather than people, the methodology itself forces the researcher to impose conceptual rigour when dealing with personal narratives and representing the reality of others.

¹⁷ Making language choices is indeed a key mechanism in how participants deal with their main concern of taking communication situations to a satisfactory end, but choosing specific languages is not linked to concrete outcomes. All languages, including English, are seen to be used to achieve a variety of goals. What matters conceptually is that languages are employed in a strategic manner.

Faced with challenging decisions on the inclusion of potentially identifiable information, the researcher needs to be conscious of protecting both participants and industry partners, and to balance this against the need for transparency and research integrity. Extreme care has been exercised to limit possible links to particular individuals to the best of my ability while still providing necessary details that contextualise the investigation, justify the connection of the setting to the overall research objectives, and facilitate readers in their auditing of the work.

4. CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GT

“Just do it” (Glaser 2017)

Although GT is a popular methodology in a variety of fields such as sociology, psychology, nursing, and education, it has rarely been applied in translation studies. In an investigation of users’ experience of interpreting in healthcare, Clifford (2006) employed an emergent approach inspired by GT to extract and assemble “themes” that offered an explanation for the persistence of the conduit model in the perception of the role of interpreters.¹⁸ In turn, Désilets et al. (2008) used a GT approach to coding based on Strauss and Corbin (1998) with the purpose of identifying key themes in their data on translators’ needs for language technology research and development. The clearest example of classic grounded theory in translation studies is Rozanes’ (2014) doctoral thesis which presents a theory of COMFORT ZONING to explain how medical interpreters resolve their main concern of maintaining integrity and discusses how this theory may be applied to technology design in order to support their work. Since GT is not bound to any particular field, theories from other disciplines abound. However, having an example from translation studies was a valuable starting point to see how others may generate theory in this area.

¹⁸ The conduit model implies that “the role of the interpreter is to act as a simple conduit, transferring information from practitioner to patient and back again with the utmost fidelity” (Clifford 2006, 91). This has been widely discussed (and contested) in community interpreting as it was long considered the ideal and it still impregnates many codes of ethics.

As “a general methodology for the development of theory using any and all types of data” (Glaser and Strauss 1967, 18), GT was attractive as a solution to the limitations on data access and the potential benefits of conceptual analysis in an area still under-explored, which could allow for broader connections at the theoretical level. However, GT is a complex methodology that necessitates trust from both the researcher and their mentors, since some of its requirements (e.g. delay the literature review, ignore typical demographic data points unless they emerge as relevant, do not be concerned about generalisability, avoid detailed description as proof) appear to go against everything that a novice researcher learns early in their academic journey. Although there is obvious nuance to these statements,¹⁹ implementing GT comes with a number of challenges. In this section, four key hurdles encountered in my study will be discussed: (i) applying theoretical sampling, (ii) dealing with the unknown, (iii) pacing and reaching completion, and (iv) research reporting. They either have to do with the practical difficulties of adhering to the strictures of the method or with the demands of the method on the researcher’s own abilities.

4.1 Applying theoretical sampling

Although GT is overall inductive, deductive work is used in deriving the next steps of theory development from the initial codes (Glaser 1978, 37). This is known as theoretical sampling, which involves making decisions on “what data to collect next and where to find them” based on the ongoing analysis (Glaser 1978, 36). However, the realities of workplace-based research and the challenges of obtaining access²⁰ made convenience sampling unavoidable. It was not possible to conduct follow up interviews with management and HR representatives after the research stay or to collect data from other settings to further extend or modify the emerging theory.

Beyond the question of to whom else to talk, nevertheless, theoretical sampling can also be understood as making decisions about what to ask next. According to Timonen, Foley, and Conlon (2018, 8):

¹⁹ See Section 2 in this chapter.

²⁰ See Section 3.3.1 in this chapter.

In GT, it is important to distinguish between sampling procedures for additional participants or cases versus theoretical sampling for building analysis and developing new insights. [...] Essentially, in GT, theoretical sampling via whichever route(s) should always be directed toward expanding on and delineating categories, and ideally, integrating theory that fully explains relationships between central concepts. Theoretical sampling is not about merely extending the data set.

In this sense, although the population was limited to one fieldwork stay, theoretical sampling was used in the questioning approach by searching for clarification and further elaboration on the most salient points from one interview to another. However, since there was little time between interviews to start the coding process, this was admittedly more impressionistic than consciously conceptual at this stage.

Indeed, while it is advised to leave some time for analysis and memoing between interviews to facilitate theoretical sampling, this is not always realistic: “It might be necessary to proceed with fieldwork as the opportunity to gather data presents itself, regardless of whether this allows for plentiful time to engage in analysis” (Corbin and Holt 2011, in Timonen, Foley, and Conlon 2018, 5). As such, data analysis for the study only began after data collection, but field notes acted as initial memos to support the process. Further theoretical sampling during the later stages of analysis took the form of a review of the international business literature as secondary data to facilitate the establishment of conceptual links with existing research on multilingual multinational corporations. While no comparable data on Irish workplaces was found, once the core category and its relationship to positioning theory was clear, consulting the literature on this area also yielded some preliminary connections with various disciplines.²¹ Further links are not explored extensively due to the scope of the project but are suggested as a potential avenue for future research in the concluding chapter.

4.2 Dealing with the unknown

Two fundamental demands that the GT methodology makes of the researcher are “letting go of your own interests and preconceived ideas” and “developing the courage to let the participants define the research problem” (Montgomery n.d.). Since GT is

²¹ See Chapter 5.

“the study of a concept”, the core category to which all other concepts relate, the focus of the study is unknown until a significant amount of analysis is completed (Scott 2009). This has major implications for how the research develops (or not). With a defined question, the researcher’s task is to look for potential answers for those known unknowns. Entering the GT territory, however, meant navigating a land of unknown unknowns. Montgomery (n.d.) explains his own journey in a relatable manner:

As I rocketed away from all that was familiar, the different aspects of my interest had to be jettisoned off to leave the familiarity of the home planet and to venture towards the uncertainty of what planet GT may entail. As dramatic and as necessary as this stage of jettison was, it was not a case of forgetting all of my previous experience and interests but rather letting go of them as a core interest of the study.

Nevertheless, with no question to delve into the data other than “what is the main concern of participants and how do they resolve it?”, the project direction was shaken to its foundations. The determination to let the data speak was strong, but so was the sense of being overwhelmed by the prospect of facing—completely new areas of scholarship as a translator researcher. Consequently, this thesis became the result of a trip back home after a wild expedition or, in other words, a compromise that attempted to be true to both the original research motivations and the participants’ reality. The core interest of the overall study (i.e., the research project as a whole) continued to be the exploration of NPIT in multilingual business settings in Ireland, although the core interest of the empirical study (i.e., the data analysis) emerged as a theory of *BALANCING BELONGING*, in which translation is not central but features as one of multiple examples of the broader positioning mechanisms employed by participants.

Arriving at this understanding of the requirement to “let go” was not straight forward though. The similarities with other approaches which favour flexible designs and the existence of various conflicting strands of GT were also a continuous source of methodological uncertainty throughout the course of the research. The GT learning curve is steep, but the only way to flatten it is through experience (Montgomery n.d.). Glaser is categorical (1992, 21): “Getting started in grounded theory research and analysis is as much a part of the methodological process as are the ensuing phases of

the research”. Therefore, he urges the researcher to “just do it” (Glaser and Holton 2004, 12).

Trust in emergence requires a leap of faith as well as meticulous work, and doubt can easily seep into the most determined researcher when confronted with the storm of messy qualitative data. Not knowing what the study is about until data is conceptualised, it is easy to be overcome by confusion and tempted to retreat to the safe harbour of other qualitative methods (Glaser 2014, 5). Indeed, as was the case in this study, it is not uncommon for novices to start with other methods of qualitative analysis before fully committing to GT:

Some novices start doing QDA [qualitative data analysis] or descriptive versions of GT, yet try a bit of CGT [classic grounded theory]. Gradual understanding of CGT from trying conceptualization procedures reduces resistance to using CGT as mistakes and confusion diminish, then disappear, fear fades. [...] They make a firm decision to use CGT even if the learning curve takes a few years. The combination of rigor and creativity growing in doing CGT reduces the novice to a CGT advocate and true believer. (Glaser 2014, 15)

4.3 Pacing and reaching completion

A direct consequence of the challenge that was negotiating the GT requirements was a loss of control over the pace of the research. The coding process was lengthy and recursive. The initial round, completed by July 2018, was merely descriptive and yielded many different codes. A second round then between November 2018 and February 2019 focused on grouping the initial codes under wider thematic arches. Participants’ main concern, i.e., GETTING THINGS DONE or progressing in the resolution of communication situations, became apparent at this stage. However, trying to fully define it made it hard to stop working around the data and led to the first period of stagnation in the analysis. Coding resumed in the Summer of 2019, when the move from CAQDAS to manual coding and memoing helped lift the analysis to a more conceptual level. Issues like intersubjectivity, trust, control, and identity negotiation started to emerge as key categories, although the core category was still far from being completely shaped. Additional memoing and initial attempts at writing what had

emerged from the data up to that point continued throughout the year until the Autumn of 2020. This was the beginning of the second and longest period of stagnation.

According to Glaser (1978, 134), however, respites are often necessary:

Temporal distance from the data, helps maintain a conceptual level. Sometimes it is best to wait months, even a year in order to think about the data sufficiently to be able to write conceptually. Letting sorts or memos lie fallow always helps to mature the conceptualization of the data. The analyst simply forgets descriptive details from the field while his conceptual scope grows.

While very impractical under the constraints of doctoral research, the advice was unintentionally proven right. In the Summer of 2023, coding proceeded as fully theoretical. Away from the raw data, the focus was on sorting memos to contrast, refine, and connect the conceptual categories and produce the integrated theory. Thanks to the slow and methodical work that went before, this was suddenly a quick, productive, and surprisingly energising process that fuelled the final writing to completion.²² Although hard to embrace, patience is an essential trait of the grounded theorist:

Significant theoretical realizations come with growth and maturity in the data, and much of this is outside the analyst's awareness until preconscious processing becomes conscious. Thus the analyst must pace himself, exercise patience and accept nothing until something happens, as it surely does. Surviving the apparent confusion is important. This requires that the analyst takes whatever amount of quality time that is required to do the discovery process and that he/she learns to take this time in a manner consistent with his/her own temporal nature as an analyst —personal pacing. Rushing or forcing the process will shut down the analyst's creativity and conceptual abilities, exhausting the energy and leaving the researcher empty and the theory thin and incomplete. (Glaser and Holton 2004, 17)

Glaser writes vividly about finding a personal recipe for pacing the discovery process and necessary creativity, as well as the common obstacles to achieving this:

²² While Glaser himself admits that generating GT takes time (2007), the time frames from this study should not be taken as indicative of any prescriptive or recommended timeline, as the development of this project was affected by a variety of personal and professional factors. Nevertheless, the challenge grappling with the GT methodology certainly played a significant role in delaying completion.

The best way for the analyst to frustrate or to abort his creativity is to start criticizing himself for what he is accomplishing. Analysts may do this in several ways. One is to say the whole research is ‘lousy’, just plain not worth it. Another is to convince oneself that every idea he generates already exists—nothing is new. The analyst can adumbrate himself to a halt. [...] Yet another form of debilitating self-critique is to feel that one cannot write the ‘immaculate conception’ desired in the first draft material in order to let somebody else see the work. (Glaser 1978, 22)

Realising that creativity is cyclical and feeds on itself allows the researcher to move through the stages of the research process at a suitable pace through blocks and fatigue to moments of revelation and flow (Glaser 1978, 22-24).

The writing process itself is inextricably linked to the theory generation process. Slow and lacking direction at first, it became much more prolific and gratifying as the theory took shape. Writing was both a way in and out. It was a way into the theory, which evolved with the act of writing since it necessitated the making of definitions and connections clear and explicit. But it was also a way out of the theory, forcing me as the researcher to settle and find closure:

The analyst, who feels that he cannot finish writing because he can never begin to tell what he knows, should just accept this fact and finish as sorted and planned. He can never outstrip his own constant growing, no matter how much he writes. His writing will always spawn growth and yield more to say. [...] He must accept that although he knows more and better, his reader, knowing less, can greatly benefit by whatever the analyst does write. It will be ‘news’ to the reader, even if ‘old hat’ to the analyst. Others will respond to the richness of the dense grounded theory, while the analyst may feel he had only begun. (Glaser 1978, 140-141)

Glaser assuages the concerns of any researchers “still blocked by the ‘puniness’ of writing compared to what they really ‘could tell’” (Glaser 1978, 142) by putting perspective into the intended outcome: “The point is to publish this ‘slice’ of a growing theory so others can get to this point and also use it and grow with the theory” (Glaser 1978, 142). What is more, “though the analyst perhaps could do more if he had more resources, his theory does explain sufficiently with concepts that fit, work, have relevance and are saturated” (Glaser 1978, 125).

4.4 Research reporting

The methodological approach not only influenced the writing process, but also the final product. The results chapters were first roughly sketched as part of the memoing that accompanied the earlier stages of analysis. When the theory was finally outlined, the writing of the final draft commenced with the introduction and methodology sections as a way to settle on a frame for the rest of the thesis. This was followed by the presentation of findings, as the theory took its final shape, and the discussion and concluding chapters. Although supported by preliminary work undertaken before the adoption of GT, the reviews of the literature were written last to optimise coherence: “The data and theories in the literature may have little bearing upon the ‘case’ under investigation. The researcher needs to know what others have done (and their explanation) but cannot be sure they’re relevant” (Gillham 2000, 6).

The order of writing reflects the chronological development of the study. The order of presentation reflects genre conventions of doctoral work. This, it is hoped, should go some way towards explaining the inclusion of an initial theoretical framework, which may appear contradictory to the GT method where the advanced establishment of a theoretical perspective is seen to encourage preconception and force on the research the professional concerns of the researcher (Holton 2008). The theoretical framework presented in Chapter 1 does not guide the analysis, it helps articulate the conceptual motivation for the study and frames the discussion that arises later on from the data. In this sense, the data is a study of *BALANCING BELONGING*, but the thesis is a study of NPIT. The literature is therefore woven throughout the work. It first serves to situate the study within translation studies and the Irish context, and then appears as a means to articulate the overall approach. Finally, it is brought out in connection to the emergent theory, even if these relationships are not pursued in depth in favour of returning to the original issues of language management, policy, and NPIT.

Not fully in keeping with GT either is the use of participant stories, descriptions of accounts, and extracts from the data. Glaser (1978, 134) warns: “The credibility of the theory should be won by its integration, relevance and workability, not by illustration used as if it were proof. [...] Illustrations are only to establish imagery and

understanding as vividly as possible when needed”. Nevertheless, he admits the following:

Some analysts do provide such descriptions of persons and places not as part of the analysis, but merely to orient the reader regarding where and to whom the process may occur. The caution is that the process can occur elsewhere too for different persons, unless one attribute can be shown as a part of the process. (Glaser 1978, 60)

The reason for including more examples and data fragments in my thesis than would typically be expected in a GT study was twofold: to facilitate the reader who may not be familiar with GT, and to offer an account that is more reflective of the evolution of the research process. The thesis did not start as a GT study, and therefore it is perhaps better understood from this perspective. Rather than presenting an abstract theory upfront followed by a breakdown of the integrating categories, a decision was made to go from the descriptive to the conceptual to offer the reader a clearer picture of the setting and show how incidents in the data indicated the different concepts.

A conscious effort has been made to treat the data with rigour by following a systematic process of analysis based on the GT philosophy, but also to present this process in a coherent manner and offer transparency about its challenges and limitations so as to allow others to scrutinise the work. The research aims in this way to extend from an exploration of NPIT in a multilingual support team to an exercise in the application of GT to translation studies, so that further research within the discipline can consider its potential to provide new perspectives to existing scholarly work and to offer avenues for the investigation of lesser-known phenomena through an interdisciplinary approach.

SUMMARY

This study follows a grounded theory (GT) approach to the exploration of non-professional translation and interpreting (NPIT) in an Irish business setting. GT involves identifying and conceptualising patterns of behaviour in a systematic manner through an inductive process of constant comparison of incidents from empirical data to generate an integrated theory which offers an explanation about a main concern of the population in the substantive area and how this is resolved or processed, and which can be later expanded and modified. After having started as an ethnographic case study, GT was found to help address a number of obstacles:

1. Limited data sources: GT can be applied to any form of data, which suited the variability arising from the combination of field notes from observations, interview transcripts, and textual materials.
2. Limited prior knowledge: Given the dearth of previous research and the lack of shared language around the area of study, GT's emergent design allowed for new insights into an under-researched area.
3. Limited interdisciplinary attention: As a general methodology with a conceptual analytical strategy, GT facilitated drawing connections to multiple fields.

Beyond describing and justifying the methodological choices of the study, this chapter has attempted to provide an honest account of the practical, ethical, and theoretical challenges encountered along the way. While the study may not adhere to the GT precepts in all respects, it still tried to stay true to its key tenets while navigating the complexities of qualitative data collection and analysis, and balancing a duty of care to participants, readers, and the process of research.

CHAPTER 3: TRANSLATION AND COMMUNICATION

“You know, it’s not just like for like, it’s context a lot of the time too” (MN3-EN)

Investigating NPIT in a multilingual firm meant grappling with the lack of a shared concept of translation and the paradox of studying translation in a context where little of it is perceived to be happening. The aim of this chapter is therefore to examine translation, whether explicit or unrecognised, as part of the communication practices that make up the daily work of staff at the business unit under investigation. First, the chapter introduces the reader to the fieldwork setting and the particularities of the job. It then presents an overview of the variety of multilingual communication phenomena encountered and offers a typology based on the products, audiences, and processes involved, including language learning as well as translation in its various forms. Finally, the chapter focuses on instances of interlingual translation, reviewing and expanding on preliminary findings from Muñoz Gómez (2020). After a detailed analysis of a range of translated texts, the closing section considers the main translation challenges and solutions encountered and discusses the key emergent conceptualisations of translation according to perceived normative criteria and goal-oriented communication behaviours.

1. WORKING IN AN IT B2B CUSTOMER SERVICE UNIT

“Do you want to be a hero to customers?” (Job advertisement)

The substantive population in this study is the staff within a customer service unit at a subsidiary of a large multinational corporation in the information technology (IT) sector with offices in Ireland. The company, which is headquartered in the United States, provides data storage and management hardware and software, operates in at least 70 countries around the world, and has over 130,000 employees. In Ireland, it sits in the top 10 of companies by turnover according to The Irish Times Top 1000, with 5 locations employing around 5,000 people in total and roughly half of them located in its Cork campus, where the fieldwork was conducted.¹

¹ As of March 2023.

The unit under investigation is in charge of providing administrative support to business customers who have the company's servers and data storage solutions deployed at their premises. Staff operate during standard business hours to make sure customers' accounts and devices are adequately maintained, and their key responsibility is to schedule installations and software updates. After a firm purchases one of the company's products, team members (TMs) work with field project managers and technicians to arrange a date for its implementation onsite. Some customers may then ask for routine code upgrades for the products directly by initiating a service request, but when a functionally critical upgrade is released, all customers must be contacted. To close each case, TMs must first arrange a technical consultation followed by an upgrade operation, both of which are typically conducted by remote engineers across the world. Depending on their service contract, some customers can request a field engineer to be dispatched. Shift leads (SLs) share TMs' role as account representatives while also acting as contact points between the teams and their managers (MNs) and participating in recruitment processes. The main duties of MNs are staffing, making sure workload business targets are reached, and helping staff deal with escalations and resolve customer issues.

The TM position is an entry level, non-technical, non-sales role. Staff are expected to develop knowledge of the products on the job and therefore do not need a technical background or any particular qualifications and work experience. Beyond language competence, which only appears explicitly on the title of job vacancies, the main requirements are soft skills like initiative, time management, and communication.² Given the nature of the posts, MNs acknowledge that many TMs would typically leave after two or three years on the job. Despite the expected high employee turnover, increased workload from new product offerings and the subsequent surge in account numbers across markets meant the unit expanded rapidly from 10 to 60 staff members in just four years.

² See Appendix D for a sample job description. Further discussion on the implications of the recruitment model can be found in Chapter 6.

One consequence of this quick growth and heightened demand is the variety and complexity of linguistic profiles in the unit. Although the majority of TMs match MN expectations of being native speakers of a local language (LL) hired to support the market of their first language (L1), some TMs cover markets in their second (L2) or even third language (L3).³ In these cases, the L1 can be the company language (e.g. SL1-FR and TM11-DA, who are L1 English speakers), an additional LL (e.g. TM9-ES, who deals with both the Spanish and Belgian markets), used only for internal socialisation (e.g. several Spanish TMs in the UK team), or not used at all at work (e.g. TM2-RU, TM8-DE, and TM10-HE, whose L1 is Lithuanian, Tagalog, and Latvian respectively).

A second key characteristic of the unit is the flexibility of work practices. Service policies only define the level of support that different tiers of customers are entitled to based on their contracts, so outside of following common basic procedural steps, teams (and individual TMs within them) have a high degree of freedom in their approach to work tasks, including how they organise their workload throughout the day and how they communicate with customers. This is in part a result of the rapid development of the unit, but can also be linked to managerial decisions in the face of the complexity just described,⁴ and the particularities of the job.

As part of a B2B unit, TMs' customers are not end consumers but business organisations, whether public institutions or private corporations. Within these, their final audience is typically made up of administrative staff and IT teams, which in some cases are outsourced. The unit's focus is on account management rather than technical support, so TMs do not have to constantly react to unexpected queries or complaints but reach out to the customer first by taking ownership of different cases as they arrive. They decide whether and when to communicate by phone or email, and they do not have to follow a fixed script or rigid call frame. In contrast with the workplace demands experienced by some TMs in other customer service roles, communication

³ The reader is directed to Appendix B again for a breakdown of participants by language. The term "local language" (LL) is borrowed from participants and used throughout this study to refer to any of the languages other than English covered in the unit.

⁴ More on managing diverse multilingual teams in Chapter 4, Sections 1.1 and 3.3, as well as Chapter 5, Section 2.4.

processes are therefore shaped by the fact that it is the TMs who are typically the initiators of direct engagement. In addition, quarterly goals are measured based on code upgrade completions. Since TMs do not carry out the upgrades but facilitate them, reaching their performance targets means working cross-linguistically and cross-culturally with multiple parties to clarify the process, negotiate the schedule, and arrange the operation:

You have this responsibility, and if you're accountable for your actions and your results, and get the results, it doesn't matter how you do it, you know? And this is the best way, really, especially when you're dealing with all different cultures. (TM4-AR)⁵

The job requires problem solving (SL3-FI) and balancing customer needs with resource availability (TM14-ES). How TMs get there is a factor of their perceptions of their role and their priorities for each interaction.

TMs may orient their responsibility more towards the customers or towards the company, highlighting different normative expectations for their work. Some TMs see the customer as the key to their objectives ("The customer comes first, so [the] customer has to be happy", TM2-RU). Nurturing the customer experience by going the extra mile is therefore essential:

Service is key. 'We have scheduled this, full stop' and not being able to provide any other help - that is not customer service, that is BS. [...] Some things are not my duty but come to me. [...] I always asked and went after the engineers. We are not meant to be technical, but we need to know what we are doing. (TM10-HE)

For others, however, the customer can become a hurdle ("You need to work around it by being clever in how you communicate. If you give loads of options, you will see they choose the one they shouldn't", TM12-NO). From this perspective, results are the drivers of behaviour:

⁵ All extracts from the data are reproduced exactly as they were transcribed or noted down to reflect the idiosyncrasies of participants' language use and offer a window into the particularities of internal communication in the unit amongst a majority of L2 English users. Only very minor corrections and additions have been introduced using square brackets where deemed necessary for clarity or readability.

This company expects goals and metrics. And how would I reach those goals and metrics? [...] I just want to know: ‘Ok, what do you want? What needs to be sorted?’ [...] Because you get one request and under that one request you could end up with ten different requests on one case number, which I prefer not to have. (TM8-DE)

Although distinct, both approaches involve strategic communication with one common aim. The staff’s main concern is GETTING THINGS DONE, i.e., resolving the diverse communication situations encountered in their daily work, not only to achieve concrete organisational objectives, but also to maintain their own personal goals. Variation in the resolution of this concern is manifested through purposeful language and translation choices, as shall be shown in the coming pages, starting with a breakdown of TMs’ workflow and the multiple tasks that comprise their job.

2. MULTILINGUAL COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

“The tasks are the same, but there is always something new” (TM10-HE)

Staff in the unit are in charge of facilitating software code upgrades by serving as intermediaries between customers and engineers. In practical terms, however, TMs’ work is not restricted to mediation between these two parties. Instead, it reflects a complex network of interactions which require negotiating audiences from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including field project managers (PMs) and technicians, as well as their own managers and colleagues, and internal staff in other departments, some based in Ireland such as sales and technical support, and others located as far afield as India, where the company has a separate administrative team.

Whether dealing with routine service requests or critical code upgrades, closing a case involves at a minimum the following steps: an initial email is sent requesting up-to-date customer information and explaining the scheduling process, the customer provides the necessary details, and the TM suggests a schedule for a technical consultation. When the customer agrees, an engineer is booked and, after the consultation takes place, arrangements are finalised for the upgrade to be carried out.

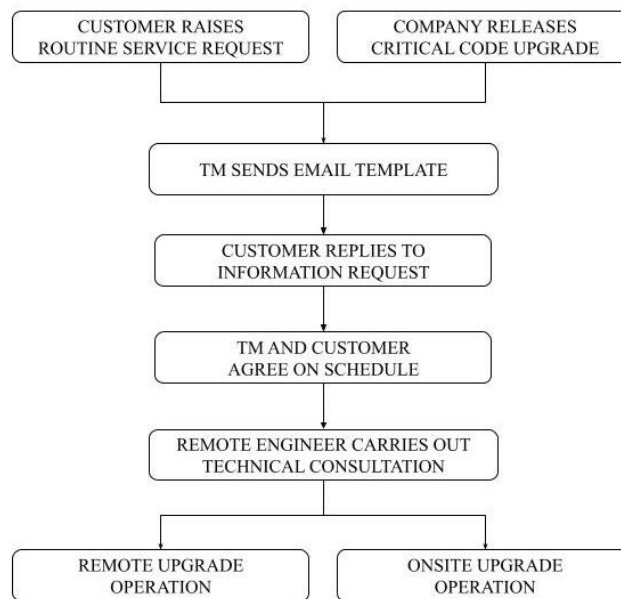


Figure 2. Basic TM workflow

At the other extreme, the sequence of events could be as follows:

1. After a few days without a response, the TM sends a follow-up message.
2. The customer provides only partial information, so the TM must request the missing details.
3. The customer has a number of queries which the TM is not able to resolve.
4. The TM talks to colleagues or contacts a local engineer before reverting to the customer with a response and a suggested schedule.
5. The customer asks to delay the consultation, but there are no remote engineers available for their preferred date.
6. The TM goes on leave, so a colleague needs to familiarise themselves with the case.
7. The new TM introduces themselves to the customer, who finally agrees on a schedule for the technical consultation.
8. A communication issue arises during the technical consultation and the TM is asked to join the online meeting to help resolve it.
9. After the consultation, the customer brings up new queries and the TM escalates the case to their MN, who needs to be made aware of what has occurred so far.

10. The TM phones the customer to clarify the remaining issues and follows the call up with an email confirming final arrangements for the upgrade.

Most cases fall in between these two scenarios. If their individual support contract allows for it, some customers will pay an additional fee and request a field engineer to attend onsite instead of carrying out a remote upgrade. This then entails a separate process of negotiation with the corresponding PM overseeing technicians in local markets and adds another layer of complexity to the transaction. The technicians themselves would be involved too, as travel dates and routes may need to be arranged to suit other site visits. Delays may also arise if correspondence is not reaching the right audience. In some instances, for example, the contact person within the customer's organisation is an administrative member of staff who needs to first process the request before identifying the appropriate case owner. Finally, both a lack or an excess of caution on the customer's part can impact the process, as some customers may consider the upgrade a low priority task while others may be concerned about service disruptions or data losses.

If a customer is unresponsive, TMs will attempt to contact again a maximum of three times before closing the case. This is most significant for critical upgrades. The company does not accept liability for issues arising from missed upgrades, so it is in the customers' best interest to engage with the process to ensure the proper functioning of their servers. Nevertheless, TMs also have an incentive to encourage customers to respond so that they can reach performance goals by scheduling the required activities within the set time frames. While all parties ultimately have a shared objective, they also want to accomplish it on their own best terms. Conflicting priorities may affect the complexity of the scheduling process, the number of exchanges and people involved, but so will customers' degree of risk aversion and TMs' ability to counter it through their communication choices.

Effective strategic communication is therefore at the heart of TMs' role as points of contact among diverse stakeholders. In their interactions, they adapt to multiple audiences, registers and channels, in one language or between languages. Table 1 presents a typology of the various practices associated with TMs' tasks, classified according to processes of language learning and translation. Following Pym (2008),

language learning is used here in a broad sense to refer to any alternatives to translation in the absence of a shared first language, which include adopting the language of the other party, using a lingua franca, developing a pidgin, code-switching or acquiring passive competence. Translation is distinguished between explicit translation and implicit translating or “unrecognised translation” (Harris 2010), which is not acknowledged as such. This should not be confused with the concepts of overt and covert translation (House 1977/1981). An overt translation reveals itself as a translation for the target culture, in contrast to a covert translation, which functions as an original text. Both, however, are recognised as translations within the source context. Explicit translations are similarly acknowledged as translations at the production stage (“source culture”), whether the readers (“target culture”) do the same (overt) or not (covert). Unrecognised translations, in turn, are typically seen as means of “linguistic transfer” other than translations (Komissarov 1996, 369). In this sense, while the notions of overt and covert translation focus on the *status of a translation*, the distinction between explicit and unrecognised translation has to do with its *status as a translation*.⁶

Table 1. Multilingual communication practices

MODE	OUTPUT	AUDIENCE	LANGUAGE	PROCESS
WRITTEN	Email correspondence	Customers	EN/LL	Lingua franca Unrecognised translation Passive competence
		Engineers	EN	Other’s language Lingua franca
		Field PMs/technicians	EN/LL	Lingua franca Unrecognised translation
	Instant messaging	TMs, SLs, MNs and internal staff (other units)	EN/LL	Other’s language Lingua franca Code-switching Unrecognised translation
	Case notes	TMs, SLs, MNs	EN	Other’s language Lingua franca Unrecognised translation

⁶ See Section 4 in this chapter for further discussion.

	Escalation notes	SLs, MNs	EN	Other's language Lingua franca Unrecognised translation
	Email templates	Customers	EN/LL	Explicit translation
ORAL	Face-to-face interactions	TMs, SLs, MNs	EN/LL	Other's language Lingua franca Passive competence Unrecognised translation
	Phone calls	Customers	LL	Unrecognised translation
	Video calls	Customers and engineers	EN/LL	Lingua franca Unrecognised translation

The main manifestation of language learning is the adoption of English, either as the other's language when the parties in the interaction are L1-English users (e.g. MNs, internal staff in Ireland or the US), or as a lingua franca with L1-LL users (e.g. customers and field staff, remote engineers across the world, other TMs). Nevertheless, English is not the only lingua franca (e.g. TM2-RU addressing TM10-HE in Russian), and there are alternative practices present such as the development of passive competence (e.g. TM1-CS and TM3-PL speaking Czech and Polish to each other respectively, or TM1-CS writing in Czech to Slovakian customers) and code-switching with other L1-LL TMs and internal staff ("I have some managers in the Middle East - they are Egyptian, so they kind of just text me and we always say 'salem', like, in Arabic, you know?", TM4-AR).

The translation of email templates for routine and critical upgrades is the main example recognised and discussed explicitly as translation but translating happens implicitly in many other instances. Practices of this kind observed in the unit can be further classified as ad hoc interpreting (Traverso 2012, 149-150) or derivation (Sager 1994, 105-113). Ad hoc interpreting may take place to manage understanding between a customer and a remote engineer conducting a technical consultation via a web conferencing system. In these cases, TMs may be invited to join the conversation and relay engineer's instructions or customer's queries to the other party. This kind of improvised interpreting does not happen often, but other repair interventions are not

uncommon, for example, when TMs mediate between customers and colleagues who may be helping with markets for which they do not have LL competence (“I am supporting Middle East as well, so I usually do it in English. But I have a few colleagues who are speaking Arabian, so they could help me to translate some things”, TM2-RU). Similarly, staff in other units may ask TMs to help resolve a customer issue through the LL (“When the customers ring themselves, it goes to Support Services. But if it’s a Danish call, I can take it”, TM11-DA; “A customer in Support was unhappy but it got sent to us because there were Russian speakers in the team”, TM10-HE).

More frequently, staff produce derived texts with various degrees of dependency to the source by employing methods of modification and transformation with a view to “making texts more effective for and in a particular communicative situation” (Sager 1994, 113). As part of their day-to-day work, TMs rely on gisting, summarising, amplifying, and rephrasing messages between two languages, either orally or in writing, for a variety of purposes. Case and escalation notes, for example, are always written in English as they need to be accessible to other TMs, SLs and MNs for visibility or advice on how to proceed with a customer, but they necessitate a summary of previous oral and written interactions in the LL (“I write a quick summary of what happened and what they said”, TM9-ES; “I just give them in a sentence what is important”, TM8-DE). Email correspondence with customers and field staff may take place first in one language, but then move to another language and back, depending on the parties involved, and this often entails relaying information from one language into the other. Even when only two L1-LL users are part of the interaction, as in a phone conversation between a TM and a customer, unrecognised translation takes place with TMs explaining and clarifying orally in the LL information first produced in written form in English. This is often followed by an email in English which serves as a record of the conversation and requires another gisting operation, this time from the oral LL message into written English.

In addition to these cases of interlingual translation, many of TMs’ tasks are examples of intralingual translation or “rewording” (Jakobson 1959). Whether in English or the LL, staff constantly produce “an interpretation of verbal signs by means

of other signs in the same language” (Jakobson 1959) when they seek or offer clarifications, pass on queries and relay information with different degrees of detail and formality based on their audience and the requirements of the medium. Chapter 4 will delve into the language choices made for these various tasks depending on the communication situation. Before that, Sections 3 and 4 in this chapter will focus on how interlingual translation is performed and understood.

3. EXPLICIT TRANSLATION PRACTICES

“Sometimes it’s fun. But it’s challenging sometimes too” (TM1-CS)

This section concentrates now on staff’s explicit translation tasks, i.e., activities openly defined as translation for which TMs have a clear and defined start text and an instruction to render it in their LL. The texts for translation are typically email templates sent either as a response to a customer’s request for a routine upgrade or to notify all customers of the need to perform a critical upgrade to one of the company’s products. This section will first offer an analysis of two templates and their translations into French, Spanish, and German provided by participants with MNs’ permission. Said overview of text samples and the general features of TMs’ translation output will be followed by a broader discussion of the challenges posed by the task of moving texts between two languages as well as the norms, values and beliefs shaping the variety of overarching decisions implemented.

3.1 Textual analysis

The email templates that TMs are asked to translate vary depending on the product that requires the upgrade, but they all share similar features as examples of formal business correspondence with domain and company specific terminology. The texts have three main purposes: (i) to introduce the TM as the customer’s primary contact for the code upgrade, (ii) to request up-to-date customer information and communication preferences, and (iii) to explain the scheduling process for the initial technical consultation and subsequent intervention. As such, they serve as operative texts and perform both a referential and an appellative function (Reiss 1977/1989),

with the ultimate objective of persuading the customer to provide the necessary details to arrange the activities.

Two English templates for the upgrade of a particular company product are used in this analysis. The first one (TEMPLATE 1) is for a routine upgrade sent to initiate the process after a customer raises a service request (SR). The second one (TEMPLATE 2) is an example of a message sent to customers via mail merge to notify them of the need to undertake a critical upgrade. Translations of TEMPLATE 1 for French, Spanish and German were provided by TM6-FR, TM9-ES and SL2-DE respectively. Translations into French (TM6-FR) and Spanish (TM9-ES) were gathered for TEMPLATE 2. Each English template, however, has multiple versions. The start text (ST) for the Spanish and French translations of TEMPLATE 1 is an older instance of the text, while the German translated text (TT) is based on an updated version showing company changes in the scheduling process. An alternative version was shared by TM6-FR with her own personal edits to the primary text. In the case of TEMPLATE 2, there is also an ST used for the Spanish and French translations, and an alternative edited version created individually by TM6-FR. A total of ten texts are therefore considered in the analysis, as outlined in Table 2.⁷

Table 2. ST and TTs for Template 1 and Template 2

TEMPLATE 1 (ROUTINE UPGRADE)			
Start text (ST)	ST producer	Translated text (TT)	TT producer
EN ST1 V1 (PRIMARY)	UNKNOWN	FR TT1	TM6-FR
		ES TT1	ES TEAM
EN ST1 V2 (EDITED)	TM6-FR	N/A	N/A
EN ST1 V3 (UPDATED)	UNKNOWN	DE TT1	SL2-DE

TEMPLATE 2 (CRITICAL UPGRADE)			
Start text (ST)	ST producer	Translated text (TT)	TT producer
EN ST2 V1 (PRIMARY)	UNKNOWN	FR TT2	TM6-FR
		ES TT2	ES TEAM
EN ST2 V2 (EDITED)	TM6-FR	N/A	N/A

⁷ See Appendix E for a side-by-side comparison of the STs and TTs for each template.

Tracking translation inputs and outputs is not straightforward. It is unclear which department within the company authors and updates the STs. Once they reach the unit, MNs distribute them to the teams, where inconsistencies in the ownership of translation processes and text production patterns muddle the journey of a single “original text” to the various markets or customers. As such, the samples discussed here should be understood as a snapshot of a particular moment in the texts’ lifecycle, which are likely to have originated from the reuse and updating of previous materials and could still go on to be edited and modified before reaching their final audience.⁸

According to MNs, translation is a collaborative activity (“So we never kind of give [the texts for translation] to one person. We give them to the group so that they can argue and agree what’s the right way”, MN3-EN). However, with no defined workflow or feedback chain, not all teams operate in the same manner, and the levels of collaboration and intervention from different individuals vary. In small language groups within teams that cover multiple languages (e.g. ES, AR, IT), TMs typically work together on the translations and share their templates. Where there is only one TM for a particular language, the translation work is naturally individual, although TMs may still seek help from field staff (“I go and I use the engineers. I just ask: ‘Look, you know, what do you think? Is this the right idea?’”, TM1-CS). In one-language teams, in turn, SLs take the responsibility for themselves (e.g. SL2-DE) or delegate the task to specific TMs while keeping oversight (e.g. SL1-FR). Whether one person is in charge or whether the translated texts are the result of a collaborative (or consultative) process, nevertheless, there is no guarantee that the final emails will be standardised, as some TMs will still make their own individual amendments and adaptations (e.g. TM6-FR).

⁸ The terms “start text” (ST) and “translated text” (TT) are therefore used here deliberately instead of the more conventional “source” and “target text” to highlight the continuous updates, chunking of content, and text reuse strategies that characterise many modern multilingual text production processes. In Pym’s (2013, 492) words: “Let us simply recognize that the space of translation no longer has two clear sides: the game is no longer played between source and target texts, but between a foreign-language text, a range of databases, and a translation to be used by someone in the future [...] I propose that the thing we have long been calling the ‘source text’ should no longer be called a ‘source’. It is a ‘start text’ (we can still use the initials ST) – an initial point of departure for a workflow, and one among several criteria of quantity for a process that may lead through many other inputs. As for ‘target text’, there was never any overriding reason for not simply calling it a ‘translation’ or a ‘translated text’ (TT), if you must, since the actual ‘target’ concept moved, long ago, downstream to the space of text use”.

The unit's characteristic flexibility across teams helps explain the existence of multiple STs and TTs for each template, but it is not the only determining factor. Beyond a general company-wide knowledge base, content and knowledge management to support the creation, maintenance, storage, and review of relevant materials in the unit happens at the individual level for personal use, rather than being shared and integrated ("Each person works how they think it's right. [...] We have so many tools and systems, information is not really centralised. There's no one tool where we can go and access information by department, for instance, to get the templates", TM9-ES). Without dedicated tools or procedures, TMs collect their translations and sample emails as well as any terminology, process notes or explanations gathered from colleagues and engineers in their own hard-drives, paper notebooks, or draft emails. As can be seen in the sample templates, the lack of version control means that TMs work with different instances of a text and updates are easily missed ("They've changed this again! Yeah, that's not in my translation [...] This was not in the other [ST], otherwise I would have translated it... Yeah, no, that's just been added. That's new. Ok, great, so I have to update my translation!", SL2-DE). The final emails are ultimately the result of these workflow inconsistencies as well as a combination of input from different agents and individual choices. Although the fundamental purpose of the translations remains prompting the customer to provide the required details, the way texts are produced leads to variations in how customers may engage with the scheduling process.

3.1.1 Start texts

As examples of customer correspondence, both English templates analysed follow a conventional three-part structure with an introduction that briefly describes the purpose of the email, a body that explains what the reader needs to know, and a conclusion stating the next steps. While able to fulfil their objective, however, the templates show a number of unidiomatic expressions, redundancies and uneconomical sentences, shifts in register, inconsistent use of company-specific terms, issues of coherence and cohesion, and some syntactic errors.⁹

⁹ See Appendix E, Table 1 and Table 4. Given the context of production, the texts are likely to be created by IT staff, including L2 English users. Nevertheless, the possibility of errors being introduced in the STs along the chain by TMs or staff other than the original authors cannot be dismissed.

The recognition of some of these issues serves as TM6-FR's motivation for the creation of their own templates: "The English emails are too long; they can be shortened and made more to the point, more concise and clear [...] If it takes more than two minutes to read an email, it is not a good email". TM6-FR's most notable amendments to the English STs include the removal or condensing of contextual details that warn customers about lead times or reassure them about the company's commitment to a smooth process. The edited versions also have some paragraphs reordered and use the first person singular subject pronoun instead of the alternation of plural and singular forms found in the primary English version of TEMPLATE 1 or the predominant plural form in TEMPLATE 2. As can be seen in the examples below, the resulting texts are more succinct and succeed in both increasing coherence and bringing the action items to the fore. The final message is therefore a more direct call for action, albeit at the expense of eliminating an option for the customer to carry out the upgrade independently instead of raising a service request via the TM.

EN ST1 V1 (PRIMARY)	EN ST1 V2 (EDITED)
Attached is our Upgrade Preparation Guide for your review. While your Upgrade Engineer will discuss this document with you upon the completion of the pre-checks, we recommend you review it ahead of time to determine what, if anything, within it is applicable to your environment, and what actions you may need to take as a result.	Please find attached our Upgrade Preparation Guide. While your Upgrade Engineer will discuss this document with you upon the completion of the pre-checks, we recommend you review it ahead of time.

EN ST2 V1 (PRIMARY)	EN ST2 V2 (EDITED)						
Our database indicates that you are not running the latest code for your [PRODUCT] with SN: <table><tr><th>Serial</th><th>Current code</th><th>Target code</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table> We would like to offer our assistance to bring the code to the target version.	Serial	Current code	Target code				I am contacting your company as our database shows that your [PRODUCT] with SN [NUMBER] is running an old version of the microcode. Hence [COMPANY] recommends that you upgrade it.
Serial	Current code	Target code					

As this box is covered by a Premium contract, this activity will be free of charge. We strongly suggest you upgrade to the latest code, as it contains all the latest bug fixes and offers the most stable operating environment. The activity can be completed remotely.	This can be done with our Remote Upgrade Engineer team, this service is included in your Premium support contract. I have included below information about the upgrade, and tables that you would need to fill in order to schedule this upgrade.
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3.1.2 Translated texts

EN > FR

TM6-FR's TTs appear to be based mostly on the primary STs rather than the edited versions, although the texts still show a number of similar interventions.¹⁰ As in the English edited STs, the opening and closing formulas in the French TTs are shortened, and some paragraphs are removed or abridged.

EN ST1 V1 (PRIMARY)	FR TT1
In order to expedite, please help us by completing or verifying the following information:	Je vous prie de bien vouloir remplir les tableaux ci-dessous avec les informations dont j'ai besoin pour planifier ces activités.
1. I retrieved certain system and contact details from the service request. Is the information below still accurate, or do any changes need to be made?	<i>Back-translation:</i> <i>Please fill the tables below with the information I need to plan these activities.</i>

The translation of TEMPLATE 1 shows preference for the first personal singular subject pronoun again, although for TEMPLATE 2 it follows the primary ST by using predominantly the plural form, albeit with some inconsistencies.

A key difference between the English texts and the translations are forms of address. In the French TTs, the customer is addressed by surname ("Bonjour Monsieur [CUSTOMER]"), while the primary ST uses the conventional English "Dear [CUSTOMER]" and the edited text takes a more informal approach with a simple "Hello". Formatting is also used to highlight attachments or instructions, and additional cohesion mechanisms are introduced through internal references and clarifications.

¹⁰ See Appendix E, Tables 2 and 4.

EN ST1 V1 (PRIMARY)	FR TT1
Ideally, the pre-check will be followed by a phone conversation between you and our Upgrade Engineer to review: 1. The upgrade plan 2. The attached preparation guide 3. The results of your pre-check	La consultation technique sera suivie d'un email ou d'une conversation téléphonique (selon vos préférences) avec notre Upgrade Engineer afin de revoir: 1. le document ci-joint, 2. le plan d'action concernant la mise à jour, 3. les résultats de la consultation technique (du précontrôle). <i>Back-translation:</i> <i>The technical consultation will be followed by an email or a telephone call (according to your preferences) with our Upgrade Engineer in order to review: (1) the attached document, (2) the action plan for the update, (3) the results of the technical consultation (the pre-check).</i>
EN ST2 V1 (PRIMARY)	FR TT2
If you wish to proceed, just follow the link(s): [LINK]	Si vous souhaitez planifier cette mise à jour, merci de bien vouloir ouvrir une SR en cliquant sur le lien suivant : [LINK] <i>Back-translation:</i> <i>If you wish to schedule this update, please open an SR by clicking on the following link.</i>

The texts are fully translated with minor exceptions, namely any references to “service requests” (SR), attachments, and the settings and options that customers must select on the company’s online system to initiate the process, which will only be available to the customer in English. The terms “back up” and “Remote Upgrade Engineer” also appear in English, although they are explained beforehand in French (solution de sauvegarde, l’ingénieur à distance). These choices signal the overall environment surrounding the interaction, which is dominated by English. Indeed, both French TTs include an additional note to explicitly advise the customer that all checks and upgrades will take place in English and that the provision of a French-speaking

engineer cannot be guaranteed. While sending the emails in the LL may facilitate reaching some customers, it may also create expectations of LL provision that cannot be met and therefore need to be addressed by preparing the customer for further communications.

EN > DE

TM6-FR's direct interventions contrast with SL2-DE's more conservative approach.¹¹ The German TT does not show any major changes at text level and sticks quite closely to the ST, with the only exception being a short paragraph missing due to an overlooked update. Outside of conventional forms of address and idiomatic opening and closing expressions, the most salient departures from the direct translation of the ST are the splitting of longer sentences and modulations or changes in perspective linked to preferred structures in each language.

EN ST1 V3 (UPDATED)	DE TT1
In order to begin, there are a few important items to address.	Vor Planungsbeginn, [sic] gibt es einige wichtige Dinge zu erwähnen. <i>Back-translation:</i> <i>Before planning begins, there are some important things to mention.</i>
Review the attached Preparation Guide, which provides direction to identify and mitigate potential issues that could cause data unavailability during your Upgrade.	Im Anhang finden Sie den Preparation Guide zur Ansicht. Dieser bietet Hinweise um potentielle Probleme, die zu Datenunverfügbarkeit während [sic] des Upgrades führen könnten, zu erkennen und zu lindern. <i>Back-translation:</i> <i>Attached you will find the Preparation Guide for review. This provides guidance to identify and mitigate potential issues that could lead to data unavailability during the upgrade.</i>

Nevertheless, the ST influence leads to redundancies and register inconsistencies being reproduced in the translation. In addition, there are some minor issues related to

¹¹ See Appendix E, Table 3.

capitalisation (“Wir tun unser [B]estes”), punctuation (“Um zu [l]ernen[,] wie man Logs zieht”), lexical interference (use of “sehen” [*to see*] instead of “ansehen” [*to look at*]), spelling (“Vor Planungsbeginn[n]”) and typographical errors (“Bitte füllen Sie unten stehende Informationen aus [und] bestätigen Sie die System und Kontakinformationen”).

When it comes to the use of English, SL2-DE does not include a language warning, but the table that customers are asked to fill in with their system information and upgrade preferences is left untranslated. Links, attachments, and terms which are deemed technical or company-specific (e.g. technical consultation, knowledge base article, health check) are also borrowed from English without a German-language equivalent being provided but for one case (Upgrade Lead Times (Vorplanungszeit)). As SL2-DE explains:

I would not translate ‘Preparation Guide’ because the attachment is called ‘Preparation Guide’. [...] Otherwise, I would have to say ‘please, look at the attached document named Preparation Guide, which is your Vorbereitungshandbuch’ or something, you know? I would have to make up a German name for it. But because the attachment is actually called like that, I am naming it like that [...] I could have completely translated it, but then there would be a risk of them going in, not finding the German word, and just not knowing ‘where do I have to look?’ So, yeah.

In this way, the TT remains strongly anchored in the English-speaking context of production. Although in a more implicit way than in the French TTs, customers are still purposely prepared for and instructed into the company language.

EN > ES

The Spanish team adopts two very distinct strategies for their TTs.¹² In the case of TEMPLATE 1, the TT opens with an introductory paragraph in Spanish which explains the purpose of the email and moves on to inform the customer of the fact that further communication will be in English (“Ya que la comunicación con los ingenieros será en inglés, continúo en inglés” [*Since communication with the engineers will be in English, I will continue in English*]). The rest of the text remains in English, although

¹² See Appendix E, Tables 2 and 4.

with some minor divergences from the primary ST which may have resulted from previous versions. For TEMPLATE 2, the TT is a full translation into Spanish with various degrees of intervention. One of the key modifications is a reordering of ideas that improves the logical flow of the text.

EN ST2 V1 (PRIMARY)	ES TT2												
Our database indicates that you are not running the latest code for your [PRODUCT] with SN: <table><tr><th>Serial</th><th>Current code</th><th>Target code</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table> We would like to offer our assistance to bring the code to the target version.	Serial	Current code	Target code				Nuestra base de datos indica que su [PRODUCT] no está en la última versión de código disponible: <table><tr><th>Número de serie</th><th>Su código actual</th><th>última versión de código disponible</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table> <i>Back-translation:</i> <i>Our database indicates that your [PRODUCT] is not on the latest available code version: Serial number / Your current code / latest code version available.</i>	Número de serie	Su código actual	última versión de código disponible			
Serial	Current code	Target code											
Número de serie	Su código actual	última versión de código disponible											
As this box is covered by a Premium contract, this activity will be free of charge. We strongly suggest you upgrade to the latest code, as it contains all the latest bug fixes and offers the most stable operating environment. The activity can be completed remotely.	Por ello le sugerimos que lleve a cabo una actualización de código ya que contiene corrección de errores detectados en códigos anteriores y optimización del funcionamiento de la máquina por lo que ofrece una mayor estabilidad en su entorno operativo. La actividad se puede completar de forma remota y es totalmente gratuita al estar incluida en su contrato de mantenimiento Premium. <i>Back-translation:</i> <i>Therefore, we suggest that you carry out a code upgrade as it contains the fixing of bugs detected in prior codes and the optimisation of the machine's functioning, so it offers greater stability in your operating environment.</i>												

	<i>The activity can be completed remotely, and it is completely free of charge as it is included in your Premium maintenance contract.</i>
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However, this example reflects some of the errors found throughout the translation. In addition to missing punctuation, typographical mistakes (capitalisation, unnecessary spacing), and inconsistencies in register and the use of formal and informal forms of address, the TT is heavily influenced by English and reproduces some of its lexical and grammatical structures. The results range from interferences (“en la derecha” instead of “a la derecha” [*on the right*]) and unidiomatic expressions like the excessive nominalisation in the example above (“corrección de errores” [*the fixing of bugs*], “optimización del funcionamiento de la máquina” [*the optimisation of the machine’s functioning*]), to unnecessary calques (“submitir” instead of “enviar” [*to send, to submit*]). The misunderstanding of adjective phrases also leads to several mistranslations.

EN ST2 V1 (PRIMARY)	ES TT2
[COMPANY] takes product quality and data availability very seriously.	[COMPANY] toma [sic] muy en serio la calidad del producto y la disponibilidad de datos. <i>Back-translation:</i> <i>[COMPANY] takes very seriously the quality of the product and the availability of data.</i>
Tick the box “Check this box if this is a new product operating software upgrade”	Marque la casilla ‘comprobar si la cabina es un producto nuevo que opera una actualización del software’ <i>Back-translation:</i> <i>Tick the box “verify whether the device is a new product which operates a software upgrade”.</i>

The second of these examples is particularly significant, as this segment is part of the steps that customers must follow to create a new service request and initiate arrangements for the upgrade. Not only is the message incorrect, but the decision to

provide a translation is likely to make the process harder for customers to navigate as these are instructions which they will only encounter in English on the company's online platform. Unlike the previous TTs, which offer justifications for their decision to not translate certain terms, the use of English here is scant and inconsistent, appearing once next to a Spanish equivalent ("Actualización de código - Upgrade") but with no explanation in other instances ("Backup? (Full/Partial/None"; "Si desea continuar, puede crear [la] SR con los links de abajo" [*If you wish to continue, you can create the SR with the links below*]).

The Spanish TT nevertheless follows the French translation in its choice to remove the possibility of customers carrying out the upgrade themselves. Details on the need to provide confirmation before the start of the activity are also eliminated, as is further guidance on the necessary information to provide when scheduling the upgrade through the TMs.

EN ST2 V1 (PRIMARY)	ES TT2
If you are unable to create the service request yourself, please reply to this email with the table above filled in and we will be happy to schedule the upgrade for you.	Si no puede crear la SR, por favor responde [sic] a este email y estaremos encantados de planificar la actualización con usted. <i>Back-translation:</i> If you cannot create the SR, please reply to this email and we will be delighted to plan the upgrade with you.

The choice to avoid translation in TEMPLATE 1 goes beyond the idea of equipping the customer for further contact in English to directly acknowledge this as the language of the global business culture that customers need to be able to operate in. Rather than cushioning the introduction to English, the LL appears as a hint towards the existence of a potential lifeline. Customers are not being prepared for English; they are addressed as members of the corporate interculture but implicitly alerted to the presence of LL-users who they could resort to. In TEMPLATE 2, in turn, the omissions and translation issues take away agency from the customers as able participants in the transaction, making them dependent on the TMs ("Some information is added because [customers] might not get it otherwise. [...] The links

are very straight-forward, but they sometimes prefer that we do it. There's a paragraph missing because we just tell them to do it, but through us", TM14-ES).

A connection may be drawn between the difference in approach and the purpose of the text. TEMPLATE 1 is a response to a service request created by the customer, while TEMPLATE 2 is an upgrade notification initiated by the company. In the first case, customers have already interacted with the company through its English-only system by raising a request before TMs send their template. TM's main objective is therefore limited to obtaining the necessary information for the process. In the second case, TMs are reaching out unexpectedly, so getting the required details could be seen as secondary to persuading customers to get on board in the first place. Indeed, intentionally or not, the resulting ES TT2 functions less as a call for direct action on the customers' part than as an invitation to let TMs take charge.

Overall, the template translations demonstrate that, while TMs show awareness of a few of the challenges posed by the specific language use of the STs, solutions are not always effectively implemented. Some interventions manage to enhance the TT, for example by eliminating redundancies and rearranging paragraphs to increase coherence and achieve natural expression in the LL, but others reflect issues with both ST comprehension and LL production, particularly with regards to genre conventions and domain-specific terminology. Whether more or less successful, however, TMs' translation (and non-translation) decisions are fundamentally driven by audience considerations. Based on their assumptions of customer competence and expectations, TMs recognise or reject their markets as part of a perceived global English business culture, and these perceptions of LEGITIMACY regulate the extent to which TMs exercise control or trust customers to have ACCESS to the process as members of this group. This behaviour is nevertheless balanced by TMs' SELF-VALIDATION mechanisms in response to underlying norms, values, and beliefs that shape their understanding of translation. Translated texts are therefore a factor of TMs' perceptions of their audience, their own competence to deal with ST interference, and their views on what explicit translation involves and the limits of their role. The following section explores the confluence of these factors.

3.2 Translation criteria

At its core, translation is about transferring a message in a different language:

I just read it first, try to digest what is it: Does it have any pictures? What is its meaning? Then I... After that, I start writing down, and after that I also ask [a colleague] to... His opinion if we need to add on anything. And then after that, you know, then I send it back to the person who is asking... That's it. (TM5-TR)

However, TMs are conscious of the fact that translation is not a direct word replacement operation:

You wouldn't— like, in any language anyway, when you're translating, you change a few words, or you change the order of the words. [...] It's very difficult because you just don't find the word to say it, you know? It's different, like, you can't translate exactly, you can't— you just have to tweak it around a bit just to kind of sound... normal, like. Or practical, or ok. (TM4-AR)

Translation is a challenging and time-consuming task (“I was thinking: ‘Wow, how tough it is to translate something IT-related into my own language!’ Even after two years working here, it really took me a while”, TM1-CS). It establishes a dependency on the original message, but it is defined by changes, since maintaining the message requires sacrificing the form:

Sometimes it's challenging because you can't translate directly the way it is in English to Polish. You have to rephrase a small bit, just to not lie the content... So sometimes it's —if somebody would then try to translate from Polish to English, it could be really something different. But I know always the meaning of the letter that is created, like technical detail, will remain... understandable, and there will be no lying or discrepancy in them. That's the entire solution for what we want to achieve. (TM3-PL)

Some formal modifications amount to obligatory shifts at the lexical and syntactic level to match the structural requirements of the LL (“You cannot translate directly from English into Spanish. There are changes because some things sound weird”, TM14-ES). A lack of metalanguage, nevertheless, does not preclude TMs from

showing awareness of the need for adjustments not only in word order and sentence structure, but also in terms of pragmatics and textual conventions. Indeed, as seen in the sample translations, TMs' discussions often reflect personal theorisations around what a text should look like given the audience and purpose of communication:

I received past templates that were half in French, half in English, but I did not like [them], so I redid [them] myself. I did not think it made sense to have the two languages like that. I felt it should be either French or English. (TM6-FR)

If I had to reach out to the customers in Czech, I would leave out most of the stuff which the English emails are saying because they are not interested in it. They want to know what's the issue, how to resolve it, and that's it. [...] I leave this in English, I put the rest my words, I don't send them word by word this because there's no need. It's too much. If I would get this email, I would be like 'Nah, it's too big, I'm not reading this', so I kind of adjust it for what I think they want here because I know they just want to go straight to the point. (TM1-CS)

I would write this completely different. I mean, you can still take the same kind of... what the ticket is about. But this whole... I mean, the fact alone that there is not one line in between, it's just all flow, flow, flow, flow. It's in one big block; in no language that is correct. That's just not how you write a letter [...] And it's all very... it's all a statement. None of it is a 'can you let me know when you would be available?' or 'is there anything...?' A lot of the things we ask —we *ask* the customer. (SL2-DE)

In addition, the criteria used by SLs to assess translation quality from recruitment tests¹³ include aspects such as clarity and tone (SL1-FR), as well as correctness (e.g. spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, modifiers for grammatical cases) and meaning

¹³ A sample email used occasionally as a translation test during recruitment was pre-edited, machine translated into French and German with a free online service, and then lightly post-edited before being presented to SL1-FR and SL2-DE to comment on their approach to translation quality assessment. Both SLs rated these mock translations highly, describing them as fluent and clear despite some minor grammatical errors (See Appendix F). The translations were produced by the researcher with an intermediate knowledge of French and German but a background in both professional translation and translation technology training. It would therefore be naive to expect raw machine translation (MT) output to be directly applicable in this context without dedicated post-editing (PE) training. However unsophisticated, nevertheless, the success of this exercise does raise a question about the potential of MT and PE implementation in NPIT settings, particularly in conjunction with controlled authoring. Indeed, the possibility of enhancing NPIT skills through MT and PE training has major implications for language education which are outside of the scope of this work but warrant further investigation.

transfer (“Do you lose the meaning? Or do you, even in those difficult sentences, do you manage to bring it over into German, and do you know that you kind of have to rephrase what you are reading for it to make sense in German?”, SL2-DE).

Ultimately, TMs and SLs show an intuitive attempt to balance meaning and form, accuracy and fluency (“The key is how well meaning is conveyed and how well it reads”, SL1-FR). While translation implies change, the question is the degree to which it is considered appropriate. Natural expression helps make final decisions (“It’s the style, the way you speak [...] what way I would like to hear it in my language”, TM3-PL), but there are limits imposed by the ST:

When translating templates, I look to be faithful to the original text, to stick to it as close as possible, and to get proofread by somebody to make sure it is natural language, rather than get the flow first [...] We can preface the text, but it is not our role to shorten an approved text. We can clarify the context, but not change the text. (SL1-FR)

As illustrated by the sample template translations, nevertheless, the types and extent of interventions in explicit translation tasks can differ considerably. Indeed, translation decisions described by participants and observed in their outputs are not systematic and vary from full to partial to non-translation.

In some instances, the text is rendered completely in the LL with various degrees of additions and omissions. Full translation is typically the preferred approach where TMs see customers in their markets as unwilling or unable to be members of the global English interculture, whether due to cultural preferences (“French customers’ expectation is that contact is done in French”, SL1-FR) or to reliance on staff’s guidance and reassurance (“[Spanish customers] get quite nervous if they think that there’s going to be a disruption”, TM9-ES).

At the other extreme, some TMs avoid translation altogether and simply use the English ST (“In Belgium the original template in English tends to work fine”, TM9-ES) or produce a translation for the record which is never delivered and therefore not part of an actual communication situation (“I kind of mostly create my own emails. I don’t use templates for Czech customers. [...] So I had to translate it obviously, I was

asked to, but I don't think I will use it in practical life", TM1-CS). In these cases, texts are seen as fulfilling their function without the LL, which is only brought in as a last resort ("I don't have the official templates translated. I would normally send the email in English, and then only use Dutch to follow up", TM13-NL).

More often, TMs opt for a gist translation that acts as a preface followed by the non-translated text, or a version that renders sections of the text in the LL and leaves others in English. Translation is considered unnecessary or used sparingly, then, as a way to regulate ACCESS by building trust through linguistic and cultural affiliation, rather than for the purpose of breaking language barriers ("I just write a few lines on top of my email in Finnish and the rest of the template is in English. Finnish people are good in English, so the language is not really a problem. But it is still effective to use Finnish to get a better response", SL3-FI). Partial translation is therefore a way of sending customers the message that, although the company operates in English, there is LL provision available ("I can try at least to put some sentences in Czech so they know. So I give them kind of a choice", TM1-CS). Translation enables trust while non-translation equips customers for the English-speaking reality of the service, in a sense paving the way for language learning alternatives¹⁴ as solutions for future cross-linguistic contact:

There are words that are... like 'preparation guide', or 'lead time', they're words that we use in the English documents that [customers] have to deal with as well. [...] Not every German customer speaks very well English. So... just for them to find that 'Vorbereitungshandbuch' is the prep guide, that's a big jump for them sometimes. So I just prefer to, if we reuse that word a lot, to not translate it. Or to put the German word in brackets once to kind of like tell them: 'This is what it is in German, from now on we'll call it that'. Just so that, when they read it in English, that they recognise that it is *that thing*. (SL2-DE)

Whether customers have limited expectations of receiving LL support or whether TMs preempt that such expectations will have to be broken as the process advances, a quick and personal introduction in the LL and a recognisable name in the email

¹⁴ See Section 2 in this chapter.

signature may indeed be enough to minimise any potential barriers (linguistic or otherwise) created by the English text.¹⁵

Nevertheless, partial translation decisions are not just about negotiating customer expectations, but also about balancing responsibility between the customer and the company. For example, when a data table that the customer must complete is left in English because it is “more clear and it avoids misunderstandings” (TM7-IT), this clarity may not be so much for the benefit of the customer, who is assumed to be comfortable with “business-related things” (TM1-CS), as to aid the TM who must then record and forward this information for the technical consultation. Along with the convenience factor, another aspect that comes into play is language size.¹⁶ The smaller the language, the lesser the tendency towards full translation:

I would probably send the email in English anyway and maybe just add the first lines in Czech. Because then if I’m out of office and there’s nobody else speaking Czech, they’ll switch to English anyway. So I think it’s much easier for my colleagues. (TM1-CS)

All of this accentuates the fact that TMs deal with various audiences, not just customers, and shows how their behaviour aims at striking a balance amongst them, as well as their own objectives. Indeed, in addition to addressing customer needs, ensuring visibility, and facilitating internal communication, staff’s choices are also linked to SELF-VALIDATION behaviours in the face of their own competence limitations, particularly with regards to terminological issues.

Terminology is the most prominent challenge highlighted by TMs with regards to explicit translation tasks (“For me as well because I’m foreign, if someone would say [expedited health check] to me, I would not know what it means. I would just take it out of context, from the whole sentence, what we are talking about, what it could mean”, SL2-DE). Resolving translation problems requires first comprehending the

¹⁵ One could even speculate the extent to which this strategy may be more effective than a full translation in this context. An avenue for further research could involve reception studies to investigate quality tolerance thresholds in NPIT settings.

¹⁶ Language size in this context does not refer to absolute numbers of speakers but is rather linked to overall market size and relevance for the company and therefore number of speakers in the unit.

English term before finding an adequate equivalent in the LL which, in turn, depends on the communicative purpose of the message (“So I have to google the words and then I just decide which one goes best with the sentence I want to write, and pick that word”, SL2-DE). A suboptimal choice would cause strangeness, although it would not necessarily lead to a breakdown in communication (“*Entschärfen* [for ‘mitigate’], for example, you would do that to a bomb. [...] They would still know what I am talking about, but that sounds like the problem that could occur would be his machine exploding!” SL2-DE). Finding an appropriate term in the LL, however, can be challenging because of the weight of the ST, which limits the freedom granted in/by other forms of communication:

I have leo.org open all the time when I do it! Because there are a few... like, something like ‘an expedited health check’. I had to translate ‘expedited’ to find out that it’s a shortened version. So, then I just picked the best word for my sentence, kind of. But this is... If I would free flow the email to the customer, [...] I would say ‘we can do a quicker one’ or ‘we can just do a quick health check without you having to be present’. I would never use the word ‘expedited’. (SL2-DE)

Common resources include free online bilingual dictionaries, as well as grammar websites, spell-checkers, and machine translation (MT) engines. TMs recognise the value of MT for assimilation (“If I really need to understand, I will use Google”, TM10-HE) or to support existing passive competence (“I would still normally understand because I speak a bit of Spanish and Swedish, but if not, I can use Google translate”, SL3-FI), but they also show awareness of its potential pitfalls (“I actually tried to put this in Google and it was disastrous! Even how they build the sentences, it was just so different”, TM1-CS). Moreover, TMs may request help from field staff who are familiar with the LL terminology or able to provide an explanation that can then be relayed further to the customer:

I have these guys here [engineers from the Prague office]. [...] They are my right hand, they... any issue I have, even regarding different cases, not just the Czech ones. But they are very helpful, they always jump in, and they advise or say ‘oh, you can call me, I can explain this to you’. And he explains it then in Czech and I am like ‘wow, that’s so cool!’ It makes much more sense. (TM1-CS)

In many cases, nevertheless, the preferred solution remains non-translation and terms which are considered specialised or company-specific are often left in English, with or without an explanation in the LL. The choice to not translate is never neutral but carries its own meanings. Although the decision is still audience-driven, TMs seek SELF-VALIDATION by (i) redirecting the responsibility of translation towards the customer and (ii) reinforcing the centrality of English as the language of business and technology. While TMs' assumptions of English proficiency vary from market to market ("If Germans know what it is, I would use it", SL2-DE), customers are still expected to be the IT experts and therefore comfortable with domain-specific English terminology ("Some words, for example, I could not translate in Russian. There's technical terms and I could not translate even in my own language, in Lithuanian language, like, it's... Some terms are just in English!", TM2-RU). However, it is not always the case that there are no LL equivalents available for specialised terminology:

So then sometimes I also ask [the LL engineers] to write what they said and I save it for myself, just in case I need to explain to the customer, I know what words to use, you know? And some of the words would be the same for different cases so that's handy that I can then use those words and expressions, because they are very technical! And [the LL engineers] have got the training in English as well, but because they work in Prague, they know both the English and Czech words. (TM1-CS)

This suggests that challenging terms are not necessarily untranslatable, or that customers would not be able to recognise what are deemed as "internal kind of sayings" (SL2-DE), but rather that, in some instances, TMs may simply lack familiarity with the domain-specific language in their LL.

Translation in the unit proves to be a norm-governed behaviour, guided by the norms set by the particular cultural environment in which it takes place (Toury 1995b).¹⁷ While these are not directly observable, they can be studied through patterns of behaviour (Toury 1995b, 65) that show how "translators are left to develop their own norms as best they can, making inferences from existing translations and drawing on any pertinent critical or theoretical formulations they may encounter" (Porter 2014,

¹⁷ Toury (1995b) distinguishes between preliminary norms, which have to do with the choice of texts for translation, and operational norms, which direct the decisions made during the process of translation.

445). Whether staff's interpretations of specialised language use and assumptions about customers' competence are fully justified or not, these considerations guide translation choices and show awareness of the complexities of cross-linguistic textual operations, recognising more or less explicitly the importance of audience and purpose, and presenting translation as a particular activity with its own specific requirements.

4. TRANSLATION CULTURE

“The templates —that’s a specific translation. But when the customer comes back, it’s normal conversation” (MN3-EN)

The various translation decisions taken by staff point towards the existence of an underlying “translation culture” (Koskinen 2008) driven by an intuitive communicative goal that shows how translation is conceptualised and understood in its different forms. Borrowing from Janssens, Lambert and Steyaert (2004) and their translation-centered theoretical approach to international communication processes, the notions of translation observed in this case can be said to reflect all the “mechanical perspective”, that places translators as transmitters; the “cultural perspective”, which presents them as mediators between systems of meaning; and the “political perspective”, that sees them as negotiators between competing discourses. From a mechanical perspective, movements between languages have no real impact in the transfer of meaning: “the presence of multiple languages may complicate the international communication process but is not considered to change the nature of this multilingual communication” (Janssens, Lambert and Steyaert, 419). From a cultural perspective, translation is key to cultural understanding, with native speakers acting as “key informants of a specific culture” (Janssens, Lambert and Steyaert 2004, 421).¹⁸ From a political perspective, “translation is an act of power, determining who is acknowledged as a full-fledged partner, who is allowed to communicate and whose interests can influence the decision making” (Janssens, Lambert and Steyaert 2004, 424). These seemingly contradictory approaches are reconciled in the analysis of the

¹⁸ Interestingly, as shown in the previous sections, TMs appear to act more as informants of the global English business culture than the LL. In translation, they may use their LL knowledge to build trust but ultimately present themselves as experts in the company's English intercultural for customers. See Chapter 4 for further discussion of participants' POSITIONING behaviours.

unit as a whole when considering the various levels at which they apply: how translation is used (as a force for inclusion/exclusion), how it is presented (as an acknowledgement of diversity), and how it is understood (as a tool for efficient communication). Overall, the unit reflects what Whyatt (2017, 48) identifies as the conflicting social understandings surrounding the ability to translate:

On the one hand, it is viewed as an intricate process of decision-making and problem-solving judged by many as ‘too complex to grapple with’ (De Groot 1997: 26). On the other hand, it seems to be socially expected of anybody who is able to communicate in two languages.

4.1 Scripted vs free-flow communication

TMs perform occasional *translations*, but they *translate* regularly. After the first contact with the customer through the translated templates, many of TMs’ daily practices remain interlingual text production operations contingent on a general presupposition of “meaning invariance” (Mossop 2017), despite the potential for changes in medium and purpose. In other words, utterances produced in one language are often conveyed in another language in ways that aim to preserve the perceived intended meaning even if the channel is different (from phone calls, virtual meetings, face-to-face conversations to emails or instant messaging applications, and vice versa), and the goal of the transfer deviates from that of the original communication. Despite the absence of a clearly defined ST, much of what falls under “free-flow communication” (SL2-DE) or “normal conversation” (MN3-EN) in this context is a demonstration of hands-on interlingual mediation skills analogous to an act of quoting or reported discourse between two linguistic codes (Mossop 1983). Although unrecognised, these are translation practices (“I need to first read what is the issue in English, and then try to translate it in my head: What am I going to say to the customer?”, TM1-CS). These exchanges are still purposeful cross-linguistic operations; a meaning transfer exercise which require capturing a message and relaying it from or into English, often with an additional function (e.g. simplifying, clarifying, providing visibility, etc.).

The relegation of these practices to the category of unrecognised translation appears contingent on four main factors: (1) the immediacy of the exchange, (2) the

intermediary nature of the task, (3) the instability of the ST, and (4) the high degree of formal independence from the ST. Rather than an assumed whole cultural group (customers in a local market), the audience is typically identified personally (a specific customer or member of staff), and the communication in question is only one part of the larger task which is resolving a case, as opposed to an individualised request for translation. Moreover, the ST is often fleeting and perishable, generated by the exchange participants themselves (e.g. a phone conversation summarised in an email, an in-person chat formalised into a written explanation, an email thread compiled into a case log).

Explicit translation, on the other hand, starts with a pre-established formal written text which has its own distinctive features endowed by the author, i.e., symbolically, the company. Explicit translation connotes for participants a form of scripted language use, resulting in a “dependent text” that preserves both content and intention (Sager 1994, 110), whether this dependency is later acknowledged or not. It is a formal linguistic task which is constrained by the ST and always comes with a loss (“It is not the same to translate an email to English than reading it directly in Spanish”, TM14-ES). Although some degree of change is always expected, this is limited by the existing ST, to which the TT is bound in a way that the “derived texts” (Sager 1994, 113) resulting from unrecognised translation practices are not. The less prototypical the task, the less hindered practices are by preconceived notions of translation. And conversely, the heavier the weight of the ST, the more the practice will tend to be conceptualised as “translation”.

The level of freedom that unrecognised translation affords TMs disappears or is at least constrained when dealing with explicit translation. Indeed, “free flow communication” is seen as natural and spontaneous, confined only by the limits of “good customer service” (TM2-RU) (“I am actually there to tell the [customer]: ‘You don’t have a choice, you have to upgrade!’, but in a nicer way, of course”, TM8-DE).¹⁹ Without a fixed ST, TMs can place greater focus on the goal of the communication and are freer to make more personal and deliberate decisions on how to deal with the

¹⁹ Just like with explicit translation, where the extent of the changes that are considered appropriate varies, what falls under good customer service is also a spectrum and defined differently from TM to TM.

message according to what they perceive is most relevant so as to maximise the outcome:

The key is, I'm trying to keep everything as short as possible. Don't try to express something in... too large. Because I know that I'm not dealing with English lecturers. They're IT people that they just want help, you know, short and straight, rather than... you know, trying to explain too much or too many kind of details. (TM3-PL)

Whether explicit or unrecognised, TMs are constantly dealing with translation situations that require them not only to identify and transfer a message for a specific purpose and audience, but also to synthesise, amplify or adapt information for different channels and uses. This, however, is not a neutral process. Choices are driven by individual theorising with a view to resolving the main concern of GETTING THINGS DONE, which involves not only fulfilling their job tasks but doing so in keeping with their own motivations and priorities. The solutions reached are the product of a balance of perceptions of themselves and their audiences, informed by norms, values, and beliefs, such as assumptions about different cultural groups, the perceived centrality of the English language, and TMs' role orientation, as well as their understanding of translation.

4.2 Translators vs mediators

Since explicit translation is not central to their job, TMs see their role as distinct to that of translators. Translation is complex and requires time, effort and specialised knowledge, both domain knowledge and transfer ability ("You can't just, like, Google translate it. [...] It takes you a while to actually put the things together and make it look... presentable, or understandable", TM4-AR). It is, however, not exclusively a matter of expertise, but of professional responsibility and accountability:

Because it's IT and every case it's just so specific and different, sometimes there are words that even for me, in those cases... not that I would go to Google Translate, in the whole context I understand what is it about, but I wouldn't be able to translate... Like, I would say to the customer 'look, this is regarding this and this', but again, I would keep the words in English. Because, you know, I am not an engineer. I don't have an IT degree, so I

don't want to pass some wrong translation of the issue and then, you know, it may become an issue for me. Because the customer would say 'oh, but she told me... there's no disruption, you know? But then there is disruption, and I lost my data!' And then I would be... So I'd rather cover my back and try to explain it as much as I can. (TM1-CS)

Particularly when it comes to financial information, technical documentation, or customer contracts that TMs may encounter during the course of their work, translation is conceived as a specialised activity which needs to be officially sanctioned or be left to dedicated providers. In such cases, TMs choose to protect themselves by rejecting the role of “translators” (“If you do mistakes or... it could be lost in translation and you could be in trouble, basically. You'd rather cover yourself instead of going ahead and doing it”, TM2-RU). As SL2-DE strongly puts it:

I would refuse to translate technical information though. If needed, technicians can contact an external translation service. We could misinterpret it. I had to translate something before, and I had the manager confirm that it would not be held against me if something was wrong.

As “authorising” figures (Pym 2019), translators are considered professionals prepared to deal with norm-bound, complex documents that must conform to clear expectations of accuracy, completion, and precise expression. In the work of translators as they are conceived within the unit, there is little room for textual modifications, paraphrasing and generalisations. And while staff often handle specialist content and are influenced by the weight of the ST too, they approach the task by POSITIONING themselves as brokers or intermediaries without the same perceived constraints which translators have to adhere to. As Munday (2009, 83) points out, citing Nida (1997, 37):

It is the ‘intelligent secretaries in North America’ who know how to delete overtly complimentary statements from Latinos, and to add appropriate expressions of greeting and friendship from their North American bosses. [...] The ‘translator’ does not have the freedom a secretary has to facilitate communication, due both to domestic fidelity-to-the-text norms and to the (limiting) beliefs that professional translators themselves have about their role.

TMs take instead the role of cultural mediators, acting as “a person who facilitates communication, understanding, and action between persons or groups who differ with respect to language and culture [...] by interpreting the expressions, intentions, perceptions, and expectations of each cultural group to the other, that is, by establishing and balancing the communication between them” (Taft 1981, 53; in Munday 2009, 88). This may seem to suggest that they are mere conduits. However, as Munday acknowledges and as the previous discussion demonstrates, “mediators feed their own (and are fed) knowledge and beliefs [about the (communicative) needs inherent between texts and their readers] into the processing of the texts” (Munday 2009, 89).

TMs enjoy a greater degree of agency than translators and interpreters who are “institutionalised” into the translation profession (Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke 2017, 464): “In the absence of explicit norms of completeness, exactness or fidelity, translatorial actors have access to a variety of language practices in completing their task”, such as duplicating, summarising, and expanding (Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke 2017, 467-470). Although explaining and explicating are also common strategies for professional translators, the degree to which participants condense, comment, and even omit necessitates “a status of authorship” (Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke 2017, 480) which is not typically afforded to working language professionals. Indeed, TMs don’t just enable communication between two distinct groups or individuals but are simultaneously mediators and authors.²⁰ Being deeply embedded in the organisation (Piekkari, Tietze, and Koskinen 2020, 5), TMs take ownership of the message in their translations: although they represent the company, it is the TMs who speak to the customer, not the company.²¹

²⁰ The written samples examined in this study confirm “the blurred author-translator roles” also seen in the study of a bilingual Finnish-Swedish formal meeting carried out by Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke (2017). There is nevertheless an important distinction between the two contexts. In their analysis, the goal of translation “is first and foremost to involve all participants in the discussions and to enable participation” (Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke 2017, 481-482). In the current study, inclusion is not the only nor even the main objective of translation. As will be shown in the following chapter, translation into English is employed for transparency when dealing with monolingual English users, but in communication amongst bilingual users, translation is a tool for balancing belonging.

²¹ This can be seen as a form of self-translation. Although TMs are not the authors of the ST, they “act on behalf of the original writers” (Grutman and Van Bolderen 2014, 324). As such, they have more agency and authority (whether they utilise it or not): “The author-translator will feel justified in introducing changes into the text where an ‘ordinary’ translator might hesitate to do so” (Koller 1979/1992, 197; in Montini 2010, 306). This contrasts with Koskinen’s (2008) experience of

TMs may also be characterised as “expository translators”, a term referring to “the non-commercial but ‘non-literary’ translator” who typically deals with predominately referential texts (Porter 2014, 442-443). The expository translator, as an editor of sorts, “need not view the source text as a sacred and inviolable object” (Porter 2014, 445).²² Like the expository translator, TMs “may decide to sacrifice concision and/or ambiguity in order to amplify or clarify a point that would be self-evident to a source-language reader but opaque to a target-language reader. For increased clarity, or to avoid distracting from the message by reproducing stylistic features peculiar to the source-language environment, the expository translator may reshape the text by altering the length or position of segments, removing redundancies, and so on” (Porter 2014, 447). Following Tanselle (1995, 17; in Porter 2014, 446), “the fundamental dichotomy is actually between making no alterations at all and making some (whether many or few) alterations”. What’s of most interest is not which choices are made, but the reason behind such choices, which may not always be conscious.

4.3 NPIT as native translators

Although TMs do not accept the responsibility associated with the role of “translators”, they are far from treating translation as a purely linguistic code-switching activity. As noted by Whyatt (2017, 56):

institutional translation as self-translation. Although in both cases translation hides its origins and the TTs are considered equally valid, in her investigation of the European Commission it is the institution who both authors and translates, which means that “the translator’s role needs to be effaced” (Koskinen 2008, 25). As she explains: “In the Commission, my words are not mine; I am a spokesperson for the institution. The institution speaks through me” (Koskinen 2008, 24). The difference can be attributed to translation culture. While multilingual work in the EC is focused on translation and translators, in a business team such as the one in this study there is little (explicit) translation and no (professional) translators — even if there is plenty of *translating*. As further discussed in Chapter 6, this stresses the value of considering unrecognised translation in the study of institutional practices, as well as the limitations of narrow understandings of translation as a professional rather than a cognitive activity.

²² This ties with historical dichotomies in scholarly writings about translation which typically describe it as choice between form and meaning, source and target. From Cicero’s word-for-word and sense-for-sense strategies, through Nida’s (1964) formal and dynamic equivalence, and Newmark’s (1981) semantic and communicative translation, up to Venuti’s (1994) adaptation of Scheleirmacher’s (1813) work into the concepts of foreignisation and domestication, “translations ‘proper’ operate with respect to two opposing sets of norms: on the one hand, that of showing concern for the contemporary reader (thus being licensed to restructure the SL text in the TL); and on the other hand, that of remaining as faithful as possible to the SL. [...] The prevailing norm in the 20th century has been, on the most general level, to expect translations to live up to some expectation of ‘faithfulness’” (Blum-Kulka 1986/2004, 297-298; in Porter 2014, 444).

For laypersons, translating simply means saying or writing the same in another language, which is perceived as a process of linear transcoding of a string of words in a source language (SL) into a string of translation equivalents of these words in the target language (TL).

However, TMs show an awareness of the complexities of the translation process, as explicit translation tasks bring to the fore the challenges linked to the linguistic and cultural border crossings of the practice. In addition, as users of multiple languages in a professional setting, they also acknowledge the need for various tools and resources along with the potential downsides of MT.²³

Overall, the data suggests that most participants tend towards renditions that are both lexically and structurally close to the ST, leading at times to interference, and typically rely on bilingual reference works for problems identified primarily at word level. This echoes findings from process research on trainee translators, who usually focus on smaller translation units and proceed in a more ST-oriented and linear fashion than their professional counterparts, who are more likely to take wider textual considerations, have greater awareness of problems, and employ more monolingual resources (Göpferich and Jääskeläinen 2009, 174-175).

As non-professional translators (NPIT), TMs face some of the same challenges as ad-hoc or amateur interpreters, such as limited resources to transfer unknown concepts or a lack of equivalent terms in the LL, and use similar strategies when dealing with specialist language, even if sometimes these lead to erroneous translations (Valero-Garcés 2005).²⁴ The TMs' role can also be compared to that of popular-science writers "in that they base their work on English texts but write in a TL [target language]",

²³ In this context, the use of MT does not enter into competition with professional translation, but with lay understandings of bilingualism and the affordances of automatic translation. The potential differences between perceptions of MT (and translation in general) amongst monolingual users and natural, native, and expert translators is a question worth pursuing for translation studies researchers interested in the developmental aspects of NPIT competence.

²⁴ For example, in her study of public service interpreters with limited training, Pöllabauer (2017) identifies three key strategies: omission, simplification, and paraphrase, which are more common than the use of direct equivalents. Rather than omitting difficult terms, in explicit translation TMs' preference is for non-translation, but otherwise the tendency is similarly to "determinologise" (Meyer 2006, 21) specialist vocabulary.

which “involves heterofunctional translation to a lower level of special-language communication (from the expert to the educated lay level)” (Wright 2011, 9). It is the writers, rather than the subject specialists, who are in charge of generating new terminology: “English borrowings and loan translations in many cases supplant native forms, and synonymy and unmotivated terms may proliferate” (Wright 2011, 9).

Where TMs differ from other groups that carry out translation as an untrained ability, like language learners, is in the type of communication situations they operate in. They are tasked with producing a translation, and in their context, this is not a mere linguistic transposition activity. “Language brokers tend to focus on the message that needs to be conveyed” (Whyatt 2017, 51) and “their translations reflect their understanding of the communicative importance of translation” (Malakoff and Hakuta 1991, 143; in Whyatt 2017, 51). As customer service experts, they understand that their translations need to function in a particular way, i.e. they need to fulfil their intended purpose of leading the customer to engage in the upgrade process by first gaining their trust and then persuading them to provide the required information, whether it is by providing a clear and convincing explanation of the process and its relevance, or simply by giving enough reassurance around the benefits of the process and the availability of support. Having a clear goal in an authentic communication situation for which they are responsible leads to greater awareness of the texts as tools with a communicative function (which sometimes may actually result in avoiding translation). It is this communicative drive guiding interlingual practices which can be seen to be unconsciously contributing to a view of translation closer to that of purposeful interaction than the direct replacement notion commonly associated with untrained bilinguals and gives credence to the stages of competence development ascribed by Harris (1977) to the “natural translator”. Natural translators perform translations in everyday circumstances without any training and “may be stimulated by real communication needs” (Harris 2017, 32). As “native translators” then, TMs are “people who have had no formal training in translating but who have picked up [translation] skills by observation and experience and acquired its socially accepted norms” (Harris 2009). They are not professional translators as they do not do (explicit) translation for a living but, like trainees, they could develop further expertise with experience, guidance, and feedback.

SUMMARY

This chapter has shown how translation, both in explicit and unrecognised forms, features along with language learning as part of the multilingual practices encountered within a unit of an Irish-based multinational IT corporation. TMs engage in communication with customers as well as local and remote colleagues using different channels and languages, putting into practice inter- and intralingual transfer skills within a specific domain as “native translators”. Explicit translation, while not central to their role, nevertheless provides rich insights into their linguistic choices and their understanding of the practice.

Although staff in the unit do not typically possess extensive disciplinary metalanguage, the data collected demonstrates a clear awareness of audience and purpose, and an acknowledgement of the complexity of the task. The sample templates and their translations reflect a number of production patterns (individual, consultative, and collaborative translation), as well as diverse approaches (full, partial, and non-translation) which respond to the main concern of GETTING THINGS DONE by balancing perceptions of self and others. Decisions may not always be effective, and practices can be marred by the lack of knowledge management strategies, but they show an overarching communicative goal that goes beyond the overcoming of linguistic barriers to the managing of interactions in keeping with their role orientation. This raises significant questions regarding participants’ overall negotiation of linguistic, cultural, and professional identity as NPIT in further communication practices, which are addressed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

“It’s all case by case. It is what the customer prefers and what’s our preference as well” (TM2-RU)

The work of the unit involves various manifestations of translation, explicit and unrecognised. Although explicit translation is seen as a form of constrained communication, the analysis of text samples and participants’ discussion of their practice presented in the previous chapter reveals how translation choices contribute to managing relations according to perceptions of self and others. Without the assumed limitations imposed by explicit translation, unrecognised translation tasks allow TMs to utilise language freely and resolve each situation as they see fit for GETTING THINGS DONE, i.e., reaching organisational targets while maintaining their own communication goals. As such, TMs’ behaviours take into consideration how to best achieve their objective of scheduling the upgrade based on their perceptions of the individual customer as a key or a hurdle to the process, and how to handle the relationship in a way that matches TMs’ view of their role, expertise, and responsibility. Not tied to a language policy at company, unit or team level, language choices are therefore diverse but not arbitrary, and reveal the dominant underlying views on language hierarchies, language competence, and language value.

This chapter looks first at how language choices operate as a mechanism for regulating ACCESS in internal and external communication. It then turns to consider this negotiation of trust and control through the use of language as a result of participants LEGITIMISING others and POSITIONING themselves within perceived groups, and explores the norms, values and beliefs they call upon for SELF-VALIDATION. These concepts make up a theory of BALANCING BELONGING which explains variation in how participants resolve their concern of GETTING THINGS DONE by positing language and translation use as the result of purposeful and strategic decisions (whether grounded or not) that reflect a constant negotiation of linguistic, cultural, and professional identity. After describing how communication patterns in the unit are connected to questions of group identification that regulate participants’ views of themselves and others, the chapter presents a typology of behavioural profiles

based on recurrent manifestations of POSITIONING, ACCESS, and SELF-VALIDATION patterns. The chapter ends with a discussion on the paradoxical understanding of language proficiency and language needs that permeates the unit, as well as the perceived significance of language(s) in this context.

1. ACCESS: LANGUAGE CHOICES

“This is not a local person” (TM3-PL)

A direct consequence of operating in a multinational and multilingual environment is the need for staff to negotiate language use with others. This includes written and oral interactions with colleagues using the same local language (LL), within teams with multiple LLs, between teams and their MNs, as well as with other staff and customers. There is no policy that regulates the exchanges, so TMs can choose how they organise and carry out their work, unlike in other service contexts (“We’re not like a call centre environment. [...] It’s all up to me. I can call them, I can email them, I can do it on Skype. Whatever is good for me. [...] We don’t have any kind of formula”, TM5-TR). However, there are patterns in the use of English and the LLs for both internal and external communication that are far from arbitrary and demonstrate that, as seen with explicit translation practices, the role of languages in the unit goes beyond the overcoming of linguistic barriers to serve as a tool for trust and control.

1.1 Internal communication

As part of a US enterprise based in Ireland, English is the official language of the company and the business intercultural (“Everything is in English”, TM4-AR). The LLs, in turn, are seen as serving an external purpose, allowing the company to communicate with partners in non-English-speaking markets. However, the notion of “English in, LL out” does not paint an accurate picture of the different roles that languages acquire in use. Rather than the company’s true organisational voice, English reveals itself to be above all a lingua franca with a functional purpose in a plurilingual environment (“It’s [an] international company. If everybody starts to speak their own language, nobody understands!”, TM2-RU). Nevertheless, in internal daily interactions, whether with local, field, or remote staff, a common LL is often the first

choice if available (“Here in the office with my co-workers, I speak German, of course”, TM8-DE). Even when there is no shared L1-LL, English is not always the default choice. There are alternative lingua francas in the unit like Russian or Arabic, and TMs employ other communication strategies such as relying on their passive competence or code-switching.¹ In fact, in some cases English does not even have an immediate communicative value. When TMs log case developments, for example, the texts are procedural and generated for record-keeping, to keep a visible account of arrangements. In this sense, English acts as a personal tool for accountability rather than to fulfil a communicative need.

It is only when a third party must be involved, directly or indirectly, that English is required to enable communication:

Even in the emails we always add like ‘Salem, how are you?’ [in Arabic] and then I continue in English, you know? For everyone to kind of view it. Because there are other people in the emails. They cannot speak Arabic, so it’s a bit... also for respect —out of respect for the other people. (TM4-AR)

This is particularly relevant in the case of SLs that act as a contact point between monolingual L1-English MNs and TMs in the bigger teams like French and German, where SLs are also users of the shared LL. The claim that “internal communication is in English because management is in English” (SL2-DE) does not mean that staff use only English, but rather that, in these vertical relations, English is employed to regulate MNs’ ACCESS to an otherwise LL-dominated internal landscape. More than just allowing comprehension, the internal use of English grants the trust needed for in-group participation, while the LL controls it:

In the team communication is fluid, but mostly in French. We can even use it to avoid being understood by others. With management it is always in English, but there is no problem. Although at a social level, it can be. I would be conscious that the manager was not able to speak or understand the team. (SL1-FR)

This shapes internal relationships amongst TMs too:

¹ See Chapter 3, Section 2.

It would be different if all TMs were Nordics, because culturally it would be more similar. Here when [the Spanish team] gets going, I do not understand a word. (TM12-NO)

It's funny because of course all three Spanish here, we're always chatting and commenting on the jobs that we get, and probably the rest are thinking 'what is going on?' TM12-NO here needed three weeks to actually say hello to me for the first time! (TM9-ES)

Amongst internal users of a shared LL, however, the role of English and the LL is typically inverted. For example, when SL2-FR changes mid-conversation from their L1-English to French, the use of the LL gives them access to the team by building trust and rapport. TMs may also employ the LL to help field staff save face and avoid being rejected as valid English users ("Sometimes you are in a joint [email] conversation [in English] with several people and someone sends you a message having deleted the manager and asks you privately [in the LL] about what's going on", TM9-ES). Conversely, when TM10-HE moves to English after TM2-RU initiates an exchange in Russian, this choice controls the interaction by rejecting TM2-RU as a legitimate LL user ("I will cover for Russian when the other Russian speaker is sick or on holidays. TM2-RU actually covers mainly English speakers. His Russian is broken, not native. Mine is better, more fluent", TM10-HE).

Although participants do not see diversity as problematic ("We have so many international teams now, we don't have any problems, you know? No barriers whatsoever", TM2-RU), it is clear that language choices have repercussions for the functioning of multilingual teams:

Some of the nationalities tend to kind of stick together. [...] For instance, Spanish, they go only with Spanish people, you know? [...] You see, here there's Turkish and then Russian, Lithuanian, and we have Italian as well. So even though we're all from different countries, we're communicating with each other more. We have to. (TM4-AR)

Teams with a shared L1 are more predisposed to control access and therefore use language for exclusionary purposes, for example, by distinguishing English as the language of management from the LL as the language of the team, and favouring the

LL to limit visibility (“You see the Polish, they are constantly chatting and it’s not work-related, you know? The same with the Italians, the Spanish, or Turkish, you know? [...] If there is an issue, you can kind of- if you don’t want anybody else to understand, I think that’s a good advantage!”, TM1-CS). In addition, they are more likely to have greater expectations of other L1 users around them. Even amongst L1-English staff, the assumptions of a shared cultural and linguistic frame can be seen to make relationships more complex, with more taken for granted. Diversity is therefore valued as a way to foster a more positive working environment and cheerful atmosphere in contrast to one-language contexts, including all-Irish teams:

I think if you’ve got a team of only Irish people, they’ll be more negative than a mixed team. That’s certainly from my experience anyway. I just find, when you have a mixture of cultural backgrounds, that is more positive, I think. [...] It’s just the way it is. Maybe it’s the weather or something. A lot of people here grew up in nicer climates! I don’t know. (MN3-EN)

Rather than being interpreted as a potential recipe for misunderstandings, the diversity of multilingual teams leads to an acknowledgement and acceptance of difference (“I feel the team works well, it doesn’t matter that it’s mixed. You adapt to different ways of doing things”, TM11-DA). Having TMs from various nationalities can also be an opportunity to learn about different cultures (“Having seen massive differences [...] I think it’s been an education for lots of people”, MN3-EN). But teams with multiple LLs also mean that MNs are less likely to be excluded from the informal communication happening amongst TMs:

I would love if the German team had a mix of people again. I’d love Swiss, Austrian, Polish, Irish, and German, all well able to speak German. But a mix of different cultures I think brings more diversity and it does maybe set the tone that the general conversation may be more inclined maybe to half English, half German? As opposed to, if you just have twelve German speakers, they are just going to speak German. Because of the different dialects, if you have Polish, German, Austrian, Swiss, Irish, all speaking German, it would lean maybe a little bit back towards English a bit more frequently. (MN2-EN)

As such, what this particular view of diversity ultimately translates into is the generalised adoption of a common L2 English (“Everybody speaks it, although nobody is native”, TM10-HE).

1.2 External communication

The strategic and relational component behind the choice between English and the LL (and with it, the use of translation) is even more evident when it comes to communication with customers, since they are expected to be both competent LL and English users. As seen in the previous chapter, translation into an LL for comprehension purposes may occur as a result of an unexpected challenge that leads TMs to intervene, such as in ad hoc interpreting situations.² TMs’ work, nevertheless, takes place mostly through English (“I use around 75% English, 25% Dutch”, TM13-NL; “Let’s say, 80% from the group mailbox would be English-speaking content. The rest would be Polish”, TM3-PL). While this is in part due to the fact that TMs in multiple-language teams deal with various markets or remote subcontracted IT partners acting on behalf of local customers, English is still the main language with LL customers (“I also have my own customers from a certain market level group, and that’s my personal mailbox. So I would say it’s still... three quarters would be English speaking at the moment”, TM3-PL).

The main reported reason for the predominance of English is customers’ familiarity with the language, whether because of their nationality, their professional background as IT experts, or both (“I actually don’t use much Norwegian at work [...] Most Norwegian people would be very ok with English and these are tech guys, so there’s no real need for Norwegian”, TM12-NO). As seen with the choice of non-translation in explicit translation practices, however, the use of English is not just linked to the technical nature of the subject domain and the B2B context of communication. It is also pragmatic and serves to aid TMs’ work by making information available to internal parties without the need to deal with the challenges

² Difficulties in these cases are typically assumed to stem from customers’ limited English competence. However, this is perhaps an oversimplification. Since staff are often based across the globe, issues may arguably arise from multiple parties being L2-English users or, in the case of L1-English staff, from the challenges of adjusting to L2-English communication.

of translation and therefore progressing faster with the upgrade activities. This is particularly relevant considering that LL support (when featured at all) starts and ends with the TM. While the LLs feature to varying degrees in TMs' interactions with customers, the overall customer experience is ultimately an English-speaking one:

I am coordinating for example [the] remote upgrade of one of the products and the customer says: 'That's fine, and who will be doing the upgrade?' And I say: 'Yeah, it will be Chung Li'. 'Will he speak Polish?' 'No, hardly'. 'Can I request support in Polish?' I say: 'No, listen, unfortunately there's no remote Polish engineers, it's an English-speaking company'. [...] Since [customers] came here, they will think that the other [departments] will have local support. (TM3-PL)

With the LL like a "carrot on a stick", preparing customers for English using notes or prefaces in email templates,³ for example, can act as a cushion to soften the transition and is therefore a way to minimise potential dissatisfaction arising from the misalignment of expectations regarding the scope of support ("It can be quite frustrating for customers sometimes when we would have the interaction with them in the local language and then they get passed over to someone else and it has to be done in English", MN2-EN). LL provision is therefore more a complement than a service in and of itself ("If the customer's English was not good enough, we wouldn't go that far [in the remote upgrade scheduling process], and a field engineer would have to be used", SL2-DE).

The need for the LL in customer communication is therefore always linked to ACCESS barriers, but while these are sometimes linguistic, more often than not they have to do with cultural identification:

In my case if somebody will call me in a kind of mixture of Polish and Russian, I'm not that open as if you would speak with, you know, someone who is native, native. I think there is some sort of a barrier [...] If you are contacting someone from your own country, it's kind of always... I think the channel of communication is more open than if you're talking with someone from another language. (TM3-PL)

³ See Chapter 3, Section 3.

The benefits of the LL come from its capacity to build trust, even when it is not needed for comprehension (“Dutch people speak English very well, so there is no need to use a lot of Dutch, but it is nice though, and it may help you strike a good relationship with the customer”, TM13-NL). For some TMs, this translates into customers being more comfortable, responsive, and open to following their advice. While English creates “some kind of distance”, when the LL is used customers “accept pretty much everything what you offer” (TM5-TR). The LL identifies TMs as part of the same cultural and linguistic collective identity, which shifts the rules of engagement:⁴

It is nice to use Danish, customers are more relaxed if you speak their language. [...] [A customer] wrote in English, so I responded in English. I was thinking that maybe he was a foreigner, not a Dane. But I tried Danish and it broke the ice: ‘You speak very well, it’s very impressive’ [he said]. We had some small talk. It was a wow moment for him, and he was more like ‘I accept what you say’, instead of ‘I want this done now’. (TM11-DA)

In external communication, the LL may therefore appear at different stages for different but complementary reasons. LL use may be TM-led, when TMs see it as a preemptive strategy to facilitate their work, but it may also be customer-led, when TMs resort to it as a remedial action in the face of delays to the scheduling and completion of the upgrades. Proactive LL use has to do with preventing obstacles, while reactive LL use is associated with resolving them.

In this regard, the mode of communication employed also plays a role, with the phone seen by many as a shortcut to close difficult cases. While customers may take longer to reply to emails, on the phone “things will be sorted much faster and people will give you a solution straight away” (TM6-FR). Beyond speeding the process up, phone calls can help build a positive relationship:

I’m constantly trying to get people to make more phone calls because sometimes I think, well, definitely emotion gets lost on email, doesn’t it? I

⁴ As shown below (see section 2.1 in this chapter), it is important to note that the notion of LL groups presented here does not presume the existence of clearly defined national, cultural, and linguistic identities, only the conceptual relevance of such an assumed identification in guiding participants’ behaviour. In this sense, LL groups can be described as “imagined communities” (Anderson 1983), socially constructed based on a shared sense of affinity amongst members.

don't think people can pick up on emotions but, if a customer is in a position then where they're kind of frustrated, I always say to the guys: 'Look, you are going to save yourself half a dozen emails now by just picking up the phone, you know? And talking to them!' And in most cases, it's better. And I think customers find it more difficult to... They definitely find it more difficult to give out to someone face to face, but they find it more difficult as well to give out to someone on the phone. But on email, it's like 'ah, you're getting it!', you know the way? (MN3-EN)

Nevertheless, the immediacy that phone calls demand can also cause challenges, so the phone alone does not always guarantee a response. While a phone call forces a synchronous response and offers limited contextual cues, written communication affords the opportunity to mitigate potential comprehension and production issues:

When you call, the customer just hangs down if he hears English. Or if he sees a foreign number, they don't pick it up. [...] So then I write the email and of course I am: 'Oh, I tried to call you on this number but I couldn't reach you so I am sending you an email'. And they straight away reply to my email! So you could feel like 'ok, they just didn't want to pick up because they were afraid probably of the other language'. (TM1-CS)

The use of email or phone is therefore not a dichotomous decision but the result of a strategic combination of tools closely linked to language choice. Emails may vary, but "the phone lends itself to the LL" (TM13-NL). The phone is typically reserved as a last resort to reach an unresponsive customer, so identification rather than visibility is the main objective and, as such, calls are always in the LL. In and of itself, the phone can lead to fear or distrust, but it works when it is connected to LL use:

[The LL] is very, very... very, very helpful when you're talking to customers on the phone. Because it doesn't make sense, when you are talking to someone, like, English sometimes is a barrier for some of the customers. It just makes them feel more comfortable when they are speaking in their own language. [...] You're breaking a kind of a boundary. With customers, I say: 'Ok, look, this is the case. I can't wait any longer, you know, this is an upgrade that needs to go ahead'. And on the phone they'll say: 'Oh!' You get this kind of connection, you know? And then you go ahead then and it's easier, it's much easier. They trust you more, really. It's better than just the

regular emails that they are receiving every day, you know? Just give them a call and end it. (TM4-AR)⁵

Whatever the mode of communication, however, customers opening up to TMs through the LL can also have unintended consequences, like additional requests or unwanted disruptions. Just as the LL can facilitate a relationship by increasing familiarity, English can be used for the opposite purpose of maintaining distance and controlling interactions. Through their choice of language, TMs can make customers feel comfortable but also stop them from getting too comfortable:

I was dealing with [a customer] in English because he replied to my Czech email in English. So I thought: ‘Ok, that’s the way’. And once I tried to call him because, I don’t know, something happened, and I was just calling him and he was the chatterbox! [...] And then even if there won’t be any case related, he would just write to me like: ‘Hey, how is it going? How is your working day?’ [...] I think I just didn’t reply, so now he’s only sending emails if it’s work-related, if there is a case. And he sticks with English. So I am: ‘ok, you got it’. (TM1-CS)

As such, breaking (or setting up) ACCESS barriers is often more a matter of expediency for TMs than a linguistic need for customers. In practical terms, what the LL vs English choice provides is a tool for managing trust and control in interactions. Translation and other movements between languages facilitate ACCESS, but their relevance does not lie so much in customers’ access to the company’s English as TMs’ access to the customers.

1.3 Trust and control

Language choices in the unit reflect strategic communication practices. While they may serve to break linguistic barriers (typically with the use of English or unrecognised translation into English), they often feature as a mechanism for

⁵ TM4-AR discusses another example of how the mode of communication can affect language choices. When working with languages with different scripts, the LL may be limited to the phone also for practical reasons: “I haven’t done much [writing and typing in Arabic] here. [...] So if [customers] email in Arabic, I could understand the email and send them back an email. I would be a trouble to type, but sure! If I needed it, I’d get it set up” (TM4-AR). Other TMs also mention challenges when dealing with non-Roman scripts, like in Hebrew or Russian (TM10-HE), as well as non-English characters (TM1-CS).

relationship management. Instances of translation are therefore not just a matter of a successful “offer of information” (Reiß/Vermeer 1984, 67; in Göpferich 2007, 32), but of ACCESS. Translation between English-LL permits (or in its absence, denies) entry to group participation, allowing trust or controlling access. However, as seen above, trust does not just happen through the use of an LL and control is not exclusively exercised through English. English can be a tool for control when TMs see customers as hurdles or other staff are rejected as valid members of a certain LL group, but it is also a marker of trust that all participants are (or are assumed to be) able members of the global English business culture. The LL, in turn, allows for trust through the identification of members of a common cultural and linguistic collective. At the same time, the LL can be used to control participation, for example, by excluding non-LL staff from informal communication.

Ultimately, language choices are not an either-or decision, but a question of balance based on individual and situational factors. When English is necessary amongst L1-LL users for the purpose of visibility and inclusion of third parties, communication still tends to carry markers of identification in the form of LL greetings and closing formulas. English is the vehicular language, but the LL offsets the distance that may arise, regulating the relationship in what is otherwise a “simulated interaction”. If an agreement has been reached in the LL, thereby fulfilling the initial objective of the communication, the English exchange that follows to confirm arrangements has no real communicative value for the original interactants and exists simply for the benefit of the non-LL partners. While addressing the LL-partner in English, the TMs are at this point indirectly communicating with the non-LL staff member who has been now included in the process.

Balance can also be achieved in LL-communication through the use of English or through particular translation decisions like omissions and text modifications. After establishing trust through LL provision, the introduction of English makes the distance from the LL environment obvious. Similarly, by omitting options for individual upgrades in their translations,⁶ TMs can limit the increased customer agency that

⁶ See the sample template translations into French and Spanish in Chapter 3, Section 1, where TMs’ choice to omit information forces customers to rely on them for the upgrade process.

comes with the familiarity afforded by the LL. The loss of control on TMs' part is therefore balanced by their choice to direct the upgrade process and therefore makes it possible for TMs to remain in charge by assuming responsibility regarding what information needs to be conveyed. On the one hand, English allows visibility at the risk of creating distance, which may be compensated with the LL. On the other hand, the LL can help build rapport, but this can be curtailed by the use of English. When there is no direct need to accommodate non-LL users, the decision becomes a balancing of considerations regarding the perceived knowledge and preferences of audiences with TMs' own positioning as bilingual or multilingual language users. This is shaped by a mixture of experience as well as individual and contextually reproduced assumptions, but it nevertheless reflects strategic communication behaviours that take into account audience, context, and individual communication goals.

Given the diversity that characterises an international organisation such as this, English features prominently, but it does so as an L2 amongst multiple LLs, which puts into question the perceived central role of English in global business settings. Internally, the unit is seen as fundamentally English-speaking with some LL present amongst TMs, but it manifests itself to be a plurilingual space where English is typically left for MNs and cross-team exchanges. Externally, customer communication is perceived as an LL service with English arising in the later stages. However, the reality is rather that of an English service with the potential of some LL presence in the earlier stages. Whether internal or external, nevertheless, language choices are shown to play a greater role than just enabling communication and transmitting information between speakers of different languages. The decision to use English or the LL (or to translate from one language into the other) serves to regulate ACCESS to assumed groups with a view to GETTING THINGS DONE, i.e., resolving communication situations according to participants' own priorities.

2. IDENTIFICATION: VIEWS OF SELF AND OTHERS

"It's a cultural thing" (TM9-ES)

Language choices are often presented as a response to audience preferences, but in practice in the unit the decision is not ruled by external demands alone, as it is the

result of TMs' personal interpretation of the critical path towards GETTING THINGS DONE. TMs balance the level of trust they gain and grant with the control they relinquish or exercise over the interaction, steering it in the direction they deem more productive for their goals. The use of English or the LL is therefore leveraged strategically to regulate ACCESS based on the perceptions that each party in an exchange has of themselves and the others, and whether they recognise each other as members of a shared group or not. With no officially sanctioned formula within or across teams to direct language use, there is not a single way for TMs to handle communication and they may choose to initiate contact in English or the LL, fully or partially. This decision, then, triggers a chain reaction of identity negotiation.

While explicitly negotiating the details and schedule of the upgrade, through their language choices, both TMs and customers implicitly negotiate perceptions of each other. If the initial contact by the TM is fully in English and the customer has no indication that would allow them to identify the sender as a member of the LL in-group, they may respond in English, positioning themselves as part of the global English interculture, or they may avoid responding, which leads TMs to reject them as part of said group. However, if in their initial contact TMs position themselves openly as part of the LL culture or their communication indicates that they can be identified as such, the customer may use this information to adopt the LL, positioning themselves closer to the LL culture and recognising the TM as a legitimate member too, whether TMs welcome it or not. Identification is therefore bidirectional: the LLs allow TMs to be acknowledged as part of the in-group, but English is also necessary for customers to be considered able participants in the international business discourse.

How customers react to the initial approach serves as guidance for TMs on how to adjust their own choices in further communication, as perceptions of participants in the interaction cement themselves through each exchange ("You have to be aware of who you're talking to. You get a feeling for what the customer wants", SL2-DE). Overall, whether with customers or staff, the longer the relationship, the more established the communication pattern, as perceptions of individuals become fixed over time ("It's been a year now, I still have the same customers what I cover. I already know them. So when I am approaching them now, I know: 'Ok, this customer prefers

conversation in English’. So I already start in English”, TM1-CS). Every new case, however, prompts a new chain of negotiations, a *BALANCE OF BELONGING* based on how participants in the interaction position themselves and legitimise others, and the extent to which these identifications are accepted or rejected.

2.1 Legitimising others: recognition and rejection

Every interaction is a source of information from which participants derive knowledge about their interlocutors to offer a tailored response that matches audience behaviour (cf. Giles 1973). Whether in English or the LL, the way language is used provides staff with indications of communicative preferences (“If it’s like more official, I go more official; if the customer is more relaxed, I go more relaxed”, TM5-TR; “Some may be more or less direct, independently of the language. Some make you go: ‘It’s him again!’”, TM11-DA). Although every case is different, there are patterns that reproduce themselves across different teams (“I have found three types: there is the director, the talkative, and the detailed”, TM11-DA). Some behavioural expectations arise from the nature of interactions as B2B transactions too:

Here you have business customers. That means, if there’s a delay or something, they will understand because they are also businesses. They are also working for somebody else. [...] I would say we have a better leeway with business customers than with consumer customers. They are more understanding. (TM8-DE)

Nevertheless, there are also perceived variations between types of businesses:

There are differences between small and medium enterprises and multinational companies. Also, institutional clients tend to be more demanding than [private] business clients. They complain more, they need more help, they have less English and less technical knowledge. (TM9-ES)

Underlying any individual distinctions, however, participants rely heavily on broader perceived patterns of behaviour based on national groups. Perceptions of the other, whether customers or field staff, are typically linked to nationality and are often highlighted as cultural differences between markets. For example, the Danish are characterised for their punctuality (TM11-DA), the Spanish and Italians are

considered more friendly and laid back than the purportedly more forthright Eastern Europeans (MN3-EN), and the Russians are seen as very demanding while the Israelis need more personal attention (TM10-HE). These distinctions apply even when markets share a language:

I have dealt with the DACH customers, meaning Germany, Switzerland, Austria. Each region in every country is particularly different. Some of them are super hyper, some regions are extremely stressed, or always on top, like saying ‘I want this, I want that’, you know? (TM8-DE)

In the UK... I don’t know, you know, none of the engineers there - none of the English like being told what to do! I don’t think, anyway - definitely not by the Irish! But so... it’s just difficult; it’s more difficult. (MN3-EN)

These differences are presented as natural and unavoidable (“It’s one of those things. It’s interesting, isn’t it?”, MN3-EN). Without customer response data, they are based on experiential impressions and appeals to common knowledge:

I think most people here would say that the Germans are very good at getting things done. We all know that anyway, don’t we, really? [...] I know the others would say the same, that it’s easier to work with Germany, France, maybe... well, maybe the French sometimes, I don’t know! But certainly, it’s challenging with the UK customers. That’s- I think a lot of people in business would say that anyway. (MN3-EN)

Some countries, they are so strict, they are very disciplined, you know? When you ask something, they get back to you all the time. Some are a bit more relaxed! Everybody knows that. (TM5-TR)

While not considered problematic (“I don’t think it reflects on people doing things slower, we’ll say, our targets being reached slower”, MN3-EN), perceived differences are nevertheless reflected in TMs’ work, both in their choice of mode (“Some spend more time at the phone than others, who prefer to communicate by email”, MN1-EN) and in their communication style:

I thought it’s nice to say: ‘Hi, dear customer, I hope you are well’. But I realised then from their answers, sometimes [Czech customers] wouldn’t even say hi, they would just fill this table, basically, and send it back. So I

am like: ‘Ok! We don’t have to talk at all’ [...] So on the emails they are very cold, and I wouldn’t use most of these expressions like ‘thank you again’ and ‘please’ five times. We don’t do it. And it doesn’t sound rude. Someone may think that it’s very rude just to be straightforward, but that’s just what they prefer. That’s how it works, you know? (TM1-CS)

[Turkish customers] are more like... open. They don’t like to just... be straight and... It’s better to just go a bit around and make sure that, you know, they are going to feel comfortable. And it’s much easier for me as well, like, if I need to change any date for upgrade or something like this, and if I can just go: ‘Oh, hey, how are you? How’s everything? Like, the weather is nice. Listen, how was the food? Bla bla bla...’ And then afterwards: ‘Ok, come to the point, I’m just going to change the date’, and that’s it! (TM5-TR)

Whether there is evidence to sustain these frequent stereotypical views linked to particular nationalities is, for the purpose of this study, not as relevant as the fact that differences, experienced or assumed, are commonly acknowledged and contribute directly to shape staff’s approaches, with perceptions of LL needs and expectations being one of the key factors in the identification of participants in any interaction.

For LL expectations to arise, however, participants in the interaction need to first be identified and legitimised as LL users, which often relies on names. Recognisable LL names are a surefire way for TMs to present themselves as in-group members (“I have my signature here and [my name] on it, so they know ‘that’s one of ours’”, TM3-PL). But names do not only help customers to recognise TMs as group members, they also guide TMs’ language choices (“I look at their name, their signature, and the company name, and I may then start the conversation in Dutch”, TM13-NL).

Accents are a powerful identifier too (“If you start in English and you hear a strong accent, or you recognise a Dutch accent, then I would ask them and would normally end up speaking Dutch”, TM13-NL). In oral communication, it is not just language proficiency but accents in particular which act as identity markers, whether this identification is welcome or not:

If I would speak to a guy from the Philippines, they would not really recognise if I am Filipino since I grew up in Germany, so my accent is completely different. Even if I speak my own home language, they would know right away: ‘Oh, that’s a foreigner, he is not from here’. (TM8-DE)

If I make an English-speaking call to [an] English native person, I think there is some kind of invisible barrier: ‘Oh, this guy, he’s a small bit of a stranger, he’s not one of ours’. I think it’s an accent thing [...] And then you know where is he from, and that’s kind of put a label on you. Even if you don’t want to have that label. (TM3-PL)

In fact, accents grant and limit legitimacy not only across languages, but across varieties of the same language (“With the Swiss accent, most of us avoid the phone”, SL2-DE; “[In] Morocco, Algeria, where Arabic is completely different from us [in Egypt], I wouldn’t understand what they’re saying most of the time. Egyptian... everyone kind of understands it”, TM4-AR). In the face of these “labels”, often linked not just to identity but also to competence and status, participants can make deliberate changes:

I would change my accent on the phone when I am speaking Spanish. In the south of Spain we sort of learn about adopting a new way of speaking because our accent is sometimes looked down. You see it even with [Spanish colleague] here, he is always taking the piss. (TM9-ES)

This process of legitimisation is also present in English. Amongst TMs, the generalised use of English as an L2 is not put into question (“I think even we know that we’re here not like as native English speakers [...] You can hear every day that there will be small mistakes made. But within the team, I don’t think anybody care about this”, TM3-PL). However, English language use does affect the perceived legitimacy of remote staff (“It is difficult sometimes to understand Indians”, TM11-DA; “We’ve got this team in Bangalore, in India, [...] and we have had cases where customers have kind of complained and said, you know, ‘I want to deal with somebody who’s English’ or whatever”, MN3-EN). Moreover, it has an impact on MNs’ views of both TMs and other MNs when it comes to progression within the business culture. For example, while all TMs are deemed to be sufficiently competent in English for the job, MN2-EN rejects some as unable to advance beyond their current position:

For moving up, language is a huge part. If you have a strong accent, it is very hard to move up. Absolutely. Because we are on calls with America, we are on calls with Shanghai, which are our two hubs, and if you have a strong Spanish accent or something, they find it difficult to understand and

that's going to hamper your chances. And that has absolutely happened that I know cases where people went for interviews for positions and didn't get the role because the fear is that if we put them in front of, you know, executives in America or in Shanghai and they are speaking, they are not going to be understood effectively.[...] I think people arrive here to learn English and they get to a certain standard where it is absolutely fine but still not business professional standard [...] They get to a level that is comfortable and it is acceptable, but it's not at a level where you are going to be presenting to [the CEO] or whoever. (MN2-EN)

Similarly, L1-English MNs are not exempt from having their legitimacy questioned, not as competent in English, but as able to progress further in the global environment, with local accents also being a hindrance:

My accent is kind of neutral and it's relatively easy to understand. Our director, actually, he is from Switzerland, and he has excellent English. He has been working in America for over 20 years. And he was over here a couple of months ago and he commented how easy I was to understand, whereas my other Irish peers, he found them quite difficult to understand because they had thick Cork accents or whatever it may be. So maybe they don't even realise it, but that could be... even though they are fluent in English, their accent could be a barrier for them moving up. (MN2-EN)

What this reflects is the co-existence of multiple Englishes. Indian English and Hiberno-English are examples of LL-English which, like any other LL, have a different status to the global English required to operate and succeed in an international business context. This global English is a language for specific purposes with its own particular features that all language users need to become fluent in, whether they are L2-English users like TMs or L1-users of an LL-English like MNs. In this sense, different levels of global English mastery have implications for participants' legitimacy not simply as members of a general "English culture" by means of being able to communicate in English, but as participants in an international business culture which is performed through a particular manifestation of the English language.

When it comes to customers, engagement with the scheduling process without significant help from TMs is typically enough for them to be considered able to navigate the business English environment. Just as names can serve as markers of LL identification, other personal identifiers like email signatures and job titles can aid in

the recognition of individuals as English users (“This guy: ‘IT specialist’... So you know he speaks English and there shouldn’t be any issue. Some of them you can know straight away”, TM1-CS). Perceptions of LL dependency and the need for LL interventions, of course, vary from market to market (“There is a certain aversion to languages in Spain. Belgium is similar, but they are a little step forward. But it is true that French-speaking customers do always prefer to speak in French”, TM9-ES). As IT experts, nevertheless, customers are expected to “get used to receive technical information in English” (SL2-DE) and it is their responsibility to have a degree of confidence communicating in the language:

We do have customers that would tell me: ‘I do not understand English at all’. Then I am: ‘Hey, you are working in an IT department and you don’t understand English? Come on!’ That’s nonsense because everything is in English, you know? [...] So I would expect from them that they understand English. (TM8-DE)⁷

A lack of engagement on the customers’ part is often assumed to be an issue of English proficiency (“[Customers] would be very appreciative of, like, calling them in Czech. And it’s funny because, you know, most of the people should have some English, at least to say ‘look, I don’t speak English’”, TM1-CS). However, risk avoidance rather than just overall competence may be a more nuanced explanation. Customer reluctance may arise from pragmatic concerns around remote operations, such as potential service disruptions or data losses, in addition to lack of familiarity with specialist domains (“In Turkey they are not using English, like, in daily life, and especially if you’re talking about this, this is technical stuff and if you understand something wrongly and if you apply it... you know, you can easily mess up!”, TM5-TR). As such, reticence may not stem from a lack of English that hampers comprehension as much as from the risk of losing face and being judged as inadequate English users, which then may trigger a reaction against this perceived status:

In my older job, [Arabic customers] wouldn’t be able to speak English, and they’d still try and they’d be: ‘Can you speak in English?’ And I’d be: ‘Ok, can you speak Arabic? Because I don’t understand what you’re saying!’ But

⁷ This shifting of responsibility towards the customer, which demands customer familiarity with technical language in English while freeing TMs from developing specialist knowledge in the LL, is clear in the handling of terminology in translation, as seen in Chapter 3.

they insist because it's kind of... I think it's kind of more like they think they're better if they can speak English, you know? Maybe they just don't think that they're... 'Oh, you don't think I'm good enough?' [...] They wouldn't fight back and say: 'Oh, I want an Arabic speaker' They'd be like: 'Ah, it's fine'. It's a cultural thing as well. And if English speaking is fine, it's actually much better for everybody here, it's more practical, you know? (TM4-AR)

The recognition of participants in an exchange as members of the business interculture is therefore a signal for the adoption of global English as a utilitarian third language ("The language is practical. There are no guidelines, but people are not too picky either. The key is to get things done. You are not dealing with complaints or sales, where the specific language you use is more important", TM6-FR). The need for global English in internal communication in particular creates a virtual reality that hides LL identification. For example, when discussing the requirement to address others by their last name in German business communication, SL2-DE explains how the English environment leads to the breaking of conventions:

There are managers that I talk to in Germany that I've never met, and I call them by their first name. Even if we talk in German. But that's company behaviour, kind of. So I can just... If I open up the chat - it doesn't matter if I ping an engineer in Bangalore or a field manager in Germany. I would say: 'Hi, first name'. So it's just because the company itself is on a 'you' personal level. (SL2-DE)

The channel of communication also plays a role, with instant messaging promoting a more personal approach, independently of the language chosen and the existing relationship ("[Instant messaging] is friendly and automatic. You can have a nice conversation even if you don't know each other", TM10-HE).

The greater the sense of identification, however, the more obvious the resistance against the virtual reality of global English ("It makes sense to speak your language if the other person is also from your country", TM13-NL). As such, oral communication then favours the decision to revert to conventional LL usage:

With customers [it] is always the last name. Just... If you've done a few upgrades, sometimes, if the [email] conversation changes into English at

some point, then you would continue with the first name. But when I call him, I would call him by his last name. (SL2-DE)

Beyond facilitating access, the recognition of shared group membership triggers the need to follow corresponding sociocultural and pragmatic norms such as degree of formality and informality. Despite interactions being framed in a wider international context, LL identification creates specific expectations that cannot be flaunted, particularly if the relationship requires additional care:

I mean, if I had a lot of conversations with a customer before in German and I know that they're kind of difficult, and then the conversation changes into English because a technician is involved, [...] I would still call him Mr. Bauer, or Mr. whatever. In English. Even though the technician is calling him by his first name. [...] If the customer says 'oh, you can call me Johan', that's fine. Then, ok, I continue like that. Because he wishes it. But he's, like, he's my customer, so it has to come from him. It's a respect thing. (SL2-DE)

The simultaneous identification of interactants as part of the LL in-group sets rules of engagement that cannot be ignored. The remote technician can break the conventions because he is not an LL user and is not bound by the same expectations. As an L1-LL user, however, SL2-DE does not have that freedom, unless explicitly granted by the customer, even if all participants in the communication are ingrained in a common international English context. SL2-DE is responsible for managing and maintaining the relationship and therefore needs to ensure the German conventions are adhered to, even in English. Ultimately, interactants may still make individual choices regarding how they wish to position themselves and be identified:

[Customers] would never say 'do not call me by my last name', but you can kind of indicate if... If an English technician says 'Hello, Mark, [SL2-DE] will help you with the schedule', and then the customer responds first and says 'Hi Ms. [SL2-DE], can you please...?' Then it's very clear he wants to stay in the last name level. Or if I say 'Hi, Mark, do you want to reschedule here?' and the answer is 'Hi Ms. [SL2-DE], yes, let's do that', then he made it clear that he wants to continue with on the [formal] level. So I would go back and call him Mr. whatever. (SL2-DE)

In this way, identification shows itself to be a process of negotiation, where participants may be legitimised or rejected as part of different groups but may also accept this or not with their own communication choices.

2.2 Positioning oneself: affiliation and detachment

The apparent contradiction between customers' expectations of LL provision and TMs' expectations of customers' English competence as IT experts is not only linked to varying perceptions of particular language users, markets or cultures, but also to how TMs view and POSITION themselves, and the degree to which they choose to affiliate or detach from the different groups they are identified with.

On the one hand, TMs may stress their affiliation to their LL identity by highlighting their connection to their language, country, or compatriots ("My fellow Egyptians, all of us in foreign lands!", TM4-AR). On the other hand, some TMs emphasise their detachment from the LL identity ("I'm so long here, it's much, much easier for me English, to be honest. [...] I had a few cases alright [with Lithuanian customers], but very little. And everything went in English. I wouldn't even try to speak with them in Lithuanian", TM2-RU). Typically, though, affective distance from the LL appears as a continuum, with TMs balancing their membership in both the LL culture and the global English environment:

I prefer myself to deal with [work] in English because I got the training in English, I got the shadowing in English, so it feels natural for me to do my job in English, and I like it. [...] But in terms of, like, the team and everything, I probably would like to have someone at least Slovakian or Czech. It's just nice to have the same language, I guess, at work. [...] When I started here, there were people with me from... There were Italians, there was Turkish, Russian. And because already the team members which were here longer, they had the same language, they could shadow them. They learnt everything in their native language, you know? Which was nice. But I was put with a German guy because there was no one Czech, so I found it a bit... I was jealous, you know? I wanted someone Czech also to explain it to me and kind of have this feeling... (TM1-CS)

As shown before, TMs' decisions on how to POSITION themselves towards the LL or English culture are constricted by having been identified by their audience as part of the in-group, as this sets up expectations of both parties that need to be negotiated. When TMs are not identified as LL users, they can choose to do it themselves or deliberately withhold this information. For example, TM10-HE and TM11-DA decide to engage early on in the LL to gain ACCESS to their customers using their LL proficiency for identification in a way that, as L2-LL users, their names alone do not allow ("Sometimes they are shocked by my name: 'Oh, do you speak Hebrew?' [...] If you are not native speaker, they would admire you because it's a very different and difficult 'upside down' language", TM10-HE); "They are surprised that I speak Danish", TM11-DA). In contrast, TM8-DE relies on his Filipino name to avoid being identified as a German user, unless it becomes necessary:

[Customers] know that Schmidt, Bauer, Müller, those are names that are really German. Like my other coworkers, they always get requests like: 'Oh, I still have to do this for this German', you know? That's why, for me personally, I usually mostly write in English, so they will think probably: 'Ah, he doesn't speak good German'. Only when the time comes when I really need to talk to them because of time issues or something, then that's a time when I actually speak in German with them. And they usually get shocked: 'Oh, you do speak German without any accent!' 'Yes', I say, 'I grew up in Germany'. [...] Sometimes they are asking me: 'Why do you always keep writing in English?' It's easier for me to write in English because, that's what I tell my customers, because my manager is English speaking and it may take me some time to translate everything if there is a case that they need to research, you know? So that's why most of my cases are in English, so that way I don't have to translate at all. (TM8-DE)

When TMs are unexpectedly revealed as LL users, the customer reaction is one of surprise, but the moment of disclosure can then have various consequences based on the alignment (or lack thereof) between the individual TM's original and newly assigned identification. TM10-HE and TM11-DA go from being considered non-LL users to L2-LL users, with no initial expectation for them to be able to provide an LL service. Once identified as an L1-LL user, however, TM8-DE's exclusive use of English to control the interaction is put into question since, although English use amongst L1-LL users is not uncommon, this is typically the result of an implicit negotiation, as seen in the previous section.

The process of affiliation and detachment is not limited to TM-customer relations. In fact, it is reflected in all participants' communication choices, although not always in relation to cultural and linguistic groups, but also organisational and ideational ones. Through their language choices SLs change their POSITIONING between MNs and TMs, stressing their connection to management ("What we [as management] look for is the ability to do the job", SL1-EN) or identifying themselves with the teams ("Sometimes we [as a team] are a bit lost because there are not clear procedures for some things", SL3-FI). Although effectively monolingual, MNs also orient themselves differently. They may affiliate to the TMs and position themselves as part of the teams ("We [as a team] deal with lots of different things, you know? And we deal with lots of different customers as well", MN3-EN). Conversely, they may detach from the TMs and choose to stress their leadership role ("I [as management] think when I've had so much success with my teams is because I treat them all like adults. I don't micromanage them", MN2-EN).

While having distinct duties, MNs, SLs, and TMs are always situated at the intersection between various parties. As "people managers" (MN3-EN), MNs act as bridges connecting teams and upper management. SLs, in turn, are a "middleman" (SL2-DE) between MNs and TMs, mediating between them both literally and figuratively. SLs are tasked with putting MNs' requests into perspective for TMs ("If [MNs] need something, I can translate it for the team and bring it into their daily work, how they have to do it so that management gets what they need", SL2-DE), but since communication amongst TMs is mostly in the LL, they also translate interlingually between both parties.⁸ Similarly, TMs are "the middle point between the client and the engineer" (TM9-ES). However, TMs do not perceive their intermediary role in neutral terms, as suggested by some of the metaphors they employ to describe their role:

⁸ In this example, SL2-DE is engaged simultaneously in interlingual translation and the kind of metaphorical translation used in knowledge transfer and discussed in Chapter 1. Given that the German team communicate mostly in their L1 and MNs are monolingual English users, SL2-DE needs to "translate" MNs' expectations into actionable steps, and does so from English into German.

I handle level 3 customers,⁹ so whatever they have, they're coming to me. It'd be like admin stuff, it could be upgrade stuff... Maybe they have a fight with their wife, they can come to me! [...] You can become like a *therapist*, you know? I'm listening and giving advice. [...] You have to act sometimes like a *psychologist*, you know? That's true, you know? You have to understand the people and how they want to be, you know, expecting some things from you, and you go that way. That's it. (TM5-TR)

I deal with customer level 3, so they need more attention. I am like a *nanny* for those customers, because they have more equipment. (TM10-HE)

Sometimes there might be miscommunications between the customer and the engineer: the technician may call to ask for permission and the Spanish customer panics and does not like answering the phone. So we sometimes will act almost as a *safety net*. We will try to schedule tasks at times when we will be at the office, when possible. (TM9-ES)

I am the *problem-solver*. [...] If I see an obstacle, I'm trying to go around it and make sure everything is fine. (TM2-RU)

A therapist is an active listener that provides guidance and advice, while a nanny takes care and minds, and a safety net acts as a form of protection. When understanding their role in these ways, TMs stress their responsibility towards the customer as a means to achieve their overall goal. This places the customer as key to their objective. Customers are the partner in the communication who has the final say on the schedule of the upgrades and therefore relationships with them must be treasured and nurtured to facilitate the process. However, this is not to say that the customer is always right. The therapist sways their client in the most beneficial direction according to their expert opinion, and the nanny does not just put up with whims and tantrums but plays a crucial part in disciplining. The safety net, although for the most part a passive source of reassurance, is in place as a preemptive measure in case something goes wrong. On the other hand, a problem-solver focuses on the ultimate goal and looks for the most efficient strategy to deal with any obstacle that may threaten its achievement. Here the customer is a potential hurdle. Customer queries and additional requests are one of the primary factors that may complicate or delay the completion of the upgrades, so the goal is to minimise friction. The relationship with the customer is still crucial, but the

⁹ Level 3 customer support is the highest support tier in many organisations. In this case, it refers to customers with a large number of devices at their premises and extensive support contracts.

choice in this case is to manage it, rather than cultivate it. This is not to simplistically imply that either approach is optimal, but rather to posit that, in addressing their common concern of GETTING THINGS DONE, TMs position themselves and their communication partners differently for strategic reasons, which also helps explain the diversity of assumptions regarding both TMs' skills needs and customers' expectations.

Indeed, in addition to the accepted identifications above, TMs position themselves by means of rejecting other ideational roles like that of “a secretary” (TM14-ES). The role of the secretary is also a support one, just like the therapist, the nanny or the safety net. However, a key distinction lies in the degree of control that can be exerted in the relationship. While the latter guide vulnerable parties towards a desirable outcome (or lead them to avoid a detrimental one), the former may be traditionally conceived as an assistant subject to the demands of a superior. Another commonly rejected role is that of translators (“I trained as a translator, and what has proven most useful are the research skills, as well as the attention to detail, but I do not consider myself a translator”, TM7-IT). As seen in the previous chapter, despite engaging continuously in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication, TMs' job does not centre around explicit interlingual transfer tasks regularly identified as “translation proper”, which are seen to be reserved for “professional translators” and come with a degree of responsibility that TMs tend to detach from.¹⁰

Just as TMs recognise or reject their customers as part of particular groups, customers situate TMs in a number of roles from which they derive certain expectations for the interaction. All participants therefore make communication decisions based on perceptions of the other, but also react to perceptions of themselves. Overall, by affiliating or detaching from the various groups they may be identified with, participants negotiate not just their cultural and linguistic identity, but the definitions of their own expertise and responsibility, and the norms, values and beliefs that underpin them.

¹⁰ See Chapter 3, Section 4.2 for a discussion on translators vs mediators. When it comes to mechanisms of identity negotiation, it could be argued that this research imposes the role of “translators” on TMs by identifying them as NPIT, despite their detachment from this label. Nevertheless, this provides a valuable window into the broader dominant understanding of translation and translators, as suggested in the introductory chapter and further discussed in Chapter 6.

3. SELF-VALIDATION: NORMS, VALUES, AND BELIEFS

“People got a job because of their language” (SL1-FR)

The linguistic and pragmatic choices made in the resolution of the diverse communication situations encountered by participants are shaped by perceptions of others as well as perceptions of the self. These, in turn, are driven by underlying assumptions of (i) language value and the distinct role of English and the LLs, (ii) language hierarchies based on shared notions of linguistic and cultural status, and (iii) language and communicative competence. As such, affiliation and detachment behaviours reflect a process of SELF-VALIDATION which frames how staff define their own professional identity by reinforcing or redirecting the normative expectations set by organisational practices in relation to management, recruitment, training, and progression opportunities.

This translates into significant variation in the way participants negotiate each exchange, which is supported by the unit’s flexible approach to both internal and external communication practices (“Every team does things differently. There is no unified way of doing things, but I am not sure whether this developed culturally from staff or it is a case of different management styles”, TM12-NO). Team dynamics lead to distinct ways of operating, with differences between monolingual and multilingual LL groups and MNs’ views as a result.¹¹ Flexible practices also match TMs’ B2B audience and the nature of their communications. Rather than dealing with the demands of consumer customers or reacting to technical support requests, where customers may have the upper hand, TMs typically remain in control of the exchanges as initiators and customers must ultimately follow their lead. Moreover, instead of having their performance measured against service level objectives, TMs’ goals are based on task completion.

This flexibility comes at a price, namely a lack of clarity in procedures (“The left hand does not know what the right hand is doing”, TM11-DA). On-boarding and training practices are inconsistent, depending on the number of staff hired at the same

¹¹ See Section 1.1 in this chapter.

time, so most learning happens informally. Practices are therefore inherited from shadowing and imitating existing staff, informed by previous experiences, or developed on the job:

There is no real training. You receive an explanation on the first week to get to know overall what is what, but actually doing the job is trial and error, asking people. You do not do stuff with someone at the beginning, so you can be a bit lost. You learn as you go. (TM6-FR)

I do remember with other corporates you do get four to six weeks training, you know, before you start. I actually literally got here, I believe I had some classroom training, like two to three, four hours, something like that, and the rest I read up on it myself or just said: 'Assign me a case, because I need to learn it anyways'. So I would say learning by doing is also not too bad. Training would be better though, also you can understand why it's been done like that or the other stuff. (TM8-DE)

Nevertheless, flexibility also has its advantages, since it allows TMs to do their job independently and feel trusted and responsible for their results:

There are no clear processes a lot of the time, and that is annoying and difficult, especially at the beginning, but at the same time that gives you freedom to manage your own work and do things your way. (TM6-FR)

Sometimes we are a bit lost because there are not clear procedures for some things. You have to figure it out yourself. In a way it's good because you are an adult. [...] [Processes] need to be documented but it's not too specific because in my previous job it was and it can feel like kindergarten. (SL3-FI)

This contrasts with rigidity of other support contexts, and shows an understanding on MNs' part of the need to adapt to different customer requirements, which cannot be achieved with strict communication guidelines:

I had it before, when I [had] a call frame to follow, which is designed for English speakers. But I mean, if you follow the call frames with an Arabic speaker, he'll hang up in your face! [...] And then you've management saying 'ok, we're going to cut back your quality of calls because you're not following the frame'. But, you know, I'm making sales! [...] Here, like, I think it's very good because it's results driven. And I think this is how it

should be everywhere [...] Having a direct supervisor that is close enough or that understands- they don't have to be from the same country, but give a chance to understand the other people and to kind of... I know our manager, he's amazing, I think he did courses and stuff before he started managing our team on understanding different cultures and this. [...] Leave [people] have their own way with the customers. Just tell them 'I want this' and you'll get it, you know? (TM4-AR)

Indeed, MNs accept the diversity amongst teams' ways of operating as an inevitable consequence of the unit's composition ("We have to be diverse because our customers are diverse anyway", MN3-EN). TMs' freedom, however, seems to arise by default rather than by design, and acts as a SELF-VALIDATION mechanism for MNs too. Unable to monitor work in the LL, MNs have to deal with a lack of ACCESS to their teams and must trust that the TMs are managing without issues as long as there are no escalations. And the source of this trust is firmly rooted in the assumed edge of the "native" speaker:

I kind of think, because we have native speakers, and because there's nearly always more than one, that - I suppose, that trust is there on people, isn't it? And I think, you know, it would be different, I suppose, for me, if we had just one Italian. We don't, we have four. So I suppose, you know, we... and they deal with the field, who are based in Italy and they are all Italians, so that you'd know pretty quickly if the correct communication wasn't going out there to people, you know? So... there's certainly an element of trust, and I think that trust is stronger with the fact that we have people who've grown up in the country. (MN3-EN)

From MNs' perspective, by having not just one but multiple native speakers, the unit buys in both proof and guarantee of seamless communication. They are trusted not only to be able to resolve difficult exchanges, but to avoid issues in the first place, and as a result they are not tested for language proficiency during recruitment. Language competence is not irrelevant, but it is taken for granted ("When HR line up an interview for a German-speaking position, it is assumed that the person can speak German, so it is not something that I would look into a whole load", MN2-EN). The presence of native speakers acts as a natural quality control system, so no challenges are identified explicitly in relation to the management of multilingual staff and their communication practices.

In addition to the assumption of language proficiency, this approach is linked to specific demographic expectations that tie in with the nature of the job and support the prevailing recruitment model:

I think the fact that we look for native speakers means that people who are interested in maybe coming to Ireland for a few years, in their twenties, with a view to... well, some do stay, I mean, some do stay here, but a view to maybe moving back home when- when they're older or settled down or whatever. I think it means that they're here for a bit of fun, and they're here to work, and they're here to be positive, you know? (MN3-EN)

The resulting high turnover rates place a burden on both teams and MNs, with work being disrupted by the constant need to hire and train new staff ("I would avoid, unless they are very good a candidate, hiring someone who I knew was really only going to be here for a year. Because they take away the talent and the skills that they have learnt, and they are gone. And then you have to bring someone new", MN2-EN). Nevertheless, turnover is accepted as a natural condition of the job:¹²

It's just... it's part of it, really, isn't it? [...] In a way, it's good to move, you know? Maybe every two years because you kind of - you get a new lease of life, you kind of freshen yourself up and challenge yourself again, you know? [...] I think, in general, you know, some people with- with the type of role that it is here, they are... maybe two to three years is the maximum. Maybe around there. And people feel that it may get a little bit monotonous. So there's an expectation that they will move on, and a lot of people do. But again, it's not a bad thing. (TM3-EN)

¹² Turnover can be said to reflect market size. It may be higher in bigger teams because there are also more positions available to match a variety of qualifications and experiences (and therefore more possibilities for further experience, progression, or more favourable conditions). Likewise, there are also more users which makes it easier to fill these positions regularly. At the same time, bigger teams serve first tier markets when it comes to language support and therefore customers in these markets may be more used to services being provided or available in their language, and these higher demands could also be linked to greater turnover ("I was told not to say to the French team that I spoke French because they would want me to go to their team. It was almost like a joke, but not really. People in the French team seem to leave jobs faster because people are more demanding", TM9-ES). In smaller markets, the number of available positions for equivalent non-specialised, entry level jobs will be lower, although so too will be the number of available candidates. Retention may be better simply because of staff will need longer to find a suitable alternative for progression, but other arguments are possible, like the job may feel more attractive with higher levels of responsibility when there are fewer members of staff in charge of a particular market.

Turnover may be a challenge in the long run, but the company does not see it as bad thing. There is an understanding that people may leave after a while. It depends on their age and their circumstances. Normally people that will stay longer are Irish people and there's no surprise that management is then mainly Irish, and people who are settled here. (SL1-EN).

Not all TMs match (or identify with) MNs' perceived prototypical profile of young L1-LL users looking to develop work experience in an English-speaking context, and it is this perceived (mis)alignment which underpins TMs' SELF-VALIDATION strategies. Whether through the use of English or the LL, TMs may orient their responsibility towards the customer or the company, justifying their choices based on assumptions of customer needs or on performance assessment measures. As such, they demonstrate different behavioural patterns, but always with the common objective of resolving the communicative situations that are part of their day-to-day job in a way that is in line with their own goals.

3.1 Behavioural profiles

TMs' response to the underlying normative expectations set by management and recruitment practices follows broad patterns that can be conceptualised in the form of distinct behavioural profiles. These reflect a combination of TMs' POSITIONING, ACCESS, and SELF-VALIDATION strategies, i.e., the extent to which TMs choose to affiliate to or detach from the LL identity, the degree of control and trust they exercise through the use of English or the LL, and whether their choices reinforce or redirect the dominant definition of expertise as linked to the notion of "nativeness".¹³ The proposed categorisation does not intend to simplify what are complex personal and professional identities. Acknowledging the diversity of participants' backgrounds and experiences, the profiles aim to conceptualise behaviour, not classify individuals, and therefore refer to broad patterns observed in the resolution of the substantive population's main concern. Said patterns, which are identified from recurring incidents in the data, serve to explain differences in behaviour within the limits of the

¹³ The label "native" is used in this section to represent how TMs relate to being identified by others as native speakers of a particular LL, although their actual linguistic profiles may be more complex. The reader is directed again to Appendix B for details on participants and their languages.

emergent theory.¹⁴ Table 3 summarises the four different profiles identified, which are further discussed below.

Table 3. TMs' behavioural profiles

	POSITIONING		ACCESS		SELF-VALIDATION	
	Affiliation	Detachment	Control	Trust	Reinforce	Redirect
Expat	X	X	X		X	
Affirmative native	X			X	X	
Reluctant native		X	X			X
Customer support expert		X		X		X

3.1.1 The expat

The expats take personal and professional pride in their ability to provide a personalised customer experience through the LL (“I like this. It’s actually kind of... oh, like, every time I get a Czech email I am always so excited! [...] I feel like I want to use Czech as much as I can here because it’s nice, I am supporting that market”, TM1-CS). As such, they reinforce the assumed need for LL natives, but position themselves as bicultural experts. They place their value for the company in their understanding of both the international and the LL contexts, and therefore demonstrate a balance of affiliation to and detachment from the LL identity.

Within the global English corporate environment, the expats are experts in the LL and the people who speak it thanks to their personal connection to the LL. The cultural and linguistic knowledge of the “native” is at the heart of their interpretation of expertise, which is linked to an inherent awareness of the communicative expectations of a community of language users with whom they self-identify. It is their background

¹⁴ Additional patterns could be explored through narrative analysis by way of reference to demographic data such as length of time in the country and the company, previous work experience, socioeconomic background, contexts of bilingual development, and personal relationship to the LL outside of work. For example, there appears to be a correlation between life stage and (mis)alignment with the dominant expat profile, since staff who have been established in the country for longer and have more extensive work experience gravitate towards the more distinct POSITIONING behaviours of the affirmative or reluctant natives. Investigating these links is beyond the scope of this study, but they point towards potential avenues of inquiry for organisational researchers concerned with the management of multilingual and multicultural teams, as well as sociologists or applied linguists considering individual processes of linguistic and cultural identity construction in cases of international mobility.

as LL nationals that allows them to communicate effectively with LL customers, whether the exchange takes place in the LL or in English:

We [Spaniards] are warmer, we like to have a closer relationship with people. (TM9-ES)

We wouldn't really say: 'Dear customer'. It would sound like I am really talking to... a prince! [...] So we would say 'Hello!'. That's what we say. [...] Sometimes there are emails where it says 'Dear customer, I hope you are well'. We don't say that in Czech. [...] Our culture is more... colder, really straight to the point. (TM1-CS)

The cultural and linguistic identification afforded by the LL can therefore be exploited to facilitate access to the customers, but also rejected when it becomes an obstacle. This forces these TMs to weigh the benefits of relying on the LL against the potential subsequent disruptions:

Some customers, you know, are really nice, and they ask you... Specially on the phone. That's why I prefer to use the phone to Czech. Because they feel more like... they chat on the phone. Sometimes it's even annoying! Because then they start talking about the weather, and 'it's sunny', and I am like 'yeah... I need to go back to work'. (TM1-CS)

They see the customer as both a key and a hurdle to their goals, and they negotiate this accordingly by exercising control over the exchanges through both the use of the LL and English.¹⁵ However, the expats' detachment from the LL is not only a matter of expediency, but of self-identification and status. Indeed, these TMs do not see themselves as just LL users, and rather consider themselves international professionals. Having high English proficiency and working for a big multinational company abroad sets them apart as institutional experts for the LL customers. In this sense, they detach from the LL identity by relating to their global profile.

The emphasis on detaching from LL customers serves to stress their belonging to the corporate interculture. Being fluent in the institutional language means being able

¹⁵ See Section 1.3 in this chapter.

to participate in a global context, thus differentiating themselves from LL users who may be considered “monocultural” or not sufficiently confident English users:

In Spain sometimes the technicians are badly accustomed. They are nice and pleasant, but they skip over the right procedures and do as they please. [...] They have their customs and don't understand that they are working with people that are in a different country. (TM9-ES)

I'd say most of them what I am dealing with, they have [a] good level of English. But it's true that sometimes I see a mistake. But you know, I won't be like: 'Hey, let's switch back to Czech because your English is bad!' No. But it's good to know that you can ask in Czech. You have the other option, you know, in case you don't understand or something. [...] I won't push them to Czech or English but, you know... They also see what they should... like, real life, without Czech. (TM1-CS)

The idea of minding and guiding customers therefore mixes with the expectation that they should know better and be prepared, not only to communicate comfortably in English, but to navigate this corporate environment competently and in an independent manner. The global English context is “the real world” that customers need to get used to, moving past the assumed limitations of the LL worldview. As a result, the expats tend to express a connection to alternative LL groups that are perceived to be more globally inclined because of their English proficiency:

Some people ask me: 'Don't you prefer to work in your own language?' Not really. If you are used to using English and you are more efficient... I prefer the Nordics. (TM9-ES)

Oh, I am more on the English side! I much more prefer to deal with someone who I can actually ask how they are doing or say 'thank you very much' or put a smiley face sometimes, you know? Because you feel sometimes from the emails as well that the customer is nice, and they appreciate it. But from the Czech customers I don't feel anything! It's like: 'Ok, I have done the job, and that's it', you know? (TM1-CS)

While at times choosing to stress their differentiation from the perceived monocultural LL identity, the expats do not actually reject the LL identity altogether, which is still very much at the centre of how they manage both internal and external relationships. Nevertheless, the emphasis on institutional language has a key role as a

SELF-VALIDATING mechanism. While relying on the LL to fulfil the assumed need for LL provision (“It’s supposed to be a German experience for them”, SL2-DE), the organisational limits to this experience highlight the ultimate requirement for English (“I can assign someone from Prague but then you have to agree on that and it may cost more money if it’s done in the place rather than remotely. So then they’d better speak in English!”, TM1-CS). From the point of view of TMs’ role responsibility, TMs serve the company by using the LL to gain initial access to customers, but then guiding them to complete the required processes in the organisation’s preferred manner, which involves English instead. In this way, LL detachment shows TMs’ alignment with the company’s objectives. But LL detachment can also be used to validate other limitations to the LL experience related to TMs’ own competence. Where TMs struggle with specialist language in the LL, resorting to English is justified by reference to these organisational constraints (“If the term is technical, I copy it in English”, SL2-DE).¹⁶

3.1.2 The affirmative native

The affirmative natives also position themselves as LL experts for the company, but rather than engaging in the balancing act of the expats, they orient their responsibility towards the customer more explicitly and signal a greater degree of affiliation towards the LL identity:

It’s not like I’m a big patriot of Poland, but it’s always part of me. Definitely. I won’t go back there, I’m a long time settled here... But you’re always kind of thinking, it’s your country, so speaking with someone from there it’s nice. (TM3-PL)

Even [if] there are so many accents, [customers] would be like: ‘Oh! Are you from this and that...?’ And they start chatting to you. So it’s about, more than anything, the whole culture coming together, you know? (TM4-AR)

The customer is key to their objectives, and for this reason the LL is an invaluable resource. Beyond language proficiency, it is their cultural belonging which gives them an advantage. Being automatically identified as part of the LL in-group allows them to build trust and establish closer relationships with customers and field staff:

¹⁶ See Chapter 3, Section 3.2.

They'd send an email, and they'd see your name and be like: 'Oh, where are you from?' [...] So I'd be 'I'm in Cork, but I'm from Egypt', and they'd start like 'oh, ok, that's lovely...' So they all know you then. It's more like, in Arabic, then, it's- it's nice even when you say 'thank you', to kind of say it in Arabic and they'd be 'have a lovely evening, and maybe if you come to Egypt just let us know, pass by the office', you know? So it kind of creates a better atmosphere, of course. (TM4-AR)

Reinforcing the normative expectations around native proficiency, the value of the affirmative native hinges on their intimate understanding of customers as LL users, which justifies their role. Their linguistic and cultural knowledge is a legitimising force that grants them trust from management, and their presence in the business signifies a recognition of the importance of the LL for customer service, which is also a point of personal and professional pride:

It's definitely beneficial to have a native or local country speakers because... many, many examples, as I said, where English can get a small respond and the minute I stepped in with, you know, a few words [in Polish], we get a respond. [...] Anyway, it's working and I will pride myself that, because of me, many cases will speed up and solve faster. [...] That's mainly why I'm here as well, for that. (TM3-PL)

Everyone wants to feel the importance of their language, and the importance of their being in that company for that specific language. [...] [Customers] can be handled in English, but it's definitely better for the customer service to have it in their own language. That definitely makes a massive difference. So, I feel that, for myself, it's definitely a trust that you, in your department, you are appreciated for what you do, and they trust that you're going to do your job, you know? Just find the way that is best for the customer. [...] I kind of find it nice, you know? Because it's good to keep the languages going, you know? And it's good for our jobs as well! (TM4-AR)

3.1.3 The reluctant native

In contrast to those who emphasise their connection to the LL, the reluctant natives detach from it ("I actually don't use much Norwegian at work or in my personal life. English is more like my first language", TM12-NO). Despite acknowledging the role of their L1-LL status in their recruitment, the reluctant natives reject LL cultural and linguistic knowledge as the origin of their expertise, which comes instead from their

prior work experience, technical knowledge, or analytical skills. The value they offer to the company is therefore redirected away from the LL identity:

The skills I need for this job are mainly attention to detail, making sure you have all the information you need, and that you provide all the correct details, that you are not sloppy. (TM12-NO)

I can switch just immediately right now in German to have a conversation with you, as well as in Tagalog. So it's not a big deal for me. [...] The main skills that are used, I would say, at least the way I see it, it's logical thinking, you know? Just getting everything organized. (TM8-DE)

Cultural differences are recognised as having an impact on communication and interpersonal behaviour (both internally and amongst customers), but these TMs show an inclination to transcend them, choosing to position themselves closer to the global English interculture. As a result, LL use is typically avoided or minimised because it is considered unnecessary ("Most Norwegian people will be very ok with English, and these are tech guys, so there is no real need for Norwegian", TM12-NO) or only required for remedial purposes, as a last resort ("Most of the time I have my conversation with most of my customers in English on mail. Only when I call them, that's when I start talking more or speaking to them in German", TM8-DE).

The reluctant natives orient their responsibility towards the company and its goals and targets, placing clear limits to their role:

I am here for the administration, so whenever something technical comes up... it's not my pay rate, you know? [...] So that's why I am telling customers: 'Come on, get it scheduled, and then you can ask all your queries to the technician'. (TM8-DE)

My favourite part of the job is looking at numbers and making sense of reports. My least favourite part is the customers! Numbers will do what you want, people won't. (TM12-NO)

Rather than a key to GETTING THINGS DONE, the customer is seen as a hurdle that must be carefully managed. While some TMs may relinquish control over the relationship in exchange for trust to gain access to customers, the reluctant natives see

the increased familiarity arising from being identified as an LL user as a potential obstacle:

When I first started here, that's what I actually did - I wrote in German. Then I saw that a lot of requests are coming and then I changed my style into English, only in English, and they just filled out my form that I sent them, you know? With no other requests. Which is good for me, because I don't have to deal with a lot of... extra baggage, you know? [...] Since my surname is not really German, I can write in English and I can expect from them 'ok, this is the given details', you know? They will not request from me anything special. They will just stay in straight forward business. That's what I would prefer, instead of 'oh, you are German, oh, could you please do this and this and this?', you know? (TM8-DE)

Their linguistic choices are ultimately validated by the fact that the success of the communication is linked to completion rates instead of any measures of customer satisfaction ("If the customer requests a German speaker, I will speak to them in German, I'll write in German, it's not a big deal. But as long as there is no request of such things, I will continue doing it the way I do it. Because that way I can work more efficiently, I can do a lot more requests, that can be work done", TM8-DE).

3.1.4 The customer support expert

The customer support experts relate to the reluctant natives in their detachment from the LL and the emphasis placed on the individual rather than the group. There are cultural differences, but these can be resolved with effective communication independently of the nationality involved or the language used. Stressing individual responsibility and personality, they resist identification not only with the LL identity, but with any LL identity:

Russians have [a] different culture, definitely. But they are not different than we are here, to be honest. You have the same people. I mean... I don't see that big of a difference between cultures, like. If you are nice to them, they are nice to you. So I don't think there's a big issue with that. [...] It doesn't matter the language, to be honest. It's all in the personality itself. You cannot judge, you know, a book by its cover. You need to read it. (TM2-RU)

Sometimes people may say: ‘Is that the Dane or the Irish in you speaking?’ But I say: ‘It’s me!’ It’s about the people themselves. If we spoke the same language or not, it doesn’t matter. Take out the uniform! (TM11-DA)

As such, these TMs also redirect the normative expectations of native proficiency, although they situate their value specifically on their customer service skills:

You need to have customer skills, basically: to not shout, to deal with the situation. Words are very important, but it’s not only about how to write the language. [...] When answering questions, you need to know how to react. It depends on the question and the type of customer. (TM11-DA)

Sometimes you need to intervene and calmly explain that there’s a technical issue, ‘we are doing everything what we can’, just to try to explain what’s going on. [...] And you try to explain [it] in [a] nice way, you know? [...] Trying to be nicely... convincing! So that’s the thing with my work. Good customer service, basically. (TM2-RU)

Their expertise comes from their ability to find the right information from the right person and manage relations by adapting to different customers, which is framed as effective communication rather than knowledge of a specific language or culture (“In any case, business matters need to be professionally written. Danish or not, I would not write something informal if it was instructions for an upgrade, for example”, TM11-DA). Like the affirmative natives, they see the customer as key and focus on the communication skills required to respond to their needs (“I have to make sure that what customer asks, customer gets it. [...] The main objective would be customer service: the customer comes first, so [the] customer has to be happy, TM2-RU). However, for the customer support expert, building trust does not hinge exclusively on the LL identification. They still rely on the LL as a valuable resource that can help avoid or resolve conflict where necessary, but they do so without the personal affiliation of the expats or the affirmative natives:

Usually, everything goes through the emails in English and, if I need Russian, I can translate that, but it’s very rarely that I do that [...] I don’t see the need for... to use [it], you know? So, of course, if it’s your own language, like, for example, it would be much easier to work on it. But I am so long in here, so I don’t see the difference, to be honest. (TM2-RU)

The weight of normative expectations on TMs' self-validating behaviours can be clearly illustrated by TM2-RU's case. In line with the customer support expert profile, TM2-RU sees language and culture as unproblematic, both externally and internally ("We have so many international teams now, we don't have any problems, you know? No barriers whatsoever. Yeah, so, I don't know. I wouldn't say there's a big issue on that", TM2-RU). Communicating in the LL is an option, but rarely the chosen one. Unlike the reluctant natives, however, this is not simply based on expediency, as a result of perceiving customers as hurdles, but rather on accountability:

I could speak with some engineers in Russian, you know, but I'm trying to keep up... I'm trying to keep English as the main kind of language just for records and everything else, you know? It's much easier, for example, if something goes wrong, you have it in English, that you agreed on that or you agreed on that. It's to cover yourself. (TM2-RU)

In fact, TM2-RU's detachment from the LL is not just a personal choice, but a managerial decision:

I know for Russia, for the Russian market, I have in my team a Lithuanian - sorry, I have a Latvian speaker who also speaks Russian, but his Russian isn't sufficient enough to be engaging with customers, so he is just used purely as a backup. So as regards to him as a Russian speaker, we didn't do a language test this time, so he slipped through the net. We hired him as a Russian speaker, but in the end, he ended up doing English. So he speaks to customers in the UK and everywhere else as a backup for someone who is our actual Russian speaker. (MN2-EN)

Not only does MN2-EN mistake TM2-RU's nationality,¹⁷ but unapologetically labels their LL proficiency as insufficient to carry out the tasks they were hired to do: to communicate with customers in Russian. TM2-RU can speak the language, but allegedly not to the extent to which they can be considered an "actual Russian speaker", which relegates them to being "used" as a backup. From this, an analogy could be made between the way TMs and their language skills are understood and the idea of "extracting natural resources": For MNs, TMs can be seen as reservoirs holding a specific commodity (the LL) that needs to be present in sufficient quantities

¹⁷ TM2 is actually a Lithuanian national.

(assumed proficiency) to justify its extraction. When this cannot be automatically ascertained by location (nativeness), an exploration (testing) must be carried out. In this case, no exploratory operations were carried out, perhaps on the assumption that geographical proximity would guarantee the presence of “sufficient” deposits. Nevertheless, even if the reservoir is not considered rich in crude oil (limited LL proficiency), the accompanying gas reserves may still be extracted profitably (English proficiency). In other words, TMs must possess enough of the LL for their skills to be considered valuable. When candidates are not native speakers, they are supposed to be tested during the recruitment process. The recruiting managers forewent this step with TM2-RU, seemingly assuming that being a national from a former Soviet republic, the TM would bring along the expected level of Russian proficiency. As it surfaced that this was not the case, TM2-RU was “used” for their English instead.

The means by which MN2-EN determined that TM2-RU’s Russian was insufficient for the purpose of successfully engaging customers are unknown, as is the extent to which TM2-RU was directly aware of this evaluation and how accurate it might have actually been. Whether influenced by another staff member’s comments,¹⁸ a misunderstanding with a customer, or any other interpersonal conflict, what is most relevant about MN2-EN’s perceptions of TM2-RU’s competence is how they reflect a wider network of beliefs around language competence and identity that, while operating mostly underneath the surface, have a very direct role in the practical decisions that guide participants’ communicative practices.

3.2 Proficiency and needs

When it comes to defining expertise, some TMs emphasise native knowledge, placing their value on their connection to the LL identity (“We are asked to provide a service in Italian”, TM7-IT). Others, however, consider the LL connection irrelevant or even an obstacle, and stress the importance of achieving the desired results (“Numbers speaks [...] Basically, if you are doing your work, there is no problem”, TM2-RU). Expertise is therefore presented either as more than language (requiring innate cultural knowledge) or as other than language (based on customer support skills

¹⁸ See Section 1.1 in this chapter.

or other abilities). For TMs, the key is in managing relationships with all parties involved, knowing how to connect, explain, reassure, and persuade as necessary to achieve their own goals. But in doing so, language is figured as either inconsequential (a interchangeable code that does not affect communication) or insufficient (a baseline that is only functional with additional insider knowledge stemming from a deep understanding of its speakers and their culture).

Attitude, personality, and previous experience are the focus of the hiring process (“During recruitment, the main concern is whether the person is a good fit for the team. Their background is also considered in order to demonstrate customer service skills. Language knowledge is very important, but so is getting the right feel from the candidate”, MN1-EN). Although customer skills are demonstrated through effective communication, the fact that this happens through and in between languages is not a consideration (“There is no training for communication as such. It is beneficial, but people got a job because of their language”, SL1-FR).

Staff were indeed hired because of their languages, but considering that this is not a factor assessed during the interview process, recruitment hinges on candidates “possessing” the language and not so much on what they demonstrate to be able to do with it. Success in the mediation processes at work is therefore treated as language-independent. Language is not seen as a skill to be refined and developed for strategic purposes, but an innate ability. And as a result, the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural nature of many of staff’s daily interactions is rendered transparent:¹⁹

In the workflow itself, it doesn’t really make a difference. It’s the same... same kind of professionalism, same kind of emails, same work ways, or email addresses we would use. It’s just really... It depends on a case-to-case thing if it’s German or English. (SL2-DE)

¹⁹ The transparency of language in the definition of needs is reflected in the job advertisements published at the time of data collection. The descriptions emphasise soft skills (creativity, teamwork, initiative) and mention communication (great communicator) but make no reference to language competence. In fact, as can be seen in the sample job description in Appendix D, the ad does not only indirectly assume LL competence, but also nationality and native status given its title: “German Accounts Specialist”.

To be honest with you, it's hard to say [what level of proficiency you need for the job] because I just switch between the two languages without any issues. (TM8-DE)

Needs are assessed based on the requirement to respond to high turnover and growing workloads in particular markets, and as such recruitment focuses on capturing the language of that market. In this sense, language is only perceived as a challenge insofar as the unit may find itself missing certain resources in the form of “languages” (e.g. German, French, Spanish, etc.). The positions target natives, so once that condition is fulfilled, language does not come into the equation anymore, as it is deemed as something “held” by natives in equal parts:

If we had three interviews and there were three native German speakers, language would not come into it. It would simply be: Who is the best candidate based on their experience and their attitude? If we had maybe three interviews and it was two Polish speakers, two people from Poland speaking German, and one German speaker, speaking native German, language would come into it a small bit. But as long as they did well in the test, it would still be down to the skills and the attitude. (MN2-EN)

Language testing only applies to L2-LL users and, even then, it is not implemented consistently. The tasks involve a general conversation in the LL and a translation task which SLs admit is not truly reflective of the work in the unit,²⁰ highlighting weaknesses and contradictions in the articulation of competence needs. What language competence entails is not made explicit or carefully assessed because it is not believed that it needs to be. In the absence of alternative conceptual and practical means for the definition of skills, “nativeness” is employed as a placeholder for a guarantee of a sufficient degree of proficiency to resolve potentially complex and unexpected communication situations in a successful manner. While L2-LL users are considered (and hired), recruitment focuses on L1-LL users based on assumptions of customer expectations and, by extension, idealised proficiency:

When the department started out, there was quite possibly some non-native speakers, or people who didn't grow up in Germany or in France but who spoke the language and, you know, there's different ways – I suppose, the

²⁰ See Appendix F.

way of speaking in a business setting is different to a social setting, isn't it? So I think some customers kind of felt that it wasn't the same, you know? They could tell the difference, I suppose, really, is the thing. So we decided, as a department, to hire people who had grown up in the particular country. (MN3-EN)²¹

Amongst TMs, however, the jury is out regarding customers' acceptance of L2 LL users and the job's LL competence requirements:

I don't think, with zero, going to support this market, just learning the technical stuff, that wouldn't be good enough, because sometimes there are ad-hoc situations and you don't know what to expect, so you need... probably to be native. I think so, I don't know. [...] Obviously on the phone, yes, but maybe for the emails, you know, if you have help from someone, writing could have been done maybe without 100% perfection in the language. (TM1-CS)

I can't imagine... really, that someone with broken Polish language could really be- feel comfortable. For the conversation... it's a complicated language and I can't think that it would be... that great? [...] In the business environment, you can't have it on kind of not a good level. (TM3-PL)

It's easier writing the language because people may understand better, but on the phone, if it's not fluent, it may be more difficult. Maybe then it's preferable to use English or transfer the case to another representative. (TM13-NL)

In French... it would depend, but mostly they wouldn't like you if you're not speaking really good French. Like, if you're not native. [...] I used to take French calls, but you have to make them aware from the start, so either they accept it or you tell them you'll transfer them to a French speaker. So it's very important there. Arabic, no. It's not like this. Arabic - you don't have to be excellent at Arabic, for example. You can be good enough [...] They would be happy even, you know, that someone is making the effort to learn their language, you know? (TM4-AR)

²¹ This is a good illustration of the contradictions that arise as a result of the assumed proficiency of the native. Staff are expected to handle all kinds of communication situations by virtue of having grown up in the LL country. However, language competence does not develop equally in all areas of life, and business communication typically requires opportunities for situated learning. Given the unit's recruitment strategy and entry level nature of the job, it is actually the language of social settings rather than that of business contexts that many L1-LL candidates would be most familiar with.

Native language not necessary for communication as such, with technical people it is not key. Customers just want to get things done and do not mind too much even if there is someone with an accent or they do not speak perfectly the language. (TM6-FR)

A key point arising from these comments is the distinction between written and oral skills when it comes to proficiency needs. MNs and SLs suggest that written communication requires higher accuracy, although this is based mostly on their experiences of the recruitment process:

I've interviewed a few people who haven't kind of been native speakers as such, maybe they've lived in a country for a certain period of time and learned the language, and they breeze through the oral test, you know? We get someone from the department in and they'll have a chat with them and just talk about the weather or something, and they get on fine with that. But then we do our written test as well, and more often than not, they don't pass the written test, you know? It's a lot more difficult for people to pass it. Because there's maybe a couple of technical terms in there, you know? And business-related stuff, we'll say. It's only one or two paragraphs, but they don't kind of get that side. And I think that may come across then in written communication more so than oral communication, I think, you know? (MN3-EN)

Given the nature of the tasks, however, it is not surprising that the written test yields less favourable results. Moreover, the conclusion that writing skills are what distinguishes natives from non-natives is, at a minimum, questionable, considering that L1-LL users are not asked to perform any test.

Interestingly, TMs stress the relevance of native proficiency in oral communication instead. Despite playing a lesser role in TMs' daily tasks, oral communication is sooner seen as the distinguishing factor in customers' attitude towards L2 LL users. In this sense, proficiency is not only related to accuracy, but fluency and acceptability as an in-group member:

If I learn Spanish, say, to intermediate level, and if I pick up the phone and talk to someone and also you [as a Spaniard] pick up the phone... [...] You can solve the case easily. You can understand, you know, the local thing and the people, and how they react. And it's definitely help. (TM5-TR)

It's not just about the language, but also knowing the country. [...] They get to know you by name, you build a relationship. You know the sayings, you have knowledge of what's going on, and they are open-minded and will ask you about everything. (TM10-HE)

Customers' reaction to "less than perfect" LL varies from market to market but, as seen before, perceptions of audience requirements are in any case coloured by participants' own cultural and linguistic identification and, consistent with their personal and professional strategies for SELF-VALIDATION, reflect both their views of others and of self as legitimate language users.²²

Since native proficiency in the LL is linked to the expectation of seamless interlingual communication, language is not an explicit component of SLs' quality assurance procedures. Quality checks focus on processes, including following the required steps, taking ownership of cases, recording updates appropriately, being responsive, and meeting deadlines ("There's loads of other checks that we do on a reporting kind of level [...] but that's not language-related", SL2-DE; "Tracking and monitoring these things would be related to other factors, but never exclusively, or that I can think of, related to language", MN2-EN). Nevertheless, attention to language use is necessary to avoid the potential for miscommunication:

It can be that something is misinterpreted from the English official procedure, or [TMs] might have put in a translation that can cause misunderstandings with customers. [...] Sometimes you just have to clarify it and say: 'Ok, you have to write this very specific so that it comes across what we are actually asking for'. (SL2-DE).

Indeed, the translations of both sample email templates²³ and TMs' comments hint at the flaws in the notion of the infallible native and in equating L1-LL use with full proficiency:

²² Just like MN3-EN invokes customer preferences to justify recruitment practices, in the examples above TM1-CS, TM3-PL, and TM13-NL present the native as equivalent to full competence and fluency, while TM4-AR praises her Arabic-speaking customers for their ability to be part of the English context, and TM6-FR resists the widespread image of the demanding French speakers.

²³ See Appendix E and the corresponding discussion in Chapter 3, Section 3.1.

I go online to check text for mistakes. Grammar is very difficult; I only did three years of it in school. The spell check is always on automatically too. (TM10-HE)

I have to be careful with spelling mistakes! So obviously I always switch the keyboard to Czech because we have those signs which in English there are not. So I have to be careful about my grammar. Because when I told you before, I am starting to... not forgetting but, just not realising, and the grammar is very wide in Czech. So I have to kind of double-check sometimes, you know: 'Is this the right grammar? Is this the right thing?' So yeah, I type the email and then I go back to it... and obviously the computer doesn't recognise the words, everything is red! And then it makes me confused and I am like: 'God, is this right?' (TM1-CS)

Acknowledgements of the need for support, however, typically come with a sense of justification. Language challenges do arise from cross-cultural and cross-linguistic practices, but they are resolved in ways that do not have a clear, direct negative impact on the running of the unit's operations:

As native speaker, I- definitely there's no communication issues. [...] Language-wise, at this stage, I wouldn't say that I'm facing challenges, because of the language. Even at the beginning, when I started here four years ago, my previous jobs were not office related - it was like construction site, you know? A catering company... Places that I wouldn't use my native language, in writing especially, for a long time. So then, my writing Polish... grammatics and orthographics, then I was making mistakes! And I was using Google to find out the way I should actually use the very specific words. [...] Because eight years of no use... mostly it's like, you know, cycling a bike, you know? After eight years you might not go on one wheel, you know? (TM3-PL)

The previous examples show both TMs' awareness of their competence limitations and their ability to address them by utilising resources at their disposal. However, the challenges are presented as stemming from a lack of practice and completely resolved after tapping into a latent proficiency, rather than being a question of experience and problem-solving skills that can be refined and trained. Instead of highlighting language users' ability to communicate successfully with different audiences and move effectively between languages, a link is established between competence and identity

that reinforces the gold standard of the native, more so in terms of authenticity than accuracy (“On the phone, accent can play a role, but there are always some mistakes that native speakers also make”, SL1-EN). What is unconsciously understood as the need for natives then appears not so much a question of competence but of linguistic and cultural affiliation.

While native proficiency is commonly seen as a shortcut to effective LL provision, no similar expectations of “nativeness” are placed on staff’s English competence. TMs are typically expected to be L1-LL users to be able to respond appropriately to the LL market needs, but the legitimacy of staff as English users is not dependent on the same proficiency requirements. With many staff members being L2 English users, including MNs’ international upper management, error tolerance (or the impact of a lack of L1-identification) is assumed to be different than amongst L1-LL users. Indeed, some TMs do not only work in an international environment as L2 English users, but also deal with customers in L1-English markets like the UK and Ireland. And just as LL-customers may be seen to have certain expectations regarding LL service from L2 users, L1-English customers are described as doing so too:

I was a representative for UK [in the past]. So I know that there are people who can be very picky on a certain approach, if you tell them something, even politely, then you can find some email that’s ‘why this person is telling me what to do?’ [...] Some people mind. I don’t mind, but I know that there will be people checking on certain wordings and things like that. (TM3-PL)

Although English dominates interactions as an L2, discussions around language competence and needs in the unit focus on “languages”, i.e., those other than English, due to the overlap of the LL-English of L1-English customers and staff on the one hand, and the company’s global English on the other.²⁴ Instead of the domain of a specific group of people, English is treated as a public good of sorts that functions as the universal voice of business and technology. It is not a “language”, but a code for international understanding through which the multilingual enterprise communicates. In contrast to the LLs which are culturally loaded and attached to a place and a people, global English is presented as filter-free and lacks ownership. While English loses its

²⁴ See Section 2.1 in this chapter.

status as an LL, with L1-English users also needing to adapt to the particular requirements and conventions of this global variety, the LLs are romanticised:

It's not like a template message that, you know- 'dear sir, we haven't received a respond'- you would write like this, you know? It's more like: 'That email was sent to you a couple of weeks ago, we still haven't got a respond, could you... make an effort and drop a line?', you know? That they know that it's not robotic, that there's a person. (TM3-PL)

I wouldn't like... you know, having to just click and send. I think there's no personal touch in it. [...] So then [the customer] would be thinking: 'Oh, that's just the machine sending an email'. (TM1-CS)

If the customer sees the first email in English and it's all technical, there is no soul, no feelings... He might not be bothered. (TM10-HE)

Like living entities, the LLs are infused with a "soul", while English is conceived as clinical, machine-generated. English is detached from a unique, recognisable culture other than the corporate one, while the LLs signify alterity ("It's not just like I speak English, you have to also... It's better to understand the culture as well. Like, you know, there's something that you can feel, that you can understand", TM5-TR).

Nevertheless, in representing "the state of being" in an international business context, English grants users the prestige of belonging to the global and being able to participate in "real life" (TM1-CS). In this sense, English interferences in LL use serve as proof of TMs' embeddedness in the corporate environment and their ability to communicate with, as part of, and on behalf of the company ("After [working] in a managerial position in English, now I realise I am speaking Finnish in an English way", SL3-FI; I sometimes even have trouble going back to German just because we speak so much English that sometimes I use an English word because I can't think of the German word, even though I'm a native!", SL2-DE).

TMs develop the ability to communicate effectively in this global English by reproducing and adapting "the language of the company" according to their own interpretation of its characteristics:

Even the English used in emails by native departments can be a bit stilted. Look, for example: ‘Please consider [customer] as entitled as the renewal contract is pending to be renewed’. (TM10-HE)

They’re being very creative with difficult words that even an English person would not use them in a free flow email. So it’s very difficult to translate them into German without... Just because it’s so... swollen, I guess! It’s kind of a swollen language, you know? It’s very like... like you would talk to a royal, that’s how the words are picked! (SL2-DE)

From these descriptions, nevertheless, it is worth considering the extent to which some textual features may be actual deficiencies (“This is the worst English sentence I’ve seen! And the text is awful, there are no spaces or paragraphs”, SL2-DE), and which may be domain-specific or characteristic of US business communication but unfamiliar to TMs (“I think the English word that they use is... yeah, ‘mitigate’. Never heard that word before!” SL2-DE).²⁵ Just as being L1-LL users does not mean TMs can always produce and translate text without issues, their ability to communicate informally in English does not equate to a grounded understanding of the conventions of the company’s business discourse. Despite the insistence on LL proficiency through the search for L1-LL users, this highlights the importance of L2 English proficiency, as well as intra- and interlingual translation competence.

As a result, language skills needs cannot just be understood as LL needs that are possessed or not. The insistence on the infallibility of the native and the overlooking of L2-EN competence hides the potential for skill development both in LL and English. The focus on full proficiency obscures varying degrees of active and passive language skills developed in formal and informal settings, from school instruction to mobility contexts or as a leisure endeavour. The assumption is that this knowledge, while positive from a personal perspective, is not generally valuable for professional purposes. Staff members may have notions of different languages but even when they may entertain the idea of further developing their skills, these capacities are quickly disregarded when it comes to their potential application in a workplace situation and are not considered to qualify as actually “having” the language (“I would consider

²⁵ Making this determination is beyond the scope of this study, but the reader is encouraged to see Appendices 4 and 5 for sample texts, also discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.1.

that, to have an additional language [...] It's not possible at this stage to study and to get additional language at the level that could be... recognised by a company", TM3-PL). While passive knowledge or lower levels of competence may not find applications in all contexts, a more explicit analysis of the kinds of skills that match specific tasks would help better understand the potential that language skills at various levels of sophistication may have for various production, reception, interaction, and mediation activities, in addition to cross-cultural communicative awareness.

3.3 The value of language(s)

In the resolution of the various communication situations they face, including instances of interlingual and intralingual translation, participants show an ability to use language strategically, adapting to their different audiences independently of the specific language employed:

There is an overall process, and we are supposed to follow it. And we do follow it! But there are like little tweaks in the middle, where can't really-like, you have to use your own judgement. (TM4-AR)

I find that I have with my different audiences and different cultures, different languages that I will try to mirror as much as I can, and that's a skill that I have learnt. [...] I have learnt that to communicate across cultures you need to have different audiences. So how I speak to the two Egyptian people is different to how I speak to the German team. I am quite sarcastic and I am very down to earth, and the German team don't get that at all. But my other team, the mix of cultures, they laugh and they get it. So there's differences there. We change how we speak to people. (MN2-EN)

Any notion of an impact on operations as a result of differences between customers or teams is nevertheless carefully smoothed out, which may aim to highlight the unit's effectiveness but also conceals and minimises participants' demonstration of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication skills. In their own eyes, their work is "not rocket science" (TM8-DE), but "just applying normal politeness and really kind of foreseeing what [customers] want" (SL2-DE). The idea of staff dealing with "language challenges" is typically avoided as if signifying a fault with MNs' recruitment practices or TMs' competence. Conceptualising complex communication

situations as challenging appears to imply a negative value judgement, rather than being understood as the display of problem-solving skills through the successful negotiation of various layers of personal and professional identification in interactions with a range of audiences and purposes.²⁶

MNs insist on the integral role of languages in the unit's operations, but language (and with it, translation) competence is nonetheless a given. It is an asset captured after a fruitful recruitment process, a prerequisite rather than a purposeful skill to demonstrate. The dichotomous formulation of language as possessed or not possessed is reflective of an understanding of languages as discrete and absolute entities, linked to concrete national cultures with native speakers as standard representatives, which limits opportunities for more strategic skills auditing. Given their entry level role, staff do not need to bring in and put to use any identified skills that would command higher responsibility and therefore higher remuneration. The greater the expertise required and the more specialised the position, the higher the value. Identity (and the adjacent notion of "nativeness"), however, is perceived as free of cost. Ultimately, recruitment strategy is a factor of assumed requirements and the costs of staff turnover, and therefore it is dependent on perceived return on investment. While the dominant recruitment model can bring benefits to both parties in the form of mobility experience for staff and talent availability for management, for example, recognising this element of convenience is crucial to get a more accurate picture of language skills needs.

This has significant implications for the articulation of language competence as helpful or harmful for progression opportunities. Options for progression within the

²⁶ Although variations between markets are acknowledged (see Section 2.1 in this chapter), language and culture are not typically seen to give rise to specific requirements that warrant consideration at managerial level. The only example of a change introduced as a result of an explicitly identified language management challenge had to do with the geographical division of markets. Switzerland was initially managed by the Europe West team despite not having any TMs to support French, German or Italian users. The language diversity in the country was not dealt with effectively, since updates had to be passed on to other teams and translated depending on the customer's language. To solve the situation, the market was then divided by language, with ownership of the Italian, French, and German-speaking Swiss customers being given directly to the corresponding language team: "The customer doesn't really care what regions we're covering. They just want somebody who can speak their language and deal with that" (MN3-EN). Considering Switzerland as a market could be relevant for certain business metrics, but it does not affect the particular work of the unit. This shows how the definition of markets and locales can affect the implementation of global strategies and highlights the potential pitfalls of perceiving markets as singular nations or national languages when it pertains to the provision of language services.

company do not tend to include positions that necessitate specific language skills. With no clear path to leverage the experience at the job, to continue in a language position therefore generally means moving horizontally to another organisation rather than vertically within the same business and being constrained to customer support roles with limited responsibility. Indeed, LLs are not seen as necessary for management positions:

I could move up and up not knowing any other languages. It wouldn't hamper my career progression at all. (MN2-EN)

We don't tend to have a lot of, say, non-native English speakers, really, in the management side of it. Which is unusual, really, isn't it? [...] Would it be better if I was able to speak Italian? I don't know. It probably wouldn't, but I think it would be... it wouldn't do any harm either, you know? But, you know, in saying that, everybody that I deal with within the field in Italy are all pretty much good at English, in fairness. (MN3-EN)

For some TMs, in fact, the LL is not seen as just a potential complement to other skills, but an obstacle to develop professionally:

I would say it's nice to have that additional language, but I wouldn't say just because of having an additional language that you can rest that easily unless you have some technical background. [...] It does make it easier in a way to find any job in particular with that, but a job that you actually want to get, that's different. (TM8-DE)

I have almost learnt to hide the fact that I speak Norwegian. I am 15 years here and I feel that not being Irish is a little barrier. [...] I do not need Norwegian to do my job. I could carry it out entirely in English and it would not make much of a difference. [...] So I almost see speaking Norwegian as a hindrance. Recruiters are looking for my Norwegian, but all positions that require languages in Ireland are generally customer or tech support and not very well paid. (TM12-NO)

Positions which explicitly require language skills tend to be entry level, while in more advanced roles an additional language may be nice to know but insufficient for progression. The implicit notion of LL competence as identity rather than a strategic skill creates a "language ceiling", perpetuated by the underlying ideas that effective LL support needs native speakers but, once hired, all natives are deemed equally

proficient. Indeed, even when participants see the LL as an advantage for progression, its value lies in its scarcity, not its application:

In Ireland, there's not much Turkish speakers here as well, like, you know? If you go to Germany, there's like four million Turkish, for example! [...]
In Turkey you are going to have loads of competition. So if there's one role and lots of high-skilled people that can apply to... It's definitely helped me here in Ireland. (TM5-TR)

Well, it is an advantage. But I think... the resource of bilingual people with English and Polish in Cork, and then Ireland, is quite high. So I don't think it's [a] really, really strong card. It's helping, but it's not the strongest card, like, for example, if I had German language, I think it's more stronger. Because there's less German speakers in this country. That's what I think. It's definitely beneficial always, if you have a second language, but again, only if the resource of similar people like... me, it's [not] high. (TM3-PL)

Being competent in multiple languages is, then, only perceived to be positive when the demand is higher than the offer, as it reduces competition. However, this competition is framed as based exclusively on ticking the box of “having” the language. Variations in perceived proficiency requirements, service level expectations and language value therefore suggest that the assumed crucial role for LLs must be further qualified to address the apparent contradictions in the definition of needs: on the one hand, the LL is needed because it leads to increased customer response and improved service, but on the other hand, the LL is not needed because customers are considered competent in English and the customer experience is ultimately in English.

Since the LLs were brought into the unit as a solution to limited customer response,²⁷ the assumed expectation of L1-LL support is a key part of the case supporting the recruitment strategy as well as a way for MNs to SELF-VALIDATE their leading of the unit's operations:

²⁷ It is not clear how the obstacles to customer responses were identified. LL fluency, intercultural misunderstandings, limited English amongst customers, or procedural issues in a young unit, these are all factors that could have contributed to the reduced response.

One of the biggest selling points that we have is that we provide support in local language. Not every department does that. [...] So, absolutely, it is very integral. If we were to offer the same service in English - and sometimes there has been cases where, you know, we would only have one person doing a language and they would be out or they would leave and we would have a gap - when we try to do it in English, we don't get the same response rate, people aren't as engaging with us. (MN2-DE)

For many TMs, LL provision is “good customer service” (SL3-FI) that customers appreciate and represents added value provided by the company:

[French customers] are very happy to be contacted in French. There's a sense that customers really feel secure and appreciate it, that the service is real added value. (SL1-FR)

It is good for the company to offer the local language, when they could just say 'only English'. It seems like the customer means something. The job is the same, the routine is the same, but the service is better. (TM11-DA)

Pretty much we are covering the entire Europe. [...] I think it's a sign that, you know, the company realised that the local language is very important and they kept the business up and running, or they expanded the business. (TM5-TR)

Nevertheless, TMs suggest in their interviews that this is a matter of preference rather than demand, and therefore LL use appears to respond more to an assumed need rather than an explicit one. Although favourably received, the LL is rarely introduced by direct request from the customers and LL service expectations vary from market to market. Perceived degrees of L2 acceptance and anticipation of LL provision, however, go beyond cultural idiosyncrasies and reflect hierarchical notions of national languages according to judgements of relevance within a world system with English at its core. The interpretation of needs is influenced by the assumed position of a language and its speakers in this global stage, which is in turn connected to assessments of worth based on relative market value, perceived difficulty, and number of L1 (and potential L2) users (“Honestly, I have never met anyone who tried to learn

Czech. [...] Why would you learn it? Unless you have a partner or kids, something like that”, TM1-CS).²⁸

Customers in bigger markets may be more likely to have greater expectations of LL support (“The French customers want native French speakers. Definitely the French are very much into that. And I think the German team as well”, MN3-EN). In smaller markets, in turn, the LL’s value may come precisely from the lack of expectation and LL provision may be appreciated as an act of goodwill on the company’s part rather than out of a requirement for support (“The customer is: ‘Oh, it’s so nice to see’, like, you know, Polish from an English company, you know? That you have support with Polish”, TM3-PL). Nevertheless, it is precisely in those markets where there are lower expectations for the company to provide LL support and greater assumptions of customers’ English proficiency where TMs may avoid the LL, unless it becomes a matter of identification, reinforcing the need for the native (“If your Dutch wasn’t fluent, Dutch people would probably go for English, not because they don’t like your Dutch, but because they don’t want to see you struggle”, TM13-NL). On the customers’ part, nevertheless, the LL might be preferred, but it is likely to be sacrificed for increased speed or reduced costs:

There are some customers that would just say: ‘No, I want German’. That’s where I would say: ‘We can request [it], but I cannot assure you’, you know? [...] If the customer has the additional contract, you know, and he has issues and wants somebody over there, then sure, why not? But sometimes, of course, we have to check if they have [premium service] contracts with us. If there is no contract, I inform the customer ahead of time: ‘Hey, listen, you don’t have any contract. If you want, I can forward it to management to provide you with a cost estimate’. But most of the time, after getting that, they will agree and choose remote support, you know? [...] It is a matter of costs. (TM8-DE)

MNs see the unit as adding value to customers by offering LL support given that increased LL use with the hiring of L1-LL users led to higher customer engagement. The link between L1-LL recruitment and customer demand, however, seems to

²⁸ This is akin to the notion of language tiers within the language services industry, which helps prioritise content for localisation by locale. For top tier markets, more content is localised. In this sense, key markets for localisation are not necessarily those with greater numbers of speakers, but those that will generate the highest revenue.

contradict TMs' comments on actual LL use. LLs may be crucial, but for whom then? From TMs' point of view, the value of language(s) seems to lie more in the potential benefits to TMs' work.²⁹ In practical terms, the unit offers support for technical operations rather than customer support. Customers and their experience are only deemed important in so far as they are the key achieving the unit's goals, and LL use is, in this sense, a TM strategy. Linguistic and cultural knowledge act as communicative gateways that have more to do with negotiating ACCESS through identification than resolving comprehension issues.

The benefits of the LLs are acknowledged, although not as a fundamental service, but as a valuable resource to reach customers in the face of what undeniably is an English-speaking customer experience justified in this context by the technical nature of operations. Overall, business is conducted through English, so the improved customer experience associated with LL provision disappears once TMs step out of the picture. The lack an LL service in other departments can therefore be a source of frustration for customers, which serves again to validate the unit's worth in contrast:

Departments parallel to us don't have this kind of support, and customers get frustrated then when they're passed from us to them [...] So essentially, it is a case of: if there is someone that speaks that language somewhere in the world in that department, they'll try to give it to them, but that's an exception, not the rule. And so, typically, if it has to be done in English for a technical thing, the customer just has to get on with it and have it in shit English or whatever they can pull together in order to make it happen. Now, most of the stuff would be technical jargon, things that I wouldn't understand, you know [...] So maybe the language isn't a key factor there, but obviously just the whole interaction would be better if it was done in local language. (MN2-EN)³⁰

²⁹ This includes both the LL and English. Customers or field staff may rely on TMs to engage confidently with the company, but L1-English MNs also depend on TMs to participate in teams with a shared LL. TMs are cultural and linguistic bridges not only as LL experts for a global company going local, but as English experts from the perspective of LL customers dealing with an international enterprise.

³⁰ It is worth considering whether customer frustration may not stem from the introduction of the LL in the first place and the subsequent breach of expectations, once customers realise that what they are offered is, in fact, not an LL experience. The question that arises is therefore whether customers' LL expectations precede LL TMs or do they emerge from their presence.

Is LL support then really a matter of customer appreciation? The unit's evolution suggests a predominance of recruitment patterns based on convenience, thanks to a political and economic context favouring the availability of LL candidates. Since LL offering is not tied to increased costs in the current marketplace and can help with customer relations, it seems to provide an appropriate return on investment. With frustration potentially arising more from misaligned expectations regarding the scope of support than from limited availability, the value gained from improved customer relations seems to be in its capacity to facilitate targets, with customer service improvements a welcome, but secondary, consideration. The LLs are one potential avenue to facilitate the resolution of participants' main concern of GETTING THINGS DONE, and a selling point for the department within the larger organisation. The benefits of LL provision can be presented as a guarantee for the unit's continuous existence and growth, and be also pitched to potential new customers. This allows the unit to operate as an isolated LL bubble and justify current processes and recruitment strategies while acknowledging how they enter in contradiction with operations in other departments:

A lot of business is conducted through English. And the company as a whole is kind of for that, and they kind of want to conduct business through English for most things. But with this department, because of the way it's set up, we feel we kind of add value to the customer, really, by providing that language cover. But it does not marry up with other departments in the company then. And that's a negative thing, really, overall. [...] The customer experience would probably be better in our department than in other departments because of that kind of, you know, that language barrier sometimes can create frustrations, I think, for customers in other departments. (MN3-EN)

What initially may appear as contradictions between reported needs and actual recruitment and communication practices exposes two concomitant sides to the idea of language as a resource. Language competence is a resource in so far as it is seen as playing a significant part in the effective functioning of the unit, but it is also a resource in the sense of a fungible consumable, a form of capital acquired through the hiring of those who embody it. As a result, it is not individual skills but the language they represent that makes staff most valuable:

I think that our challenge is that the business is getting quieter. [...] And it's interesting, it's only going to affect some teams and not others, right? Because if we only have two Polish speakers, two Turkish speakers, we can't really get rid of one of them because someone else has to go on holidays or is sick. But where you have a team of twelve German speakers, well, they're straight for the chop. (MN2-EN)

Intertwined with this conceptualisation are market conditions and demographic considerations. Indeed, as indicated earlier, it is not clear that LL provision was so much a strategic decision as one of convenience, since LL provision is synonymous with L1-LL recruitment, and this is enabled by the national job market and the attraction of an English-speaking setting with high demand for language-based positions. In this context, experience in an English-speaking business context is the currency used in exchange for the possibility of LL provision in entry level positions with limited direct progression. As long as the local marketplace makes it viable to hire L1-LL users to support this model, it will remain beneficial to both parties. The recourse to the native emerges then as a rationalisation for what appears predominantly as a pragmatic (and cost-effective) response to an undefined LL need.

Ultimately, contradictions regarding the value of languages can perhaps have a simple explanation in the transparency with which the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic nature of their application is conceptualised ("What is the role of languages in the team? I actually haven't really thought of it", SL1-EN). While LLs are said to be integral, their offer is more opportunistic than fundamental to the unit's main concern. LLs are part of the service because they can be. They brought an increased customer response to the unit and can therefore be seen as added value. It is also an illustration of the unit's recognition of the benefits of attending to local markets characteristics and requirements. Nevertheless, recruitment practices reflect limited long-term strategic thinking, since attention to LL provision seems to be reactive rather than curated, and highly reliant on specific candidate availability rather than considered staff and resource development. Were market conditions to change for a particular LL, support for that LL could be expected to subsequently diminish or even disappear.

Language matters are only considered in cases when TMs communicate with LL customers. English is the “state of being”, and the LLs are clusters of alterity inaccessible to the company except through these “language people” who carry languages as an identity trait. With the presence of these human decoders, language becomes a non-issue. It is simply seen as a matter of “which”, while the “how” of effective communication is resolved through a combination of (language-independent) customer skills and personality on the one hand, and (nation-dependent) cultural understanding on the other, in what is conceived as a range of monolingual operations between two (mostly L1) LL users. In reality, as shown in Chapter 3, TMs are constantly engaged in mediating activities between the English-speaking company, L1 users of multiple languages, and the LL-speaking customers, which points towards inter- and intralingual communication skills as being of most value in the context. Although TMs exercise these skills to different degrees daily, their articulation remains reliant on fixed assumptions of language competence and how it manifests itself in the ways people can be self- and mutually identified. As a result, both TMs existing individual skills and the criteria driving their application remain undefined, and potential areas for development, unidentified. This is not only detrimental for L2 users, forced to defend alternative ideas of expertise, but also for the L1-LL staff, who are reduced to a language passport of sorts. The assumption that language simply “comes with the person” limits the exploration of actual needs and conceals learning opportunities arising from common phenomena in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication.

SUMMARY

As seen in the examples of explicit translation practices, language choices are a balancing of variables such as the perceived knowledge, skills, and preferences of the other, as well as participants' own goals and positioning as language users. LLs are often presented as providing added value to the existing service, which justifies recruitment and resourcing decisions. However, when considering customer experience as a whole, LL provision emerges as a pragmatic operational choice with the purpose of facilitating the resolution of participants' main concern of GETTING THINGS DONE. The value gained is in the LL's capacity to facilitate targets and the barriers that the LL breaks have less to do with language competence than with personal identification, while internally English emerges as a lingua franca in a plurilingual landscape.

Every communication is a source of information from which TMs derive knowledge about their customers and allows them to provide a tailored response. Perceived patterns of behaviour based on nationality are key criteria in defining language use, but decisions are not exclusively a reaction to audiences' communicative style, and also have a relational component. They depend on whether participants in the interaction are LEGITIMISED or not as part of the linguistic and cultural group in question, both the LL in-group (including LL-English) and the global English interculture, for which names and accents are a strong marker. Whether recognised or rejected, participants in an interaction can also choose how to POSITION themselves by affiliating or detaching from the groups they are identified with. And this balancing of identification is not restricted to linguistic and cultural groups, but also organisational and ideational ones. As such, MNs and SLs may choose to identify themselves as part of management or the teams, and TMs affiliate to or detach themselves from different role definitions based on how they orient their responsibility and expertise.

TMs' communicative approaches are closely connected to the values and beliefs that underpin organisational practices, and therefore reflect varying SELF-VALIDATING behaviours depending on the perceived need to reinforce or redirect their expertise

away from the normative expectation of native proficiency. Although strategic communication decisions are at the heart of TMs' work, language competence is taken for granted and expertise is seen as more than or other than language, which renders the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural nature of their practices transparent. Ultimately, the unit operates effectively for their purposes, but the unquestioned infallibility of the native speaker and the overlooked role of L2 English use highlights the complex interrelation of competence and identity in the discussion of language skills needs, as well as asymmetries between languages which are directly related to recruitment practices and have consequences for development and progression opportunities.

CHAPTER 5: BALANCING BELONGING – A GROUNDED THEORY

“The goal of grounded theory is to generate a conceptual theory that accounts for a pattern of behaviour that is relevant and problematic for those involved. The goal is not voluminous description, nor clever verification” (Glaser 1978, 93)

This chapter brings together the concepts introduced throughout the previous analysis and integrates them into a theory of BALANCING BELONGING that, grounded in the data, emerges as a conceptual explanation for participants’ behaviour in the resolution of their main concern. The chapter opens with an overview of this multivariate theory and its constituent categories and interrelations, linking back to key examples from the data for illustrative purposes. It then moves to assess the theory based on the GT criteria of fit, work, relevance and modifiability, before reviewing relevant research in the field of international business that supports the findings as secondary data. The final section highlights further connections with the literature in a number of disciplines through the notion of positioning, from social psychology and organisational research to applied linguistics and back to translation studies.

1. A THEORY OF BALANCING BELONGING

“GT generalizes to a transcending process” (Glaser 2002, 8)

Following the inductive, bottom-up process of grounded theory, multiple rounds of coding and comparison of the data from interviews, observations, and text samples led to the identification of concepts and categories. These were then further compared and contrasted to establish connections and relationships until the analysis gave rise to an integrated explanation of observable behaviour that can be explored beyond the original context.

1.1 Overview of the theory

A main concern emerging from the data gathered from staff in a B2B IT customer support multilingual business unit in Ireland is GETTING THINGS DONE. This an “in

vivo” label, derived from participants’ words because of its illustrative power rather than formulated by the researcher (Glaser 1978, 70). As a conceptual label, nevertheless, it should not be taken literally as merely descriptive without due attention to what the “things that must get done” represent in the substantive area. As the previous chapters demonstrate, there is not a clear consensus on this amongst participants, who understand their role in different ways as a result of their skills being just assumed as a byproduct of “possessing” a language. However, the analysis shows that, with communication at the heart of the work performed by all participants, what the three roles have in common (TMs, SLs, and MNs) is their responsibility for cross-linguistic and cross-cultural practices involving various audiences, registers, and channels, whether inter- or intralingually. Beyond completing assigned work tasks, GETTING THINGS DONE therefore can be articulated as resolving the wide range of communication situations arising on the job not only to achieve key performance indicators and meet organisational targets, but to do so while protecting their personal goals according to their own motivations and priorities for each exchange.

As such, there are two dimensions to GETTING THINGS DONE: a task-oriented one, and a goal-oriented one. The task-oriented dimension refers to the intention of a given interaction for the end result that participants want to accomplish (e.g. convincing, summarising, clarifying, requesting or providing information, etc.). Performance is measured quantitatively through metrics based on completed transactions, but these transactions are made up of series of exchanges with different partners (internal or external, local or remote) and can take multiple forms (written or oral, formal or informal, in English, in the LL or across languages). The aim is therefore to progress through these and move forward towards reaching organisational objectives. The goal-oriented dimension, in turn, reflects the values and beliefs behind participants’ choices, however grounded or unconscious. The aim in this regard is to maintain their aspirations, which may evolve with the interaction (e.g. closing cases quickly, establishing relationships, confirming their status, validating their choices, etc.).

Variation in the resolution of the main concern is manifested through diverse strategic linguistic and pragmatic choices and explained by the core category of BALANCING BELONGING. As such, the substantive population GETS THINGS DONE by making purposeful communication decisions which involve engaging in a process of

constant negotiation of linguistic, cultural, and professional identity driven by individual and collective conceptualisations of language skills and language use. In the course of their interactions, participants identify themselves and others as part of different groups, whether cultural, organisational or ideational. Staff show varying degrees of recognition and rejection of others to LEGITIMISE them as members of these groups, or move through a continuum of affiliation and detachment to POSITION themselves as part of or in opposition to the same. On the one hand, perceptions of the legitimacy of others, often reliant on notions of national or international identity, regulate their ACCESS to the group in question by building trust or exercising control in order to facilitate progress in their tasks. On the other hand, positioning choices regulate SELF-VALIDATION strategies, whereby participants reinforce or redirect their perceived (mis)alignment with the expectations set by recruitment and management practices in order to preserve their goals. BALANCING BELONGING is therefore a norm-responding behaviour shaped by the conditions emanating from underlying assumptions regarding (i) language hierarchies, (ii) language competence, and (iii) language value. Figure 3 illustrates the connections between all the concepts and categories that make up the theory of BALANCING BELONGING.

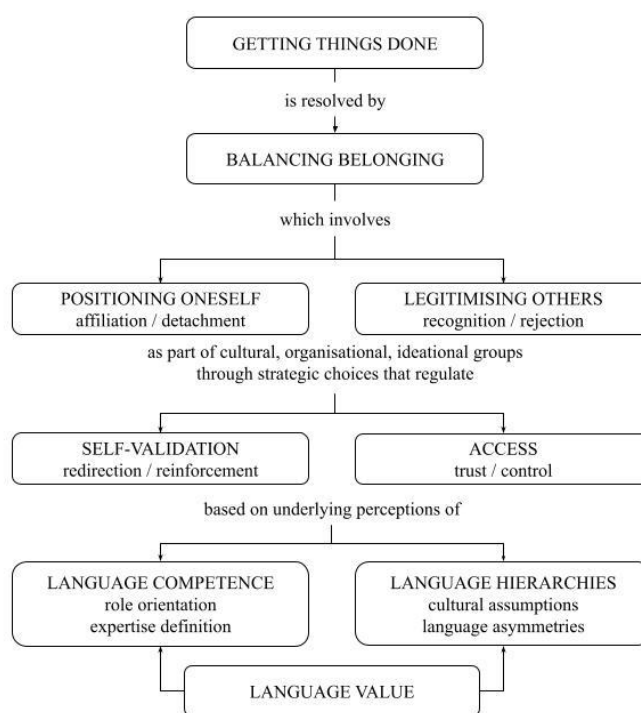


Figure 3. A theory of BALANCING BELONGING

Identification may focus on participants' tendency towards the teams or towards management, or be based on metaphors of distinct professional roles and responsibilities (e.g. nanny, secretary, psychologist, etc.), but more often than not it hinges on interactants' place as valid representatives of an LL in-group or the global English interculture. Behavioural expectations are typically linked to broad assumptions of cultural and linguistic identity which, in turn, are associated to particular national groups. Different nationalities are seen as having shared characteristics that affect how they communicate, and native proficiency is taken as the ideal benchmark to reach these LL-groups, as it guarantees not only idealised proficiency, but the insider knowledge that enables a deep understanding of the people and their ways.

This raises a two-fold question of status with regards to both the romanticised nature of the LLs, as well as the cosmopolitan quality of English. The LLs are somewhat exoticised and perceived as culturally laden in contrast to English, which is taken as merely utilitarian and therefore cultureless and impersonal, with no soul, no spirit, and no owners. The resulting disregard for the interplay between LL-Englishes and global English, along with the role of L2 English competence, highlights the first of multiple paradoxes: *Operations need natives... but not in the case of English.*

However, LL belonging is only considered worthwhile in this context as a complement to global English membership. Whether it is TMs presenting themselves as bilingual and bicultural experts in the face of customers and MNs, SLs choosing to position themselves as part of the management team with additional responsibilities over TMs, or MNs aligning themselves with the wider business rather than the local team, global English is conceived as allowing staff to identify with the central interculture which owns the language of business and technology, the "real world" that monocultural LL-users are not privy to. LL groups, including LL English users, are therefore judged and clustered based on their ability or willingness to be part of the international sphere. This is not always just a matter of English competence or idiosyncratic cultural behaviour, but also of perceived worth based on market value (cf. Bourdieu 1977), which colours notions of LL provision requirements.

Given the disconnect between assumed needs and actual practices, with expectations for native proficiency during recruitment facilitated by the job market followed then by limited explicit customer demand for the LL and the use of quantitative performance metrics, language use is contingent on participants' conceptualisation of their own role and its boundaries. They may see the customer as a key or a hurdle, and orient their responsibility towards the customers or the company, the teams or upper management, but this ultimately translates into various language choices based on what they consider more helpful to their goals. This points to a second paradox: *LLs are added value... but more so for the unit than the customers.*

As a result, expertise is typically defined as more than language (innate cultural knowledge and understanding) or other than language (customer service skills), with little heed paid to the processes of language adaptation at play as a demonstration of advanced communication skills. In this sense, the benefit of the LLs rests predominately on their capacity to enable identification, often manifested through proficiency and fluency, if not simply recognisable names and accents. The third paradox could therefore be stated as follows: *Competence is not a matter of language... but of identity.*¹ It is therefore not surprising that explicit translation is conceived as a distinct linguistic activity based on “scripted communication” that places specific demands on language use in contrast with the more common and unquestioned situations of “free flow communication”. Here’s a fourth paradox: *There is very little translation... but plenty of unrecognised instances of intra- and interlingual communication shaped by considerations of audience and text purpose.* It is then the fifth and final paradox that subsumes and explains the rest, accentuating the view of language as a transparent resource, possessed rather than developed as a tool for cross-cultural and cross-linguistic exchanges: *The job is all about communication... but not language.*

The act of balancing involves “handling many variables at once in order to start an action, keep an action going or achieve a resolution. One gets an equilibrium between

¹ Identity is, of course, ascertained in this case mainly through language features, but what the distinction highlights is the transparent articulation of “language” as a strategic process in contrast with the linguistic elements of identity (e.g. names, accents, fluency, etc.), which are more easily discerned.

all the variables. One can achieve a stasis for a time” (Glaser 2005, 29). This balance may, however, not always be achieved or maintained. Indeed, the extent to which the main concern is resolved in each interaction varies and may be represented by a matrix displaying the task-oriented dimension or progress made towards a resolution on the horizontal axis, and the goal-oriented dimension or stability of participants’ aspirations on the vertical axis.

Table 4. A matrix of resolutions in GETTING THINGS DONE

GOAL-ORIENTED DIMENSION (STABILITY)	TASK-ORIENTED DIMENSION (PROGRESS)		
		+	-
	+	(1) satisfactory	(2) laboured
	-	(3) negotiated	(4) unsatisfactory

As a process of negotiation, identification can be assumed of or denied to others, self-imposed or given, and equally accepted or rejected. Staff may therefore initiate an exchange aiming at a particular BALANCE OF BELONGING, but this may need to be altered throughout the course of the interaction in response to others’ behaviour. When carrying out explicit translation tasks, TMs’ audience is not a particular customer but a market as a whole and, as such, language decisions respond to general perceptions of the specific cultural and linguistic group’s needs. When exchanges become individualised, however, TMs may still rely on these assumptions, but the customer can now subvert expectations about themselves and impose alternative identifications on TMs, just as TMs may choose to accept or not to be identified in particular ways. This may lead to four different conclusions:

(1) A satisfactory resolution implies a successful interaction where progress is made, and staff maintain their chosen goals. For example, TM11-DA presents themselves as a Danish user to build rapport with a L1 Danish customer based on the view of the customer as key to facilitate the closure of the case. Similarly, TM12-NO legitimises their customer as a competent global English user and chooses to position themselves accordingly to speed up the transaction.²

² See Chapter 4, Section 1.2.

(2) A laboured resolution means that the chosen goal stability is maintained despite progress being momentarily stalled. Thus, TM1-CS aims at nurturing their customer relations through the LL, which they employ as a tool to build trust, but this affects progress.³ This can also be seen in the case of the Spanish TMs and their translation decisions, which create excessive reliance by omitting selected details and therefore makes them take longer to move forward with the tasks.⁴ Internally, MN2-EN keeps their distance from the German team, not fully legitimising them as part of the global English environment due to their continuous use of the LL, but this translates into a strained relationship that hampers progress in managerial duties.⁵

(3) A negotiated resolution signifies a loss of goal stability to allow for progress to be made. TM8-DE illustrates this when forced to relinquish the control gained over the interaction through the use of English and having to re-position as a German user to deal with customer frustration.⁶ TM9-ES positions themselves as a global English user with internal partners but also has to rely on their LL identity when an L1 LL field technician asks for help after identifying the TM as another LL user.⁷

(4) An unsatisfactory resolution is one where no progress is made and, as a result, the chosen goal is not maintained either. This is typically the case when customers are unresponsive, so no exchange takes place. TMs must therefore implement a different communication strategy, and the resolution may then move to be satisfactory, laboured or negotiated.

A satisfactory resolution is ideal, but movement across the different types of resolution throughout the multiple exchanges that make up every transaction is not only common, but strategic. As can be seen in the examples above, a lack of progress in a particular interaction may be accepted as a path towards a satisfactory resolution later on, and goal stability could be threatened by others, but it can likewise be

³ See Chapter 4, Section 1.2.

⁴ See Chapter 3, Section 3.1.2.

⁵ See Chapter 4, Section 1.1.

⁶ See Chapter 4, Section 2.2.

⁷ See Chapter 4, Section 1.1.

disrupted by choice to facilitate progress. Also, where the resolution falls within the proposed matrix may not be the same for both parties in the exchange. By way of illustration, when TM2-RU is rejected by TM10-HE as a Russian user and has to change their choice of language to English as a result of this loss of legitimacy, the resolution is negotiated for TM2-RU, for whom progress is achieved at the expense of goal stability, but it is satisfactory for TM10-HE, who makes progress while maintaining both their position as a valid Russian user and their rejection of TM2-RU as the same.

Since interactants have their own goals, no single choice of balance will always yield the same type of resolution, and therefore the theory is not intended to be evaluative. Decisions may sometimes have consequences that do not align with initial intentions (e.g. both trust and control can affect progress, whether exercised through English or the LL), so no one choice guarantees a satisfactory resolution without further consideration for the audience's response and its role in the negotiation. This may force participants to shift their original positioning and, consequently, call upon different norms and beliefs for self-validation, redirecting or reinforcing how they justify their behaviour.

1.2 Evaluation of the theory

The theory of BALANCING BELONGING aims to explain variation in the substantive population's patterns of behaviour to resolve a concern of particular relevance to them as identified through the process of constant comparison and conceptualisation of incidents in the data. Although it makes reference to other parties, such as the customers, it does so only in so far as their actions have repercussions for how participants adjust their own behaviours while dealing with their main concern, and so it cannot be assumed to elucidate the behaviour of others outside of the unit or exhaust all theoretical avenues. The emergent theory is precisely that, a theory, a conceptual hypothesis offering an integrated explanation that accounts for the existing data but is open to changes and further interpretations. In this sense, "a grounded theory is neither

right nor wrong; it just has more or less fit, relevance, workability and modifiability” (Eriksson et al. 2016, 3).⁸

While existing concepts from translation studies frame the overall study and its objective of gaining a better understanding of (non-professional) translation in multilingual business settings, the data collection and analysis were not led by these frameworks, and the categories that make up the theory of BALANCING BELONGING were instead generated using the grounded theory method of constant comparison. Other areas of the scholarly literature were brought in during the theoretical coding phase as relationships between concepts became clearer, but only once their *fit* with the emergent conceptual categories was established.⁹

Despite being one of potential theories, the theory of BALANCING BELONGING *works* to the extent to which it provides a way of explaining how participants GET THINGS DONE and variability across participants’ behaviour can be understood using the theory’s categories and concepts. Indeed, the unit as a whole employs various communication strategies as a response to perceptions of self and others based on underlying normative expectations. While this may be more obvious in the case of TMs and SLs as multilingual users, this mechanism is also at play in MNs’ actions. Although presenting as monolingual, their role also requires them to resolve diverse communication situations with users of multiple languages, and they do so by making decisions about their own and their audience’s group belonging which then manifest themselves in their recruitment and management practices.

The theory is also *relevant* as it addresses a concern emergent from the data and the core category that resolves it, but it can be *modified* and adapted with new data leading to alternative categories or relationships amongst them. In the context under

⁸ See Chapter 2, Section 2.2 for a discussion on evaluating a grounded theory.

⁹ This illustrates how grounded theory’s maxim to avoid preconceptions may be put to practice (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1). The emergent theory borrows from the existing concept of positioning to conceptualise one of its categories, and positioning theory therefore helps explain the substantive population’s behaviour in resolving their main concern, even if the study did not set out to analyse participants’ actions from the perspective of positioning. Conversely, while the study’s aim is ultimately to shed light on the articulation of translation practices, the data show that (explicit) translation is far from participants’ main concern and therefore it does not feature in the theory but only as a manifestation of the wider patterns of behaviour demonstrated by participants.

study, identity negotiation has to do first and foremost with how cultural and linguistic identification (i.e., POSITIONING and LEGITIMISING), ACCESS, and SELF-VALIDATION patterns manifest themselves through language choices, and the normative expectations that drive them have to do with participants' underlying articulation of language skills. Nevertheless, the basic process of BALANCING BELONGING could be hypothesised to be in operation too in other contexts where participants may find themselves negotiating identity in response to perceived norms to resolve complex communication situations. Scholars in different disciplines could test the theory in an extended substantive area by means of theoretical sampling and thereby refine it based on new findings.¹⁰

The specific characteristics of the unit, its members, and their job cannot be generalised onto other workplaces, or even the same workplace over the course of time. However, while it is not possible to make claims about others who, *a priori*, may also be part of the substantive population, the abstraction of the data and the theory that emerges as a conceptual explanation for participants' behaviour can be put to the test and be sustained or not by further investigations:

Because GT operates on a conceptual level, relating concept to concept, it can tap the latent structure which is always there and drives and organizes behavior and its social psychological aspects, all of which are abstract of objective fact. [...] GT does not generalize from a researched unit to a larger unit or a similar unit, as a description might. GT generalizes to a transcending process or other form of core variable, and in the bargain may relate seemingly disparate units to each other by an underlying process. (Glaser 2002, 8-9)

This of course limits the narrative depth and detail in the treatment of the data that a descriptive analysis within a singular disciplinary approach could provide. In

¹⁰ As Glaser points out, "a 4 year medical school may be seen as the same as a 6 week contractor's course, from the point of view of credentializing" (Glaser 2005, 9). From the point of view of BALANCING BELONGING, we could speculate the existence of similarities between multilingual support teams in an international business setting and other contexts of cross-linguistic or cross-cultural communication where the success of interactions relies on a process of identity negotiation. In monolingual situations of intralingual translation, for example, identification might focus mainly on professional or organisational groups instead, while ACCESS and SELF-VALIDATION behaviours could be demonstrated through specific forms of language use such as specialist or lay terminology based on particular contextual norms, values and beliefs around the notions of competence and expertise, but nonetheless reflecting a similar pattern of BALANCING BELONGING.

studying a similar context, translation scholars may seek further examples of start and end text pairs and pay greater attention to textual features and translation solutions. Applied linguists, in turn, could interrogate the data through discourse analysis to learn more about processes of multilingual identity construction and intercultural communication, while sociologists and organisational researchers may opt for ethnographic investigations of questions relating to mobility, work processes, employment relations, or managerial practices in international environments. The present study does not pursue any of these single avenues for long, although it opens the door to all of them. The resulting theory does not intend to provide coverage for everything that happens in the unit, but it calls attention to many aspects that warrant further investigation and could benefit from scholarly collaboration. As a hypothesis generating effort applied to an exploratory area of research, therefore, the contribution of grounded theory is in its interdisciplinary potential to “stimulate the imagination towards acquiring new insights into general problems and suggesting theoretical solutions” (Saldanha and O’Brien 2014, 37).

2. BALANCING BELONGING IN THE IB LITERATURE

“International business research necessarily is about translation” (Chidlow, Plakoyiannaki, and Welch 2014, 576)

This section discusses existing IB research that supports and complements the findings of this study, focusing on six key recurrent themes: language choice and language ideologies, group identification, local and global English, the management of multilingualism, language and power, and the invisibility of translation practices. In grounded theory terms, the following review reflects the process of theoretical sampling, through which the literature acts as secondary data to build on the analysis and help elaborate and integrate the categories of the emergent theory.

2.1 Language choice and language ideologies

While some may see it as the ultimate solution to all language issues, “the rise of English as the world’s lingua franca [does not] do away with the question of how to manage language. It does, however, allow those who wish to avoid this question the

means to do so, by reducing it to the problem of getting everyone to speak English everywhere” (Maclean 2006, 1383). The prevalence of English “everywhere” is markedly in the form of an L2 though, which translates into a growing number of bilingual and plurilingual users and a more rather than less complex linguistic landscape “than the label of English as a lingua franca would suggest” (Nickerson 2005, 371). Indeed, language choice is not only a question of English vs the local language(s) but implies the use of different languages for different purposes and the need for staff to contend with “company speak” and the domain-specific languages of various professional communities too (Frederikson, Barner-Rasmussen, and Piekari 2006, 409). Multiple studies therefore point to the differences between corporate language policies and the individual workplace practices of managers and employees, which are usually more flexible and creative than top-down mandates would indicate (Decock et al. 2018, 322). So, while English may often be the main language of communication, language choice is dynamically negotiated in everyday interactions which bring to the fore dominant ideologies related to language use.

As posited by the theory of BALANCING BELONGING, Angouri’s (2013, 569) investigation of perceptions of language policy and language use in MNCs shows that participants construct multilingualism as a “given reality” and take a “what works” approach to language focused on accomplishing the job, a process which has “a task-oriented function and a social function”. In other words, language use responds to the need to account for both task completion and rapport management (akin to the task-oriented and a goal-oriented dimensions of GETTING THINGS DONE). Language choice is reported to involve “a constant negotiation process between participants” grounded on the interactional context and the skills of those involved (Angouri 2013, 570). These decisions are nevertheless construed as “commonsensical”, revealing the extent to which they are taken for granted:

Framing a situation as ‘common sense’ [...] is an ideological position which presupposes a discourse of shared understanding of reality and at the same time this very discourse constructs reality for the employees. (Angouri 2013, 569-570)

According to Lønsmann and Kraft (2018, 406), “when ideologies are hegemonic, they are accepted as the natural state of things, and as such remain hidden”, which helps explain why the common mismatch between dominant views of what “language” is and the varied resources employees rely on may be identified by researchers as a source of tension while seemingly being unproblematic for staff. Their study of production sites in Denmark and Norway shows that, although multilingual practices are a key element of everyday interactions for warehouse and construction workers, the conception of language competence in their workplaces reflects the communication practices of managers and erases those of lower-status employees. Different linguistic repertoires have different value, with “language” and “the ability to communicate” restricted to high proficiency in selected languages (Lønsmann and Kraft 2018, 420). Those who do not speak English and Scandinavian languages are constructed as “non-linguals” despite regularly deploying a range of resources from these and other languages to ensure understanding (Lønsmann and Kraft 2018, 413). In the current study, the tension is less apparent because English is both the *lingua franca* and the local language in internal communication. Nevertheless, this only makes multilingual practices more opaque, since “language” then becomes simply a matter of LL use in external interactions with customers and “the ability to communicate” is a given attached to the native speaker status of most TMs.

Through the analysis of white-collar managers’ perceptions of the use of additional languages in European MNCs, Angouri and Miglbauer (2014) identify three dominant discourses which are also present in the unit under investigation here: English as the language of business, English as a marker of cosmopolitanism, and English vs the native ideal. Both my study and that of Angouri and Miglbauer (2014) reveal the key position of English as the language of business, particularly in terms of specialised terminology as well as international collaboration. Users of the same LL therefore often have to communicate in English, since many exchanges are part of a larger conversation (Steyaert, Ostendorp, and Gaibrois 2011, 275), but participants would still favour a shared L1 over English save for the need to include others (Angouri and Miglbauer 2014, 156; cf. Kankaanranta, Karhunen, and Louihana-Salminen 2018, 342). The presence of multiple parties links language choice to questions of responsibility, accountability, and transparency (Mahili and Angouri 2015). As a result, English is perceived as the language of professional and technical subjects,

while the LLs are reserved to maintaining personal relationships through a shared local identity, even if materialised simply through small talk or conventional greeting formulas. The mode of communication also affects language choice based on perceived function and formality, with several studies finding a link between the use of English for written reports and documentation and the LLs for informal, everyday oral communication (e.g. Kingsley 2009, Mahili 2014).¹¹

In addition, English is associated with access to not only the global workplace, but the “global mindset” (Angouri and Miglbauer 2014, 158). Some TMs in the current study detach from their national culture and claim affiliation to a “global culture” which distinguishes them from the assumed monolingual and monocultural profile of their customers and allows them to fit into the wider workplace community (Mahili 2014, 130). In this sense, English grants “a common (trans)national identity” (Decock et al. 2018, 327), and represents “transnational elites who are integrated as a group through language use” (Frederikson, Barner-Rasmussen, and Piekkari 2006, 409).

Finally, the use of multiple languages leads to conflicting perceptions of competence. Participants rely on their L2 or L3 for work purposes while also constantly switching between languages in different situations, which gives rise to two competing discourses: the native speaker model, which serves as a benchmark of proficiency, and the instrumental view of language as a tool for communication (Angouri and Miglbauer 2014, 161-163). In the words of Cohen and Kassis-Henderson (2017, 17), “there is tension within individuals between their pragmatic acceptance of language practices in the team and their idealistic expectations of what constitutes ‘good’ language standards”. This demonstrates the complexity of participants’ positioning with regards to the interplay between English and the local languages. Amongst LL L1 users, the native speaker ideal “represents a powerful resource for constructing professional identity” (Angouri and Miglbauer 2014, 164). Any linguistic challenges, particularly in terms of English use, are minimised by the

¹¹ Since they have both formal and informal uses, business emails are particularly good examples of the dynamics of language choice (Mahili 2014, 121). As building blocks in larger interactions, emails in the unit are a key manifestation of translingual practices (cf. Hinds, Neeley, and Cramton 2014, Cohen and Kassis-Henderson 2017).

construction of the unit as an L2 space where “good enough” suffices for handling business activities.

The articulation of professional expertise with regards to language competence, along with the official and unofficial responsibilities of the job, is also a key factor for the choice between the local L1 and English as a lingua franca in Mahili’s (2014) investigation of Greek workplaces. English and the LL were linked to higher and lower-level posts respectively, but both languages were necessary to establish rapport and maintain social relations (Mahili 2014, 128). While English is still required for advancement to managerial positions (Millar and Jensen 2009; Frederikson, Barner-Rasmussen, and Piekkari 2006), its superordinate status does not cancel out the significant role of LLs for participation in informal situations, particularly in bigger language groups: “Employees in this international workplace need to be proficient in *both* the local majority language *and* in English in order to have access to all communicative events and to be integrated socially” (Lønsmann 2014, 113). As seen in the analysis, this may affect TMs and MNs alike. Language choice can therefore be a way to exercise power by excluding others or gatekeeping communication based on language proficiency rather than individuals’ hierarchical position in the company (Mahili 2014, 138).¹²

Overall, employees in MNC are seen to make dynamic choices about language and the communities they align with independently of any company policies. Language policy influences workforce composition, but actual language choice is based on various factors, such as staff’s linguistic repertoires, the transactional or relational nature of the exchange, perceptions of language competence, questions of accountability, transparency and record-keeping, as well as processes of inclusion or exclusion (Mahili 2014, 120). As the findings of my project have shown, language choice is not fixed but constantly negotiated based on individuals’ perceptions of their own and others’ roles and social identities.

¹² See Section 2.5 in this chapter for further examples of the interplay between language and power in MNCs.

2.2 Group identification

The language diversity that characterises MNCs can lead to inter-group tensions and impact on employees' communication, relations, and performance (Woo and Giles 2017, 48). Although personal, cultural, and professional commonalities may outweigh language differences, these are a key factor in developing trust and therefore team cohesion:

Native speakers of diverse languages working together may require greater efforts and time for trust building than does a group of individuals speaking the same language as their L1, because they share less interpersonal similarities and cultural experiences (i.e., different language backgrounds). (Woo and Giles 2017, 42)

Language can reinforce group boundaries through code-switching, when L2 users revert to their L1 amongst themselves, and parallel information networks, whereby the established chain of command is undermined as “communication channels are determined by language capabilities rather than formal position” (Harzing and Feely 2008, 54). Although these phenomena are often seen in the literature as having a negative impact for operations, interviewees in the study by Harzing, Köster, and Magner (2011) construed them simply as ways to overcome language barriers. Indeed, while linguistic clustering can lead to divisions, it is not always presented as marginalisation but can be accepted instead as a natural consequence of multilingualism (Angouri 2013, 572). Any tensions are also seemingly less acute in my study given the assumed prevalence of English. As a result, nobody is apparently barred from mutual understanding and language differences are seen as unproblematic, but this does not eliminate the potential for language-based exclusion, or circumstances “in which language serves as the basis for real or perceived rejection by others” (Kulkarni and Sommer 2014, 638).

According to Kulkarni and Sommer (2014, 639), language-based exclusion may arise from language-related ethnic or cultural stereotypes as well as from perceptions of competence derived from an individual's linguistic proficiency, and it can be subtle, such as when employees switch to a language that others cannot understand, or

explicit, such as when a supervisor criticises a subordinate's communication skills.¹³ When excluded on the basis of language, employees' identification with their team or organisation deteriorates, positive mood and feelings of pride and enjoyment at work are negatively impacted, and staff are less likely to engage in prosocial behaviours like volunteering for assignments or helping others.

The impact of language difference nevertheless depends on the weight of in-group solidarity amongst members of individual language communities vis-à-vis that of the organisational norms and values in the building of a shared organisational identity (Woo and Giles 2017, 41). A common language and nationality can actually contribute to clustering into subgroups, while diversity may help reduce the fault lines caused by these (Cohen and Kassis-Henderson 2017, 13-14; Hinds, Neeley, and Cramton 2014, 538). In the unit in my study, in fact, for MNs diversity is positive in so far as it implies that less is taken for granted than in groups that have the same L1. As evidenced by the relationship between MN2 and the German team, however, this view of diversity seems to appear as a response to MNs' own situation of exclusion: "If everyone but the leader speaks the same language, high-quality LMX [leader-member exchange] may be difficult to develop while employees enjoy a high level of group solidarity and cohesion by themselves" (Woo and Giles 2017, 44).

As illustrated by the theory of BALANCING BELONGING, language use is not just a resource for "fitting in", but a crucial symbolic element in identity construction (Angouri 2013, 572). Language contributes to categorisation processes that create social boundaries and shape the ways individuals position themselves and are positioned relative to one another. These categories operate "in terms of prototypes that assume high levels of similarity among group members and allow for easy comparisons between in-groups and out-groups" (Kulkarni and Sommer 2014, 642).

Linguistic practices, and accents in particular, act as identifiers of membership, deliberately or inadvertently advertising a particular linguistic identity (Kulkarni and Sommer 2014, 639). This may trigger both positive or negative stereotypes based on

¹³ There are examples of both in the unit under investigation. Exclusion is subtle in mixed-language teams or between MNs and TMs in single-language teams. Exclusion is explicit, for example, in the case of TM2-RU's proficiency being considered insufficient to cover the Russian market.

expectations of linguistic performance according to individuals' L1 and assumptions of standard vs non-standard language use (Woo and Giles 2017, 40).¹⁴ Asymmetries in language proficiency can therefore give rise to “Othering processes” (Wilmot, Vigier, and Humonen 2023) and “us versus them” dynamics interfering with information sharing and rapport building (Hinds, Neeley, and Cramton 2014).

Language-based evaluations of self and others are used as a measure of not only linguistic competence, but overall social positioning and professional competence (Tenzer, Pudelko, and Harzing 2014), which in turn can have an impact on individual and team performance (Kim et al. 2018) as well as perceptions of legitimacy and authenticity (Duchêne 2009). As a result, users react by “making active attempts either to enhance their social identity by trying to assimilate their behaviours to those of native speakers [...] or to positively distinguish themselves from the native speakers” (Woo and Giles 2017, 42). In the unit, this is seen most clearly in TMs' POSITIONING and SELF-VALIDATION behaviours, as they choose to affiliate to the global culture or highlight their LL knowledge. In this sense, individuals aren't just subject to others' assessments, but can also choose how to present themselves to preserve their legitimacy as language users:

If we can compare our in-group favourably to relevant out-groups, the in-group becomes positively valorised, and through our identification with this group, our positive social identity is enhanced. If an individual cannot compare the in-group favourably to other groups, he or she can resort to a number of strategies, e.g. seeking to leave the original group for a more positively valued group or trying to change the status of the group. (Lønsmann 2014, 94)

As noted by Harzing and Pudelko (2013, 15), questions of legitimacy are particularly salient when it comes to interactions between native and non-native users of English. In their study of the cognitive and affective experiences of native and non-native English users, Kim et al. (2018, 79-81) show that non-natives experienced anxiety caused by the threat of being perceived as less competent. They also suffered fatigue from monitoring their behaviour when communicating in their L2, and felt

¹⁴ In my study, it is obvious that some accents lead to negative social evaluations among the members of the team (e.g. Indian and Irish English, Swiss German, or Southern Spanish).

their professional status diminished, which led to other negative emotions such as frustration, embarrassment and insecurity, and consequently avoidance behaviours. Interestingly, the authors revealed similar feelings of discomfort amongst L1 users when interacting with L2 users. This mirrors the work of Tenzer and Pudielko (2015, 2017), who identify anxiety, resentment and fear of losing face or being negatively evaluated amongst the emotional implications of language diversity in the workplace.

Hinds, Neeley, and Cramton (2014, 544) also report on feelings of anxiety, frustration, anger, guilt, discouragement, and exclusion amongst both L1 and L2 English users in globally distributed software development teams. Like multiple other studies (e.g. Nekvapil and Nekula 2006, Tange and Lauring 2009, Neeley 2013, Woo and Giles 2017, Wilmot 2017), their findings show avoidance and non-engagement as key coping strategies, with some employees ceasing interactions and refraining from communicating in English, whether for formal knowledge sharing or informal socialisation, particularly if they perceived that their level of competence could lead to a negative evaluation of their identity.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the authors also found instances of reappraisal, where employees recognised language matters as “just part of the job” or reframed the situation in a positive light (Hinds, Neeley, and Cramton 2014, 545). In the Irish unit, avoidance can be observed more commonly amongst customers or field staff, while TMs would typically use reappraisal strategies by referring to the transactional nature of communication in the context of international B2B support.

2.3 Local and global English

Competence in English is crucial for employees to be identified as legitimate professionals. However, English use is not homogeneous, and the discursive configuration or “linguascape” (Steyaert, Ostendorp, and Gaibrois 2011) of MNCs is populated not only by various national languages but also multiple Englishes with different associated values.

¹⁵ Nekvapil and Nekula (2006, 321) describe an instance of “panic” in a Czech subsidiary of a German MNC when a telephone’s display showed the HQ country code in an incoming call. This anecdote is curiously similar to TM1-CS account of staff in the local Czech office ignoring calls after seeing a foreign number for fear of the language. Similarly, Martin and Davies (2006) show hotel receptionists hanging up on queries in a foreign language.

Kankaanranta, Karhunen, and Louhiala-Salminen (2018) explore the notion of English as a corporate language by distinguishing between English as a Native Language (ENL) and Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF). The former sees English as one of the various linguistic systems present in a multilingual company, albeit one with a higher status compared to local languages, while the latter is conceived as “a resource that multilingual employees use to get their work done and create rapport” (Kankaanranta, Karhunen, and Louhiala-Salminen 2018, 333). ENL is associated with an assumed standard constrained by the norms of native-speaker communities. Rather than a stable, pre-existing system, BELF is a resource mobilised to respond to the communicative needs of the situation as a social practice amongst users of various linguistic backgrounds, including L1 English users (Kankaanranta, Karhunen, and Louhiala-Salminen 2018, 337-338).

The authors link ENL with the corporate voice, heard in one-way external communication, and BELF with two-way internal interactions (Kankaanranta, Karhunen, and Louhiala-Salminen 2018, 343). In our Irish B2B context, however, the social and functional stratification of English goes beyond a distinction between internal and external communication. TMs use BELF as a practical tool to engage both with customers and other staff, including Indian agents, who despite being L1 English users, are nevertheless perceived as less fluent in this international English. Similarly, although Irish MNs use English as an L1, when interacting with upper management (including L2 English users), it is BELF which they need to show competence in. This global English or “globish” (Nerrière 2004) puts into question the dichotomy of native vs non-native English speakers in international business, since L1 users need to master it too:

Many English native speakers may lack proficiency in communicating using BELF, because they are applying expectations and standards that are not appropriate for these specific sets of circumstances and, accordingly, many of them have experienced challenges when communicating in English across language boundaries. (Wilmot 2022, 123)

Ultimately, the key distinction is not between “the language of Shakespeare” (Cohen and Kassis-Henderson 2017, 18) —or Yeats, as the case may be— and a

common, neutral BELF, but between global English (based on American corporate speak) and all other LLs, including local Englishes. Not owned by any of its users, global English is shared amongst the international business community, but this does not mean that all users are considered equal. This leads to what Wilmot describes as a “pyramid of English”:

English native speakers from the inner circle position themselves at the top of a hierarchy in which they are able to determine which variations of English should be considered as appropriate usage. Outer circle users are considered as legitimate users of English, as long as their usage does not conflict with inner circle norms, to which they are subordinate. Finally, the expanding circle, which comprises the majority of English language speakers across the globe, are not seen as users who can claim authority to shape and use the language as they see fit, but rather that they should seek to emulate the varieties used by the inner circle, who are able to set and determine these norms. (Wilmot 2022, 122)

Millar and Jensen’s (2009) interview data from Danish MNCs suggests that two parameters drive the evaluation of self and others as competent English users: (i) the requirements for the job, and (ii) the social representations of different nationalities. With English presented as “the global bridge across the multilingual divide” (Millar and Jensen 2009, 91), “good enough” rather than “perfect” is the norm for the people participants communicate with, mostly technical or operational staff whose priority is to get the message across. In the current study, TMs similarly construct their audiences as technical staff who therefore are not concerned with linguistic issues and find varying levels of English competence acceptable and unproblematic. English as a working language is “reserved for the culturally disembowelled world of ‘international business’” (Maclean 2006, 1385), which allows for different accents, errors, and imperfections, and is distinct from “English as a real language” with its own cultural heritages (Steyaert, Ostendorp, and Gaibrois 2011, 276).¹⁶

At the same time, the general acceptance of L2 English use does not eliminate the hierarchical view of English users based on comparisons of national groups (cf.

¹⁶ Participants in Jämtelid’s (2002, 44; in Logemann and Piekkari 2015) case study of a famous Swedish white goods manufacturer describe this as “bad English”, a form of international English which employees were nevertheless able to easily understand and use.

Angouri 2013, 576; Lønsmann 2014, 103): “It may be that companies define themselves as international, but their employees may still categorise each other on the basis of national and/or linguistic belonging” (Millar and Jensen 2009, 97). Since business communication is assumed to be in English by default, the burden lies with customers who expect to conduct business in their own language to learn English (Millar and Jensen 2009, 99).¹⁷ The need for other languages is framed then as an issue of limited English on the part of certain nationalities, with the LLs just a bonus to support interpersonal relationships: “The discourse is not constructed in terms of obligation, e.g. that one ought to try to speak the language of the other to show goodwill towards one’s listeners, rather than to receive it from them” (Millar and Jensen 2009, 100). Indeed, customers often congratulate TMs for their ability to speak the LL or demonstrate their appreciation of the company for providing LL support, reinforcing this “monolingual framing of multilingualism” (Millar and Jensen 2009, 102).

2.4 Managing multilingualism

Managing linguistic diversity is a challenge for both MNCs and their employees, who have to deal with increasingly complex linguistic environments in terms of both work tasks and social interactions (Angouri 2013, 566). Language choice and practice in professional encounters is dependent not only on economic and technological developments and relevant policies, laws and regulations, but also sociocultural factors reflecting dominant ideologies as well as the norms, values and behaviours of local and global discourse communities (Gunnarsson 2013, 167). Following “language management theory”, Nekvapil and Nekula (2006) stress the interplay between micro language planning (simple language management, at the level of the interaction) and macro language planning (organised language management, at the level of social structure), and how participants may reproduce or challenge social structures in their

¹⁷ Just like in the current study, French speakers are often singled out in the research literature being perceived as less proficient in English, more reliant on their L1, and more demanding regarding the need for native speakers in support roles (e.g. Duchêne 2009, Millar and Jensen 2009, Lønsmann 2014, Wilmot 2017). In Wilmot’s (2017) study of UK-based SMEs, French users’ expectations of LL support is linked to a view of French as a language of global significance. As seen also in the Irish unit, this contrasts with staff’s assessment of users of lesser spoken languages such as the Nordics, who are seen as happy to use English given their lack of expectations for LL provision.

interactions. In this sense, management actions can affect staff's linguistic behaviour directly and indirectly:

[Leaders] can communicate both explicitly and implicitly the assumptions and values they hold — through what they reward or pay attention to, through modeling, through the manner in which they deal with critical incidents, and through the criteria they use for recruitment, selection and promotion. Employees in turn internalize the uniform corporate values by conforming to the norms and expectations of the organizations. (Steyaert and Janssens 1997, 138)

The management practices identified by Duchêne (2009) in his case study of a tourism call centre in Switzerland mirror the present findings in three key areas: language and market, language and location, and language and recruitment. In both studies the number of employees hired to cover each language depends on the specific market that is targeted, but market relevance has more to do with economic value than size: “Institutionalized language choice, in a way, reproduces the economic power of the globalized society by choosing languages that are already highly valued or by choosing languages which allow them to enter a new market” (Duchêne 2009, 47). Language selection also tends to follow an assumed connection to geographical location. In the Swiss call centre, calls are automatically assigned to different language users based on the country code of the customers' phone. The underlying notion of “one language-one nation” could be seen in the Irish unit too, where Swiss customers were originally looked after exclusively by the DACH team before being distributed to representatives across teams based on language preference.¹⁸ When it comes to recruitment, both workplaces require bilingual or multilingual speakers, but neither assess these skills by means other than a few informal questions in the target language.

Multilingualism is a condition to access employment since it is seen to bring economic gains to the companies.

¹⁸ As seen in the analysis, a similar situation arises with Belgian customers, who are directly assigned to a French-speaking TM. Nevertheless, this is not addressed by management in the same way as there are no Flemish speakers in the unit, which could be linked to considerations of market value as discussed above. Just the fact that some customers outsource their technical operations to third parties points to the potential drawbacks of assuming a link between language and place in the global economy. This is an area to which the localisation industry is particularly well suited to contribute.

However, —and because all employees are multilingual—once they enter the workplace, their multilingualism becomes ‘banalized’, that is to say of no added value for employees. What’s more, multilingual skills [...] are considered to be evident and in turn are excluded from any kind of salary recognition. (Duchêne 2009, 48)

Multilingualism is therefore not constructed as an obstacle but an advantage: “In fact, the potential tension between profitability and linguistic diversity does not arise in this specific case. On the contrary, linguistic diversity is a source of benefit and multilingual skills are seen as commodities” (Duchêne 2009, 48). Duchêne (2009) further notes how multilingualism appears as a marketing strategy driven by notions of cost-benefit and how this essentialist view of language is reflected in the workers’ practices and discourse. The provision of multilingual services rests on the idea that speaking the language of the customers offers an advantage in terms of marketing, as long as there is a positive ratio between the investment made into languages and the profits obtained. Multilingualism is seen as an asset because of the symbolic weight of addressing customers in their L1, but also because of the assumption of increased efficiency and, consequently, reduced costs (Duchêne 2009, 38).

Participants in the present study similarly conceptualise multilingualism as added value. Like the agents in the Swiss call centre, they see LL use as a positive gesture that is appreciated by customers, but ultimately this is only relevant because it can translate into an easier resolution of service requests. While stressing the significance of language diversity, language matters are not granted much importance (cf. Wilmot 2017, 156). From the management’s point of view, LL provision is a question of return on investment that hinges on staff availability in the marketplace and is therefore only viable as long as the recruitment of multilingual employees offers an economic advantage.

2.5 Power and status

A key topic in language-sensitive IB research is the interplay between language and power. The choice of a single corporate language and its implications for the daily practices of workers in MNCs is one of the main points of focus, and common questions include how different repertoires are valued, leading to hierarchies of

linguistic resources, how proficiency in certain languages can result in formal and informal power and enhance professional mobility, and how policies that grant superior status to a single language can create internal divisions and structures of exclusion and inequality (and how these may also be challenged through language) (Decock et al. 2018, 323).

Many MNCs implement a common corporate language with a view to standardising language use, enhancing internal communication and formal reporting processes, increasing operational efficiency, reducing costs, and promoting cohesion (Frederikson, Barner-Rasmussen, and Piekkari 2006, 409). The corporate language may be limited to top management, used for external interactions, or permeate the whole organisation, but it typically functions as “a symbolic expression of organizational unity” (Gunnarsson 2013, 164). A single corporate language “gives an illusion that by controlling for national language diversity the transfer of meaning becomes relatively unproblematic” (Brannen, Piekkari, and Tietze 2014, 496). This is most obvious in MNCs from Anglophone countries, where English doubles as corporate and home language and therefore the extent to which “the common corporate language is ‘common’” is less likely to be questioned (Frederikson, Barner-Rasmussen, and Piekkari 2006, 408).

Despite its potential advantages, “a common language does not imply a common culture, and a common culture need not imply a common language, while neither determine effective communication or understanding” (Maclean 2006, 1385). The introduction of a common corporate language does not transform MNCs into monolingual entities or remove the need to negotiate and adapt meaning (Logemann and Piekkari 2015). A top-down corporate language “just pushes the translation question down the line”, since language questions remain relevant for many workers (Welch and Welch 2008, 345). Indeed, a lingua franca is not the neutral form of communication that it is regularly conceived as. It can betray hegemonic language ideologies, creating internal hierarchies that position some languages as more prestigious than others and giving rise to processes of inclusion and exclusion.

In the current study, management's discourse on language does not gain status as a formal policy (cf. Lønsmann and Kraft 2018). Although there is no explicit mandate for a corporate language, English is the "company language", being at the same time the language of HQ, the local language of Ireland, and the language associated with the information technology sector. As noted by Harzing and Pudelko (2013, 12), "one of the reasons for not having a corporate language could be that there is no perceived need for it". English is the global language, and everybody is expected to speak it confidently. Nevertheless, translation is still very much present. There is "a surface appearance of harmony from a top-down perspective, while employees still struggle with the daily challenge of cross-language communication" (Hanson and Mellinger 2021, 84).

Whether in the form of explicit guidelines governing language use or as a result of an informal, emergent process, "corporate language policies should not merely be treated as practical means to solve inevitable communication problems; rather, they should be viewed as exercise of power" (Vaara et al. 2005, 596). Through a case study of a merger in a Finnish-Swedish bank, Vaara et al. (2005) investigate the implications of language policy decisions by following Clegg's (1989) "circuits of power" and connecting episodic social interactions with processes of identity/subjectivity (re)construction, which are then normalised by structures of domination. This resembles the theory of BALANCING BELONGING as a process whereby individual exchanges reflect a constant negotiation of identity based on dominant underlying ideologies.

Vaara et al. (2005, 602) present language skills as a source of (dis)empowerment, since the introduction of Swedish as the new corporate language meant some employees were seen as more professionally competent, while others experienced a loss in status. To address the feeling of inferiority when dealing with L1 Swedish staff, many Finnish employees resorted to avoidance and resistance strategies like remaining silent, using Finnish as a "secret language", or escaping the need for Swedish language through internal mobility (Vaara et al. 2005, 610). The language policy was interpreted as an indication of Swedish dominance which disadvantaged the Finnish workers. Later on, Finnish staff welcomed the change of the corporate language to English as a move towards equality but, interestingly, Swedish employees started highlighting

challenges for those with limited English skills akin to those signalled by their Finnish counterparts in relation to Swedish (Vaara et al. 2005, 612-615). A notable finding in their study is the ambiguity of power implications. Swedish-speaking Finns became key intermediaries, which meant that they gained greater influence than they would have had based on their job position alone. However, being used as “translation machines” affected their workload and led them to be regarded by some as “privileged information gatekeepers”, while also seen as inferior compared to “the real Swedes” due to their particular use of the language (Vaara et al. 2005, 611-614).

Status loss is also the focus of Neeley’s (2013) investigation of employees in a French technology company after the establishment of English as the corporate language. Her findings indicate that L2 English users experienced a loss of status independently of their English level. Nevertheless, the extent to which they suffered language performance anxiety varied based on their self-assessed fluency, with those that had medium-level fluency demonstrating more self-consciousness and fear of being judged as a result of their English proficiency rather than their domain expertise (Neeley 2013, 477). Previously, communication was perceived as “a cooperative effort amongst equals” (Neeley 2013, 486), given the lack of a shared language across the different subsidiaries. Rather than adequate bilingual employees, participants now felt relegated to second-language speakers of English (Neeley 2013, 484).¹⁹

Reported levels of performance anxiety are low in the Irish unit, partly due to staff’s awareness and acceptance of mistakes and “imperfections” as is the case with high-fluency speakers in Neeley’s study.²⁰ Since English is an L2 for most TMs and their audiences, it acts as a leveler, bringing a sense of parity and comfort, and creating a sense of solidarity (cf. Cohen and Kassis-Henderson 2017, Steyaert, Ostendorp, and Gaibrois 2011). However, while English competence appears mostly unquestioned, with native-like proficiency an expectation only in the case of the LLs, the connection

¹⁹ In the words of one interviewee, “the most difficult thing is to admit that one’s value as a second-language English speaker overshadows one’s real value” (Neeley 2013, 476).

²⁰ Performance anxiety could be hypothesised to be a factor in the apparent apathy shown by some TMs to the proposal of taking turns to lead their weekly team meeting. While MN3-EN suggests this was due to lack of initiative or fear of change, the possible impact of feelings of inadequacy in English cannot be fully dismissed. At the same time, the fact that MN3-EN does not consider language as a potential influence underscores the conflicting proficiency expectations regarding English and the LLs.

between English fluency and status (and consequently opportunities for upwards mobility) is still present in management's discourse: "English is simultaneously considered as offering a chance at democratization and assessed as a form of power imbalance" (Steyaert, Ostendorp, and Gaibrois 2011, 276).

2.6 Translation practices

IB research concentrating explicitly on how individuals and organisations deal with translation as part of their daily work is scant. A notable exception is the work by Wilmot (2017, 2022) on supply chain relationships in UK-based companies, which reflects perceptions of translation in the Irish unit under investigation here. Like TMs in my study, her participants felt strongly about the difference between the tasks of translators and their own role. In addition to relying on free online machine translation services as "a convenient resource to check particular words or phrases" while acknowledging its potential for errors, they saw translation as time-consuming and requiring "a particular skill which is quite separate from being able to communicate and use a foreign language in a work context", showing a preference for the use of professional translators for high-risk documents (Wilmot 2022, 84-86).

Piekkari et al. (2013) also reveal a spectrum of translation practices in the routine behaviours of managers and employees in a Nordic bank. The authors identify organisational and individual translation responses to the increase in language diversity based on situational factors such as the need for accuracy, timeliness, cost, confidentiality, and task criticality (Piekkari et al. 2013, 778). Organisational translation responses included introducing a formal language policy, providing technical translation tools, and establishing a central translation department in-house. Individual translation responses, in turn, varied based on employees' views of the task and their own language competence. The most common strategies were self-translation and the use of social networks, going beyond colleagues for assistance and resorting to friends or relatives, with time pressures overruling potential confidentiality concerns (Piekkari et al. 2013, 776-777).

The findings reveal that, while management believed all translations were carried out in the translation department, employees often bypassed it in favour of faster and

less bureaucratic ad hoc solutions. As above, however, participants still resorted to the in-house translation team when faced with official and legal documents. These were considered outside of their job description, being assessed as too difficult and time-consuming, having a greater need for accuracy, and therefore carrying higher responsibility (Piekkari et al. 2013, 776).²¹

Staff in both the Irish unit and the Nordic bank accentuate the difference between formal translation and direct exchanges with customers, where immediacy rather than accuracy is seen as the priority. According to Piekkari et al. (2013, 779), “the more the task concerned the written word, the more formal the task was seen to be”. In my study, the more fixed and stable the start message, the more it is constructed as a translation, requiring particular skills vis-à-vis “natural”, free flow communication. As a result, the reality of translation demands remains hidden:

The informal coping mechanisms kept the issue beyond the purview of top management; not only masking its importance for company performance, but potentially reinforcing a view that the central translation solution was the correct solution and that the activity was a minor, even mechanical issue. (Piekkari et al. 2013, 780)

The invisibility of translation practices and skills is also evident in Cohen and Kassis-Henderson’s (2017) investigation of a multilingual management team. Their research shows that participants only considered their L1 or languages learnt in formal settings (e.g. English) when assessing their language competence despite regularly drawing on knowledge of other languages in multiple ways (Cohen and Kassis-Henderson 2017, 17). Consequently, the authors distinguish between “language-specific” and “language-general” skills. Language-specific competence refers to the mastery of an idealised form of linguistic proficiency and fluency represented by the native speaker, while language-general competence requires metacognitive abilities

²¹ This is also seen in Hinds, Neeley, and Cramton (2014) and Nekvapil and Nekula (2006, 323), where external service providers are employed in the translation of regulations, directives, contracts, and other texts where form and accuracy are considered crucial. Formality and technicality are too taken into account as factors for the use of specialist services in Hanson and Mellinger (2021). Interestingly, the situation is reversed in Ristolainen, Outila, and Piekkari (2021), where generic translations were outsourced to external providers while sensitive texts were translated internally with input from both in-house translators and HQ representatives such as marketing and communications staff, suggesting that paraprofessional translators’ embeddedness in the organisation reality may have a bearing on making translations locally meaningful.

developed through multicultural experiences, such as cross-linguistic awareness and tolerance of divergent discursive practices. Language-general skills are harder to define and measure, which explains why they are typically overlooked, even though “these are the very competences that should be sought and developed” (Cohen and Kassis-Henderson 2017, 12).²²

As discussed in Chapter 1, many IB studies look at languages as static and discrete entities, reinforcing the notion of language as “an easily accessible instrument or management tool” (Tenzer, Terjesen, and Harzing 2017, 817) and the native speaker as a representative of a standard linguistic norm and a homogeneous national culture (Cohen and Kassis-Henderson 2017, 9). However, a growing number of scholars are now considering the fluid and dynamic nature of language use and language competence. Under the influence of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics (and, to a lesser extent, translation studies), recent work in IB is shifting the focus from (national) languages as separate systems to language users and their varied linguistic repertoires and resources (Angouri and Piekari 2018, 9).

The grounded theory of *BALANCING BELONGING* contributes to language-sensitive research in IB with an understanding of translation as a process of membership negotiation. This implies “a departure from the traditional instrumental view of language as a bounded and stable system and as a variable which can easily be ‘managed’, in favour of a view of language as a set of repertoires or web of linguistic resources unequally distributed and mobilized by speakers in very complex ways in actual practice” (Decock et al. 2018, 322). However, as Angouri and Piekari (2018, 13) point out, “it is important to note that life is not always fluid and dynamic in the eye of the beholder”. So while researchers may recognise the issues associated with simple categorisations like the treatment of languages as separate and discrete units and multilingualism as the sum of multiple national languages, these views still matter for participants and how they make sense of the world: “For lay people, visible stabilities remain and many of our categories such as national languages are still very real in their daily lives at work” (Angouri and Piekari 2018, 13). What is important

²² Similarly, Decock et al. (2018, 328) discuss how the way policies conceptualise language often “confound ‘soft’ communication competences with ‘hard’ knowledge of specific languages”, erasing the multilingual nature of workplace communication.

in this case then is to uncover the ideologies underpinning the existing dominant frames, paying attention not only to the participants' fluid processes of language use but also the "fixed understandings of language, culture and identity" they commonly draw on (Janssens and Steyaert 2014, 635).

3. POSITIONING, GATEKEEPING, AND PARTICIPATION

"It is with words that we ascribe rights and claim them for ourselves and place duties on others" (Moghaddam and Harré 2010, 3)

In this final section, the focus turns to the links that emerge between the theory of BALANCING BELONGING and the broader scholarly notions of positioning, gatekeeping, and participation, pointing to its potential to inform and be informed by further research in different contexts.

The identity negotiation behaviours that participants in the study engage in bear a close conceptual relationship with the principles of positioning theory, developed in the 1990s by philosopher and psychologist Rom Harré along with other authors such as Davis, Van Langenhove and Moghaddam. According to Harré (2012, 193), "not everyone involved in a social episode has equal access to rights and duties to perform particular kinds of meaningful actions" so positioning theory takes a social-constructionist approach to "how people's space for acting is created" (Van Langenhove 2022, 1044) by considering "the shifting patterns of rights and duties that shape and are shaped by social interaction" (McVee et al. 2021, 192).

Positioning Theory stresses that understanding what people do and what they don't do requires to look at what is permissible according to the local moral order that is followed and to the positions that people take in that order. 'Positions' are clusters of beliefs that people have with respect to the rights and duties to act in certain ways. 'Positioning' refers to the processes of assigning, appropriating, or rejecting positions. Every position both opens and closes possible actions. What people possibly can do is a function of three determinants: the *capacities* of people to do certain things, the *restrictions* imposed upon people to do certain things, and the *intentions* that people have to do certain things. (Van Langenhove 2022, 1044) [emphasis in the original]

The theory emphasises that these positions are fluid and constantly mediated through speech acts and storylines or established narrative patterns, highlighting “the importance of the discursive nature of psychological and social phenomena” (Van Langenhove 2022, 1046). In Moghaddam and Harré’s (2010, 2) words, positioning theory shows “how people use words (and discourse of all types) to locate themselves and others” which, in turn, has “direct moral implications, such as some person or group being located as ‘trusted’ or ‘distrusted’, ‘with us’ or ‘against us’, ‘to be saved’ or ‘to be wiped out’”. Following Blommaert (2010, 196), “it is not necessarily the language you speak, but how you speak it, when you can speak it, and to whom it matters. It is a matter of voice, not of language”.

In this sense, the theory of *BALANCING BELONGING* demonstrates how, through their communicative choices, participants contribute to various constructions of self (e.g. I am a mediator, a problem-solver, a native speaker, a customer support expert) as well as social narratives of identity and role (e.g. a mediators’ job is to provide a tailored experience; the responsibility of an accounts’ specialist is to close cases quickly to meet targets; native speakers do not have language challenges; customer support skills have to do with communication, not language). These serve to “position” individuals with respect to their rights and duties and therefore impact “what people possibly can do, what they are allowed to do, and what they actually do” (Van Langenhove 2022, 1044).

Although positioning theory originated in the field of social psychology, stemming initially from the area of gender studies (Hollway 1984), it has since been applied to the study of many varied social situations within a widespread number of disciplines, including education (McVee, Brock, and Glazier 2011; McVee et al. 2018), political science (Slocum-Bradley 2008; Moghaddam and Kavulich 2008), nursing (Phillips, Fawns, and Hayes 2002; McKenzie 2004), and public relations and communication studies (Wise and James 2013; James 2014).

From the perspective of business communication, Hirvonen (2013) uses positioning theory to look at group dynamics in professional team meetings, showing how participants in a small group interaction negotiate their positions through specific phases of working together. Within the wider field of organisational research,

positioning theory has been taken up as an analytical tool by scholars favouring a discursive approach to the study of institutions and organisations, particularly in organisational development and change management. For example, Boxer (2001, 2005) uses positioning theory to investigate parity and power in barriers to change in third level education. Similarly, Zelle (2009) investigates change communication in higher education and how both societal discourses and local practices impact on the identities of academics, influencing how they position themselves to resist or accept managerial practices. Ghosten (2012, 146), in turn, relies on positioning theory in conjunction with narrative analysis to examine conflict in a large corporation and identifies the storylines of Management as Conscientious Business Leaders, Thoughtless Management, Employees as Troublemakers, Supervisors versus Subordinates, and Site versus Corporate as arising from participants' experience within the context of a business reorganisation process. Broad parallels can be drawn between these dichotomous patterns of interaction and the mechanisms of *BALANCING BELONGING* which similarly reflect different assumptions of competence and responsibility amongst participants in an exchange (e.g. customers as hurdles or as key, management versus staff, global versus local), act as a form of power to regulate access, and are ultimately impacted by general and contextual narratives that lead individuals to situate themselves, be situated by others, and change or resist positions based on perceived (mis)alignments with dominant practices and role definitions.

When it comes to social positions and behaviour expectations arising from them, another concept of relevance to the current study often employed by sociologists and social psychologists is precisely that of role, and role orientation in particular as “the psychological boundary of a role” (Parker, Wall, and Jackson 1997, 904). From the perspective of human resources and management research, Parker (2007, 404) describes role orientation as the socially constructed way employees “define their work role, including what types and breadth of tasks, goals, and problems they see as within their set of responsibilities, and how they believe they should approach those tasks, goals and problems to be effective”. She goes on to explain:

Roles contain both ‘established task elements’ that are constructed by the organization as well as ‘emergent task elements’ that occur as a result of social factors, including the job-holder who can self-generate these

elements. [...] People change how they see their jobs (or engage in ‘cognitive job Grafting’) to achieve meaning and identity in the work place. (Parker 2007, 404)

This is clear in the context of the current study, where staff show themselves to hold different values and beliefs about their role, resisting or (re)negotiating positions to fulfil both organisational tasks and personal goals. Role orientation is, in this way, one of the drivers of participants’ positioning behaviours.

Positioning theorists see roles as a more static concept than positions, which are considered dynamic, relational, and situation-specific, associated with “both the individual- and group-related aspects of interaction” (Hirvonen 2013, 102). Closely linked to conversation analysis, positioning theory emphasises the importance of language, as “it is within conversations that the social world is created” (Harré and Van Langenhove 1999, 15). Nevertheless, the impact of multilingualism is not always acknowledged in its applications outside of second or additional language acquisition classroom-based studies. Applied linguists have therefore taken up positioning theory as a tool to research discourse, identity and participation in the language learning and teaching process in an increasingly complex and diverse social world:²³

Positioning theory can illuminate important elements that are crucial for second language learning or teaching, such as one’s access to speaker rights in the language classroom or other multilingual contexts, as well as identities, language socialization, ideologies, culture, moral dimensions, proficiency, interactional competence, intercultural communication, and social justice, among others. (Kayı-Aydar 2019, 45-46)

The concept of positioning highlights language learning as “a social phenomenon embedded in the social context and cultural knowledge required for appropriate language use” (Kayı-Aydar 2019, 44), although this perspective is yet to be applied more extensively to informal language learning settings as is the case with the development of global English proficiency in an international workplace by both L1 and L2 English users in the current study. As such, the link between positioning, the definition and assessment of language competence, the negotiation of identities, and

²³ See Kayı-Aydar (2019) for an overview.

the nature of interactions and participation in multilingual business contexts still warrants further investigation.

From a textual perspective then, some authors have focused on the study of pragmalinguistic means of intersubjective positioning to show speaker involvement and stance-taking through discourse and corpus analysis of diverse genres, like political and economic interviews (Šandová 2015), scientific texts (Hidalgo-Downing 2017), academic writing (Guziurová 2016), and advertising (Řezníčková 2016). Similarly, the comparison of linguistic and pragmatic choices has been typically used in descriptive translation studies to investigate the translator's position, although more often as a metaphor than through the direct application of positioning theory. In this sense, positioning has commonly been explored either as a question of source vs target orientation, or from the perspective of the translators' (in)visibility in the text, which in turn is influenced by dominant norms and practices that determine expectations about translations and translators:

[The notion of positioning] concerns the way in which, and the degree to which, translators make not just their presence but their views felt even as they report someone else's words. [...] The words chosen by translators to represent a source text are bound to do more than merely represent; they convey attitudes and judgements, that is, positionings. It is a matter of reading for the relevant clues. [...] Translators may, through their choice of texts to translate and through the textual choices they make, align themselves not just with individual role models but with broader modes or styles of translating. Individual translators may make these choices unconsciously or as a matter of routine, following established practice or teaching. (Hermans 2009, 424-427)

Positioning highlights the relation between translators, translations, and the context of production and reception, and frames translation as a form of interaction where translators can follow or reject established understandings of translation and audiences respond by sharing, affirming, challenging or undermining these values (Hermans 2009, 425-428). As Hermans (2009, 427) explains further:

Approaching translations with the help of the concept of positioning fosters an appreciation of translation as a communicative act, a conversation in

which, as a minimum (real conditions will always be more complex), a translator addresses an audience and the audience responds. [...] Individual translations are interventions, turn-takings by means of which discursive identities are established, participants position themselves and are in turn positioned by others.

In cases of prototypical translation, the translator can make assumptions about the audience in their positioning choices, but the audience does not typically have a direct way to reposition themselves in relation to the work. The more immediate, personal, and perishable nature of many forms of unrecognised translation as exemplified by the data, however, accentuates this negotiation of positions and its consequences for access and participation. This is akin to contexts of interpreting, particularly in public service settings, where the assumed neutrality of the interpreter can often come into question. One way this has been addressed is through the concept of gatekeeping, which, like positioning, is considered a discourse process manifested through language choices. An example of this is Pöllabauer's study (2012) of interpreter-mediated communication routines in social services and welfare institutions, which focuses on interpreters as "gatekeepers" and the "gates" that may hamper client access, like lack of training, language competence issues, and conflicting role definitions. Additional parallels can be drawn between gatekeeping and the theory of BALANCING BELONGING:

'Professional role conception' is a major factor of analysis on the individual level according to Shoemaker and Vos (2009: 47): 'The gatekeeper's ideas about what his or her job entails can also affect gatekeeping choices.' [...] With the socialisation of gatekeepers into a specific institution they also 'learn' the explicit and implicit routines and practices favoured within a certain institution. (Pöllabauer 2012, 220-225)

Role performances, whether arising formally from defined positions or informally through interaction, can also be conceptualised by reference to Scott's (1995) three pillars of institutions: the regulative, the normative and the cognitive. These "form a continuum, moving from the conscious and the legally enforced to the unconscious and the taken-for-granted" (Koskinen 2008, 18). Regulative processes force compliance through explicit rules, sanctions, and rewards, while normative systems compel social behaviour through values and norms, i.e., notions of what is preferred

and the means to achieve these desirable ends. Some values and norms are applicable only to certain actors or roles, setting behavioural expectations which act as external pressures but also being informally internalised. In this regard, norms do not only impose constraints but enable action by according rights and responsibilities (Scott 1995, 35-38). Cognitive systems, in turn, represent symbolic understandings and shared meanings, unquestioned routines and scripts that highlight the importance of social identities as conceptions of “who we are and what ways of action make sense for us in a given situation” (Scott 1995, 44). In the unit in my study there is no regulative framework governing language and translation practices, no explicit rules or enforcement mechanisms. Behaviour, nevertheless, conforms to normative expectations underpinned by socially constructed categories of actors and their assumed ways of acting. From the company’s point of view, the desired end is the meeting of service targets, and native proficiency is the norm guiding how to pursue this goal. In response to this, staff’s choices and routines, while often “taken for granted as ‘the way we do these things’” (Scott 1995, 44), nevertheless reveal latent conceptions of conduct for native and non-native TMs, LL customers, and L1-English management, including gatekeeping practices through language and translation use.

Studies on “translating institutions” (Koskinen 2008), nevertheless, typically concentrate on situations where mediators, whether professional or not, are explicitly needed to resolve a language barrier. Traverso (2012), instead, takes the notions of positioning and gatekeeping to the area of NPIT for the investigation of ad hoc interpreting in multilingual work meetings where the use of English as a lingua franca is taken for granted: “No one attends the meetings as an interpreter. Yet, improvised interpreting is regularly used for managing mutual understanding” (Traverso 2012, 149). Basing her analysis on Goffman’s participation framework (1981), which considers how participants align themselves in interactions, Traverso uses conversation analysis to study how issues of categorisation, face-work, and sequentiality are connected to the organisation of participation in translation episodes. The research shows how translation is a collaborative process that forces parties to carefully craft their contributions considering all participation positions (Traverso 2012, 174). As can be seen in the present study, the use of translation is far from a straight-forward solution to a comprehension issue, but a strategic skill that is closely linked to questions of identity, access, and status:

The assumption on which the meetings are held, i.e. that mutual understanding is possible with the resources at hand, is not inadequate: participants do communicate and work in spite of the linguistic diversity. In other words, the linguistic skills of the group as a whole do permit the discussion to take place and the meeting to proceed. From this perspective, interpreting displays participants' linguistic abilities as much as their difficulties. Yet, on the individual level, claiming the need for translation is a delicate matter. It comes down to acknowledging a lack of competence, and this is face-threatening [...]. Similarly, offering a (non-requested) translation amounts to attributing difficulties in understanding to the targeted participants (see Greer 2008). In short, negotiating translation (who needs it, who makes it) always results in sorting participants into categories related to linguistic skills (like English-speaking, non-English speaking, bilingual, etc.). So, the mechanisms highlighted here may also make reference to language skills' attribution/distribution and to its consequences in terms of power distance. (Traverso 2012, 151-152)

Overall, the theory of BALANCING BELONGING adds to the existing literature in stressing the need to see languages as more than assets to be accumulated and language users as more than transmitters of fixed meanings. Instead, translation emerges as one of the ways individuals strategically mobilise their linguistic resources, not just to improve and facilitate communication, but to manage and control it.

Through the grounded theory of BALANCING BELONGING, the current study offers a conceptual explanation that allows the behavioural patterns observed in the data to be explored further by scholars in different disciplines working with questions of social interaction and identity construction and negotiation in areas that may, on first sight, not appear to be directly comparable. Ironically though, while the use of the GT methodology shines in enabling these interdisciplinary connections by way of abstraction of people, place, and time, the focus on conceptual analysis runs the risk of perpetuating the invisibility of the interlingual nature of interactions in multilingual environments that emerges from the data in this study. The definition of the main concern as GETTING THINGS DONE allows for the level of abstraction that GT demands, but the label, arising directly from participants' interviews, crucially betrays the opacity of the skills that the research set out to highlight. The "things" that must be done are only articulated explicitly as cross-linguistic communication situations as a

result of the analysis but are unrecognised as such by participants, so it is precisely this lack of acknowledgement of the strategic use of language which leads to the main concern being resolved through a balance of belonging, i.e., to “things getting done” on the basis of identity negotiation. In other words, it is the underlying view of languages as reified and possessed which ultimately drives participants’ conduct to be focused on group belonging. Nevertheless, by analysing the norms, values, and beliefs shaping behaviour in this context, researchers can still use the theory of *BALANCING BELONGING* to consider specific issues related to language use in multilingual environments. From the point of view of translation studies, and NPIT in the workplace in particular, the transparency with which cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication is treated raises questions both in terms of missed opportunities for effective language management, but also for the investigation of the social and scholarly understandings of translation. The next chapter returns to this original focus by addressing key implications of the findings at local, national, and disciplinary levels.

SUMMARY

In GETTING THINGS DONE, or successfully resolving the communication situations that are part of their daily job to make progress in their tasks while maintaining their own goals, multilingual customer service teams engage in a process of BALANCING BELONGING by POSITIONING themselves and LEGITIMISING others as part of cultural, organisational, and ideational groups. This process of identity negotiation is a norm-responding behaviour that manifests itself through strategic linguistic and pragmatic choices that serve to regulate ACCESS to said groups and reflect mechanisms of SELF-VALIDATION based on underlying assumptions of language hierarchies, language competence, and language value. Resulting from the grounded theory methods of constant comparison and abstract conceptualisation, the theory of BALANCING BELONGING demonstrates itself to fulfil the criteria of fit, work, relevance and modifiability in explaining variation in participants' resolution of their main concern, and therefore can be connected at a conceptual level with scholarly work in a number of disciplinary areas.

The results of the analysis mirror findings in the international business management literature dealing with aspects such as language choice and language ideologies, group identification, the distinction between local and global English, the management of multilingualism, the interplay between language and power, and the invisibility of translation practices. More broadly, the theory of BALANCING BELONGING can be linked to questions of gatekeeping and participation, particularly through positioning theory.

CHAPTER 6: PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

“Try to get a company to pay well for a well-done translation for the first time. Or try to get substantial financing (from a company or government) for a language policy that includes translation. Or try to find long-term stable institutional employment as a translator. Or try to go into a company, do a linguistic audit of its communication needs (the models are in Reeves and Wright 1996), and tell them to station a translator on every single cross-over point. Try those things, or find out how others try them, and you soon discover that there is a big gap between the kind of cultural translation that is always everywhere and the kind that actually attracts the investment of social resources” (Pym 2008, 1)

The analysis of the data offers a conceptual representation of the behaviours that the substantive population engages in to resolve a main concern, which involves resolving situations of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communication, thereby providing valuable insights into how these operations are understood and conceptualised. The theory, born out of the data rather than the researcher’s specific personal, professional, and scholarly interests, speaks of negotiating identity in response to underlying norms, values, and beliefs with regards to language competence. The discussion that follows in this chapter then uses the emergent theory as a springboard to concentrate on the implications of these perceptions for the public discourse around language skills needs in the particular context of Ireland and the wider understanding of the role of non-professional translators and interpreters and multilingual practices in business contexts from a translation studies perspective.

The initial section presents some practical recommendations for language management strategies at a local level, connecting them with the broader corporate and national policy landscape. The second section engages with questions around the theoretical conceptualisations of language and translation in the face of a greater recognition of NPIT as an essential activity of interlingual and intercultural mediation.¹

¹ Some of the ideas in this chapter have been published under peer-review in Muñoz Gómez (2020).

1. LANGUAGE MANAGEMENT AND LANGUAGE POLICY

“Emergent strategy means, not chaos, but, in essence, unintended order”
(Mintzberg and Waters 1985, 271)

In their study of language management in German and Japanese MNCs and their subsidiaries, Harzing, Köster, and Magner (2011) distinguish between structural solutions introduced at organisational level (adopting an official corporate language, providing dedicated language training, contracting external translators/interpreters, or relying on machine translation for general comprehension), and informal solutions employed by individuals in their day-to-day work (code-switching,² building redundancy through repetitions, examples, and summaries, or changing the mode of communication from oral to written). External language service providers were rarely used due to the considerable costs involved and so, along with the adoption of English as a corporate language, participant companies leveraged informal solutions most frequently instead by leaning on the existing language capabilities of bilingual members of staff. In the unit under investigation in my study, the key requirement for effective cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication is resolved, from the company’s point of view, by carrying out selective recruitment (Feely and Harzing 2003), i.e., by “hiring” the necessary language competence in the form of L1-LL users. Management leads operations successfully for teams to meet their targets while enjoying a high degree of freedom and flexibility in how they fulfil their tasks. There is no doubt that “companies deal with language issues every day, they cope, the world continues to turn” (Maclean 2006, 1377). Indeed, what the unit does works for its purposes, but practices nevertheless betray the ad hoc and reactive nature of language management decisions. In this regard, the findings mirror those from Wilmot’s (2017) doctoral research of British SMEs, which show how organisations arrived at their practices through an emergent process of “unplanned planning” (Nekvapil and Nekula 2006, 315) or “bricolage” that did not give much thought to language matters “beyond hiring language nodes” (Wilmot 2017, 156).

² Rather than indicating the alternation of languages at the word or sentence level, code-switching refers here to situations when L2 users revert to their first language to communicate amongst themselves.

The way the unit addresses multilingualism in the current study is reflective of an instrumental approach “leading to pragmatic but not always well-considered strategies” (Steyaert and Janssen 1997, 146). Trial and error drove the establishment of the unit and facilitated its growth to a point of stability, but without an overarching strategic approach, ungrounded rationalisations of effective phenomena distort the understanding of actual processes, preventing change that could address existing inefficiencies. Even when perceived needs are met, a lack of a clearer language management strategy (LMS) may risk an inconsistent user experience and missed opportunities in terms of leveraging current resources.³ While the study does not intend to be evaluative but diagnostic with regards to participants’ language and translation use, it would be remiss not to point towards some practical recommendations that could contribute to the long-term sustainability of (i) recruitment criteria and (ii) knowledge management practices.

The current recruitment process relies on the unquestioned expectation for LL native proficiency, but this perspective offers only a shallow picture of language use that conceals the fundamental role of English as an L2 and other language learning phenomena, as well as the prevalence of various forms of translation in how staff achieve the unit’s objectives. After the initial HR screening, all candidates undergo an interview in English with the corresponding hiring manager. L2-LL users are often (although not consistently) also asked to complete two additional tasks: a general conversation in the LL with another LL-speaking member of staff, and a 30-minute translation test with no aids. As discussed before,⁴ both the type of activities and their irregular application across candidates reflect the shortcomings in the definition of skills needs for the specific communication situations encountered on the job.

³ An LMS guides “the *planned* adoption of a range of techniques to facilitate effective communication” (European Commission 2006, 5) [emphasis mine], which may comprise initiatives such as specialised training, focused recruitment or the use of external resources, i.e., learning, hiring, or buying the necessary skills. Research shows that very few businesses in Ireland have an LMS. According to a 2006 study, less than 1% of Irish SMEs surveyed had a LMS compared to 48% of respondents across the EU (European Commission 2006, 24). One measurable for delivering the Languages Connect policy is, in fact, the percentage of employers reporting the use of an LMS, although the implementation plan did not set specific targets (DES 2017b, 38).

⁴ See Chapter 4, Section 3.2.

While a general conversation in the LL can be useful both to ease the candidate into the task and get a general sense for their communicative fluency, it offers no indication of their capacity to manage customer relations in a professional context. A role-play where the candidate is given key details of a case in English and asked to simulate a call to a LL customer would instead allow for a more direct assessment of potential job performance. When it comes to the translation test, it is unsurprising that, as reported by SLs, candidates tend to do better with conventionalised genre structures but struggle where company-specific knowledge is required.⁵ An alternative task that captures more closely the work of the unit in content and function, accompanied by some contextual information, would provide a clearer picture of candidates' transfer abilities. Candidates could be asked to translate an email from English into the LL, write a free reply to a customers' response, and then provide a quick summary of the exchange from the LL into English. The proposed activities would therefore be applicable to all candidates, whether L1 or L2 LL users, since they would assess not only LL, but also English proficiency, and candidates' ability to move strategically between the two for a specific purpose in a way that mirrors TMs' daily practices.

A second key area for improvement that would bring to the fore language and translation data as a valuable asset is knowledge management. Current processes are inherited from previous staff members and simply reproduced or adapted individually. Resources are managed at a personal level, emerging needs covered on an ad hoc basis, and hidden assets often overlooked rather than identified, curated, developed, or rewarded. The consequences range from terminological inconsistencies to missed content updates, doubling up of work, and a loss of knowledge with staff turnover. Implementing information management procedures aided by the introduction of translation memories, automatic QA checks, glossaries, or common knowledge bases and documentation repositories could lead to increased productivity, quality, and consistency, facilitating text reuse, version control, and knowledge sharing. This is not to advocate for a single, rigid workflow across teams, but for an explicit one that would allow for greater visibility and integration of multilingual text production and content management practices in the units' operations. More conscious decisions do not need to translate into reduced flexibility for staff but rather added clarity and cohesiveness

⁵ See Appendix F.

in the current processes. This could be positive for performance but also to build a case for the unit's value proposition within the company.

Further interventions could include data collection on customers' service preferences to gather insights into the adequacy of the unit's assumptions regarding customer demands and expectations. This could be done as part of the information that TMs request for the upgrades, or with a brief service questionnaire sent afterwards. In addition, teams could be encouraged to keep a record of good practices to be regularly shared and updated. Although it may not be possible to draw immediate actionable conclusions from these data, patterns may arise over time. The results can be useful for on-boarding and quality assurance, but also to highlight the benefits brought in by the teams in a more explicit and evidence-based manner and to identify areas for development.

It is in the implementation and assessment of initiatives such as these that cooperation between businesses and research teams across multiple disciplines could find a space to flourish. Skills auditing programmes could be used to document tasks and their different degrees of expertise and thus help determine competence requirements for NPIT (Angelelli 2020, 126), while dedicated training sessions could promote the development of existing skills and better utilise hidden assets.⁶ As Angelelli (2020, 125-126) suggests:

Catering to NPITs' needs requires developing specific executive alternatives to educate for a specific purpose. NPITs constitute a specific case of bilinguals performing a task for which they may not have the knowledge or on which they might not have had the opportunity to reflect. So, an educational programme tailored to NPITs means educating them not only on skills and tools but, most importantly, on how they can identify their own strengths and limitations, learning strategies and techniques, rather than 'training' them as if one size fits all.

Data access remains the greatest barrier to the kind of collaborative action research proposed here. This is in part to be expected in any workplace study, where the aims

⁶ One area of particular interest may be machine translation and post-editing to raise awareness not only of risks regarding confidentiality and data ownership, but also of its potential applications in multilingual authoring and text optimisation.

and scope are bound to be constrained by staff workload and availability, in addition to confidentiality and data-protection concerns (cf. Ehrensberger-Dow 2014). However, access is not just a practical issue, but a question of relevance and return on investment, as the level of access granted by the research partner is linked to the organisation's perceptions of potential benefits based on their self-identified needs. A company must first recognise an issue to be tackled or a potential for improvement, whether in revenue or efficiency, and be willing to invest time and resources to address it. And this, of course, is less likely to occur where language, translation, and communication are not identified as a concern.⁷

In the unit in my study, the strategic use of language and translation proves to be central to facilitating operations, but it is also taken for granted. And if issues are not identified, solutions are not necessary. As Angouri (2013, 572) points out, “an ambiguous policy may serve the company's interest and save managers from policing language use”. From the company's perspective, change can be disruptive, so the benefits of addressing language practices must be visible, concrete, and measurable. In addition, greater complexity and specialisation of staff would also enter in contradiction with the entry level, low responsibility, and transient nature of the post, which limits the incentives for further training in the face of high turnover rates. While this may not have a direct impact on day-to-day activities, it is still relevant to the management of multilingual teams, from aspects such as efficiency and productivity to staff motivation, career development, recognition and, of course, remuneration.

In the broader national context of Ireland, in turn, the ambitions of the current foreign language policy call for increased critical engagement with public discourse around language needs and future enterprise requirements. Much has been said about the benefits of language competence for trade, competitiveness, and employability,

⁷ According to a survey of European companies, greater performance in international trade is associated with four main characteristics: “the employment of native speakers; recruiting employees with existing language skills; using professional interpreters and translators; and having a language management plan (or strategy) in place” (European Commission 2011b, 3). This reinforces the advantage of having an explicit LMS, but also shows how translation appears only as an external service to buy and not considered as part of the activities that plurilingual employees may engage in. The particular translanguing skills of NPITs therefore remain unrecognised by both individuals and organisations, since they are not explicitly articulated as part of the necessary skill-set for global teams (Cohen and Kassis-Henderson 2017, 16).

but little is yet known about what multilingual professionals need to be able to do, and how the knowledge of languages or the ability to move between them are deployed in business settings as a means for cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication.

Public and private bodies have long recognised foreign languages and cultural awareness as crucial for international trade and therefore a priority to guarantee the economic prosperity of the country (e.g. EGFSN 2012, DES 2014, DES 2017). However, it is not clear how this value is made manifest in employers' management and recruitment strategies, and the extent to which it is reflected in employees' daily communication practices. Indeed, in the large-scale surveys typically used to capture national or sectoral requirements as part of publicly commissioned reports, needs are investigated from the perspective of employers and their anticipated gaps in operations, and defined as a range of specific languages (other than English) in a given quantity or proficiency level, rather than in relation to particular skills, competences, or contexts of use. This creates a "shopping list" of sorts for the education system to try to keep up with.

The short and long-term priorities of industry and education are at odds due to conflicting understandings of what it means to "know languages". However, the fundamental issue is not whether education can (or should) play catch up with industry needs, but the fact that these are not articulated in an informed and sustainable manner in the first place. If a company determines that expanding their operations in Germany requires the hiring of German native speakers, no amount of curricular innovation or teacher support will prevent the education system from falling short to respond to this demand. In turn, the L1 English graduate competing in the market merely on the basis of "having German" will face a constant losing battle, no matter how much public discourse insists on the benefits of language learning for employment options. And the L1 German candidate will see their skills equated to little more than "language fodder". But what does a company mean when they determine a need for "German native speakers"? Maybe they require somebody who can effectively negotiate complex communicative situations with business partners in Germany (who, in turn, may or may not be L1 German users). Maybe they are looking for somebody who can draft and review content for the German market, or maybe they actually need a person who can hold a general conversation in German with prospective customers before

achieving record sales through English. To address language requirements in the workplace, the question cannot just be which languages are needed, but for which practices and at which levels of competence.

In this sense, it could be speculated that the higher satisfaction rating for language capability reported by Irish-owned companies might not necessarily reflect an actual assessment of skills but rather a lesser need or even a more limited awareness of the issue compared to their foreign-owned counterparts (Fitzpatrick Associates 2019, 6). Likewise, the higher levels of proficiency desired by foreign employers may not be based exclusively on consciously identified needs, as already suggested by the findings of this study, but more pragmatically have to do also with access to talent. Multinational companies operating internationally are more likely to possess the means to hire abroad and deal with the quick staff turnover linked to many multilingual customer service positions. In line with the 2018 National Employer Survey, “this might suggest that an educational exercise is required to highlight to prospective employers the range of graduate skills and expertise they could potentially benefit from” (Fitzpatrick Associates 2019, 52).

Raising awareness amongst of the benefits of language education for employment has, in fact, been a recurrent point in Irish public discourse for years, and remains a key goal of the language policy (cf. EGFSN 2005, 2018; DES 2016, 2017a). However, as hinted at by participants in the current study, career opportunities with an explicit requirement for languages are typically limited to entry level support roles, while in more advanced positions language becomes a complementary nice-to-know:

For roles in which customer service is the predominant activity, as is the case in many Contact and Shared Service Centres, language competency outweighs other accomplishments and experience. In such cases, training is provided by the employer for job-specific knowledge and the recruitment process is focused on language competency. The importance of language skills relative to other academic or vocational skills in a particular role is generally more difficult to gauge the more the role is driven by professional skills, such as in investment analysis, where technical know-how is at the core of the job specification. Companies with such needs will look for IT graduates, MBA graduates, Business/Finance graduates or other professionals; languages may be a background issue, noted and desirable,

but not necessarily weighing heavily in the job specification: a second-level enabler. In general, language proficiency requirements appear to be inversely proportional to the complexity of the overall job specification. [...] Consequently, at the point of recruitment foreign language competency is viewed as a non-essential life-skill, rather than as a valuable job qualification. (EGFSN 2005, 15)

Although there is no denying that the overlap between LL-English and global English as the language of international business can be a challenge for the promotion of language learning in a predominately L1-English country like Ireland, a key takeaway from this study is the mismatch between the general message of the importance of languages, the reality of the demand, and dominant recruitment models, driven as they are by the current availability of overseas candidates in the marketplace and a lack of a more critical approach to the assessment of skills needs.⁸

When the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) set out to examine the likelihood of a future language skills deficit in Ireland in 2005, they concluded that there was no systematic shortage at the time and that “a much more fundamental issue for contact centres than the availability of foreign language skills [...] is Ireland’s competitiveness as reflected in the cost of housing/accommodation, insurances and services” (EGFSN 2005, 10).⁹ Indeed, according to the report, the reason why there was no demand and supply imbalance was because of the overwhelming demand for native speakers, with very minimal requirements for other levels of competency: “The market requires native speakers and by definition, the Irish educational system cannot supply native speakers. This is not a shortcoming of the Irish educational system, it is simply a reflection of the nature of demand” (EGFSN 2005, 9).

⁸ My study suggests that present conditions may be mutually beneficial for some parties, given that the company is able to fulfil its needs and transient staff can gain international experience in an English-speaking context. However, if unquestioned, this is problematic as the basis for a definition of enterprise requirements to which national policy and education efforts are aligned.

⁹ The potential impact of the cost of living on the attractiveness of Ireland as a destination for foreign nationals is to this day still a variable worth considering when looking at the composition of the language skills supply. While reduced cost competitiveness could be a barrier for importing language requirements, factors such as Brexit, the normalisation of remote work, and the rise of multilingualism within Irish society may act as counterbalances, perhaps indirectly perpetuating current assessment and recruitment practices.

In contrast, the business organisation Ibec (2014, 8) maintains that “there is a clear need for languages in business, but the requirement may not always be for a very high level of proficiency”. The findings of the study suggest a similar conclusion, at least in the particular context of B2B IT support, but also reveal how the normative expectations for native proficiency are still very much present almost two decades after the EGFSN report. Despite being long in the making, *Languages Connect* failed to become the integrated policy recommended by the Council of Europe (2008), missing the call for the decompartmentalisation of language, “to consider the language scene as a whole [...] to develop in each individual citizen a single plurilingual competence, rather than what is evident at present, namely an unrelated set of fragmentary competences in particular languages” (Council of Europe 2008, 33). As stated in the Language Education Policy Profile (Council of Europe 2008, 35):

Languages are not just a part of the equipment needed (survival kit) or possibly useful (extra gadget) to face new challenges. They have become a constitutive dimension of human development, action and interrelation in contexts characterized by a plurality of languages and cultures. An education integrating languages in its project does not have to try to turn pupils into polyglots, nor supposedly “perfect bilinguals”. Its aim and its responsibility are to enable young people with a successful plurilingual education, which includes both education for plurilingualism and education for plurilingual awareness.

From this perspective, it is crucial to recognise and stress the benefit of various levels of proficiency, “so that a profile of competence in a number of languages for different purposes and at different levels is acknowledged as valuable by parents, employers and other members of civil society” (Council of Europe 2008, 38).¹⁰

Irish graduates who are L1-English users cannot compete with native speakers at “being native”, but they can equally develop the strategic language and translation skills necessary to adapt to different communication situations. However, if such skills remain unrecognised, a vicious circle can ensue where business will continue to lament talent gaps, public initiatives will fail to achieve meaningful change, the education

¹⁰ This is the reason why that the term “language user” is preferred over “language speaker” throughout this study, as it highlights the value of being able to use language in multiple ways beyond speaking fluency.

system will remain under constant pressure, language positions will prove unattractive (or unattainable) for language graduates struggling to articulate the value of their competences, and multilingual professionals will miss valuable opportunities for further development.

Failing to address the rift between perceived and actual needs obscures both the potential benefits of developing cross-cultural and cross-linguistic transfer skills at lower levels of proficiency, as well as the possibilities to hone language users' natural ability to translate into a "trained skill" (Whyatt 2017, 50). As boundary spanners, NPIT represent a key category of undervalued human capital, which makes "recognizing, mobilizing, rewarding, and retaining these 'secret linchpins' [...] a crucial challenge" (Barner-Rasmussen et al. 2014, 900-901). The explicitation of language management strategies, and the values and beliefs that inform them, is therefore an essential step in critically identifying, assessing, communicating, and deploying existing skills. Given the complex and dynamic environment in which businesses currently operate, the national language policy's aims of diversifying the offering and encouraging uptake in an already strained education system where languages are continuously competing for curricular space and resources may only bear fruit if they do not focus on immediate, vaguely defined needs and are instead directed by considerations of actual language use in an increasingly multilingual and multicultural society.

2. TRANSLATION THEORY AND RESEARCH

"Could TS become a trans-discipline, a transversal object of inquiry?" (Gambier 2019, 358)

Through the investigation of a B2B customer service unit in an Irish-based multinational organisation, the present study brings to light the veil of transparency that shrouds the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural nature of multilingual communication. As discussed before, the normative expectations around native proficiency and the subsequent articulation of expertise as language-independent rather than a strategic skill carries significant implications at the local level when it comes to language management, from knowledge and recruitment practices to staff

assessment and opportunities for development and progression. The findings also reflect ongoing public conversations on language requirements for enterprise at national level, which, in turn, have practical consequences for the definition of skills needs and the sustainability of educational and policy efforts. From a theoretical perspective then, the need for a more critical approach to language use auditing in the workplace is relevant to help further illuminate the underlying relationships between languages and the role of translation in global businesses.

Attitudes towards language planning and policy implementation tend to reflect one of three views: language-as-problem, language-as-right, or language-as-resource (Ruíz 1984). The conceptualisation of language-as-problem relates to questions of integration and assimilation, while language-as-right stresses the learning of one's language as a universal right. Language-as-resource, in turn, refers to the benefits of multilingualism for individuals and society as a whole. In Ireland, key stakeholders acknowledge the value of languages, commonly touted as a priority skill for modern employees, and the language policy can thus be said to take a language-as-resource orientation (Gallagher 2021, 45). However, the vision of language-as-resource is often linked solely to discussions of economic benefit and market value which connect multilingualism to increased competitiveness for individuals, businesses, and nations in the global economy, and places multilingual workers as a tool for cost-efficiency and market expansion (Duchêne 2009, 28). The ideological underpinnings of the “multilingualism as a skill” discourse have therefore led to what some authors describe as the commodification of language (e.g. Heller 2010, Cameron 2012, Heller and Duchêne 2016) or, rather, the commodification of linguistic skills, with language as “an embodied instrument of labor” (Petrovic and Yazan 2021, 30).¹¹ As seen in the study, the perceived added value of language rests on staff seemingly being conceived of as embodiments of particular languages and therefore interchangeable placeholders for them, rather than individuals with varying degrees of experience and ability to be developed, enhanced, and remunerated.

¹¹ In a 2021 edited volume, Petrovic and Yazan offer an in-depth theoretical discussion on the conceptualisation of language as instrument, resource, capital and commodity. In their eyes, “labor may be applied in learning new linguistic skills, as in learning a particular discourse in a first language (e.g. speaking like a lawyer or writing like a journalist), learning a foreign or second language, learning a new accent, or following a script. [...] In other words, one's labors result in a skill added to an existing natural capacity. What is involved in any exchange, then, is the selling of one's labor power with an increased [linguistic] capacity, not language itself” (Petrovic and Yazan 2021, 27).

Language is considered “as a whole, bounded system, consistent with the territorial boundaries of the nation-state and the historical continuity of a putatively culturally (and, often, genetically) unified population, and repository of its distinct worldview” (Heller 2010, 102). Each language is therefore conceived as a discrete entity, owned and represented by its native speakers, a status which “has more to do with who one is, or appears to be, often in terms of ethno-national identity” (Simpson and O’Regan 2021, 12). Instead of considering language use through individuals’ varied repertoires across different communication situations, native speakers are seen as bastions of an ideal (or rather idealised) proficiency standard, a form of “native speakerism” (Holliday 2006) which conflates linguistic, cultural and national identities as one and the same legitimising force:

Language fetishised in this sense is seen as a property of the speaker, [...] an imagined characteristic or trait of the speaker in-themselves — i.e. as a part of their nature. [...] Even though nonnative speakers cannot become members of a formal native-speaker citizenry, they can do the next best thing by becoming “authenticated” as proficient users. [...] Those without any credentials are likely to be automatically discounted. But even for those with them, there are no guarantees, since their credential may be deemed not to be at a sufficiently advanced level to qualify them for recognition, and what eventual level is achieved will also be determined by the cultural, social, symbolic, and financial capital which they can bring with them. (Simpson and O’Regan 2021, 12-14)

While the global economy can bring new opportunities for workers across borders, these are not simply related to their linguistic capital but “dependent on the specific socio-political and economic contexts the individuals find themselves in and/or attempt to access” (Angouri and Miglbauer 2014, 150). As such, Duchêne (2009, 49) calls for the consideration of the “the social and economic conditions in which multilingualism becomes an object of interest in the new economy” in order to investigate “who profits from what kinds of multilingualism and who is excluded both in terms of access to jobs and to salary/status recognition in the job” and therefore “gain further understanding on the way language ideologies are produced and reproduced and how language remains a terrain on which legitimacy and belonging are constituted”.

Language acquires value through its significance for economic gain [...] reducing communicative activity to a commodity negotiated between those who have it, those who sell it and those who need it. This essentialises language use, oversimplifies the complex profile of the multilingual workplace and ignores the interactional work multilingual speakers do in negotiating their resources to reach their interactional goals. (Angouri and Miglbauer 2014, 151)

According to Urciuoli (2016, 472), the “language” worker “is imagined as a ‘bundle of skills’ [...] valued to the extent that its bearer can treat it as a contribution to the larger organization”. In this sense, “what gets commodified is not language per se but the worker’s packaging of self” (Petrovic and Yazan 2021, 2). In the modern economy individuals are encouraged to see all aspects of self as marketable, and therefore those “who supposedly ‘own’ their native language are in many ways better understood as franchising it” (Urciuoli 2016, 476). A hierarchy arises along the apparently neat yet illusory line separating non-native and native speakers, or those who are accepted as such. As shown in the study, participants are variously recognised as valid speakers and thus able or not to claim native (or native-like) speakerhood, with not only L2 but also L1 users meeting or breaking the expectations set by factors like their nationality, background, name, accent or even self-identification. “How workers conceptualize language is contingent on how they are languaged as workers” (Urciuoli 2016, 479), and this can be seen in the various ways TMs position themselves, validate their language choices and describe their expertise.

In addition to the native/non-native division, another binary demarcates the distinct ideological worth assigned to the LLs and English. The LLs are seen as culture-bound, an expression of particular ways of speaking, thinking, and being: “Local languages tend to be equated with ideologies of difference that seek to create, reinforce, or reinstate (linguistic, cultural, geopolitical) boundaries” (Lane-Mercier 2014, 218). English, in turn, appears as an impersonal and utilitarian code, a “free-floating lingua franca [...] [that] has become a reduced standardized form of language for supra-cultural communication” (Snell-Hornby 2000, 17). It belongs to everybody and nobody, representing “the universal ideal of a transparent, borderless vehicle of

communication uprooted from its original cultural and geopolitical context” (Lane-Mercier 2014, 218).

The LLs are “foreign” languages, peripheral to a globalised world that appears to operate seamlessly through English, despite being an L2 for most of its users: “English is everywhere and nowhere, omnipresent and unnoticed” (Council of Europe 2008, 33). While it may have lost its status as a culturally specific (foreign) language, the opposite is true of its prestige as the vehicle of transnational communication. With English varieties relegated to the local, this global English has no native speakers, but proficiency remains a marker of cosmopolitan experience. As a result, both L2 and L1 users alike must translate themselves (intra or interlingually) into English to be part of the global, but they may also translate themselves out of it, bringing to the fore the otherness that the perceived “frictionless monoglossia” (Cronin 1998, 153) attempts to drown.

In this sense, the international business unit is, more than a multilingual space, a translational one: “Multilingualism calls to mind a space of plurality and diversity, with no particular idea of hierarchy or organization. Translation proposes an active, directional and interactional model of language relations” (Cronin and Simon 2014, 119). Cronin and Simon’s description of urban landscapes as translation zones is fitting in this context too:

When translations take place among communities that share the same territory, the same geographical and cultural references, the social effects of translation are enhanced. Relentless contact between languages reaffirms language as a marker of identity, and language calls attention to itself. This persistent reaffirmation of language as a performative marker of identity increases the fraught nature of translation—and defines the kinds of border logics that operate across small distances. When languages are privileged markers of conflictual identity, then the social effect of translation is restricted to forms of distancing—that is, when translations serve to underscore the differences that prevail among cultures and languages. (Cronin and Simon 2014, 122)

Under the shadow of a shared global English, translation helps highlight relations between languages and their users. Far from a neutral act of enabling comprehension,

its presence (or absence) separates and brings together, signals difference and belonging, allows and controls access, and directs the strategic negotiation of positions, roles, and relationships.

More English therefore does not necessarily make translation superfluous. As global connections intensify, the need for a lingua franca naturally expands, so the dominance of English as an international language can actually be seen as a result of linguistic diversity rather than an alternative to it (Pym 2008, 5). In fact, the more prominent English becomes, the more the demand for translation surges too. Pym (2008) calls this seemingly contradictory situation “the diversity paradox” and looks at international institutions to explain it. These organisations reflect a clash between “the symbolic ideal of multilingualism”, i.e., the use of many languages as equal, and a reality where efficiency demands lead to the use of just a couple of central languages (Pym 2008, 8). What often happens is a combination of language learning within “the professional intercultural” of the institution, particularly in technical domains, and translation “in relations with what might be termed client cultures (the relative monocultures whose languages are accorded official status by the institution)” (Pym 2008, 8).

The model of a growing lingua franca within intercultural and translation reaching beyond them reflects the wider patterns that characterise the development of global markets through localisation, “based on production in a central language, mostly English, then translation and adaptation into a wide range of target languages, with the latter determined according to market criteria” (Pym 2008, 9). This is akin to what can be seen in the present study, where English is the company language and translation is used for communication with customers: “[T]he lingua franca plays its global role as a factor of production, whereas translation plays its role as a tool of distribution” (Pym 2006, 749). However, such an account of directionality presents only one side of the coin. While the company follows the traditional one-to-many pattern of localisation (Pym 2006), the unit’s internal communication often flows in the opposite direction, with translation typically going from the LL monocultures to the English intercultural, as a form of reverse localisation (Schäler 2006).

As a force of globalisation, localisation plays a key role in “the intensification (number of translations) and diversification (number of languages translated) of intercultural exchange, despite the omnipresence of English” (Lane-Mercier 2014, 226). Nevertheless, while highlighting difference and diversity, the commercial logic of localisation also reinforces the hierarchical relations between languages and cultures, and impacts on the social, professional, and academic understandings of translation.

In internationally traded products and services, language(s) are “features” that may be fully or partially enabled based on their position in the “world language system” (de Swaan 2001) as peripheral, central or supercentral. And to help these global commodities reach local markets, translation “assumes a transparent, top-down role” (Lane-Mercier 2014, 219) as “an unproblematic transcoding process” (Buden et al. 2009, 218). New labels emerge then for services that are seen to provide distinct added value, like transcreation, multilingual copywriting, transediting, language versioning, etc. But the growing popularity of terms which appear to intersect and overlap with translation is not limited to the language industry, where there is a business incentive behind the offering of differentiated services at various price points. Concepts like (trans)linguaging, metrolingualism or codemeshing are also commonly referenced in scholarly descriptions of translanguing practices with as of yet little crossover from translation studies, which is itself increasingly fragmented into distinct subdisciplines, turns and paradigms with their own niche terms, methods and approaches.¹² Whether some of these may be considered “fancy terms but nothing essentially new” (cf. Pym 2004, xv) or meaningful ways to describe particular workflows, contexts, and practices with various degrees of specialisation, what they have in common is their typical claim to go “beyond *mere* translation” (Carreira 2022, 500) [emphasis mine].

As seen in the present study, translation is consequently presented as a rigid interlingual task dependent on clear and stable source texts, if not simply restricted to “a linear substitution of words” (Gambier 2019, 357), which in turn sets constraints to

¹² As Delabastita (2013) explains, this fragmentation is a healthy sign of dynamism and continuous intellectual development in the discipline. However, it can also be seen as the result of the marketisation of the academic environment and the constant competitive pressure to innovate, which puts the field at risk of “breaking up into a juxtaposition of multiple closed circuits competing for market share” (Delabastita 2013, 15).

the profile and identity of those engaged in translating: “The term ‘translation’ is rejected because it implies a formal transfer, a word-for-word work and because it goes with the traditional image of the translator as a subservient or ‘subaltern’ worker” (Gambier 2019, 356).¹³

Indeed, within the language industry it is not “translators” doing the higher value activities, but localisers, transcreators, multilingual copywriters and marketers, cultural consultants, or even “multimedia, multilingual communication engineers” (Gouadec 2007, 369). Translation, an increasingly technology-mediated practice of text reuse, is then often the job of linguists, language specialists, and post-editors (that is, if there is any human intervention at all).¹⁴ And in many other contexts, as is manifest in this study, it is “native speakers” or “bilingual staff” who deal with communication in multiple languages. What is left then for “translators”? Is “translation” doomed to become the poor relation in a spread of evermore diversified practices? How is translation studies to orient its object in this evolving landscape?

These questions are particularly relevant for translation training and education. Given the current complexity of content development networks, the changing of business practices, and the emergence of new work processes and occupations, trainee translators are faced with the challenge of articulating their skills and building a professional identity in a booming “translation” industry with declining opportunities for “translators”.¹⁵ And as a result, they may be at a disadvantage against other kinds of professionals:

¹³ See, for example, what a popular translation technology and language services company has to say about the difference between translation and transcreation: “Transcreation is about creating content that resonates with a new audience. [It] is the process of adapting content from one language to another while maintaining the existing tone, intent, and style. [...] While translation focuses on replacing the words in one language with corresponding words in a new language, transcreation services are focused on conveying the same message and concept in a new language. [...] Billing per word is not an accurate reflection of all the work a transcreator does to recapture and recreate your brand’s messaging, since the idea isn’t just to translate with equal language. A good translator will translate website or app content ‘in the spirit’ of the source text without being too literal, but even so, the message can lose impact in the process of straight translation”.

¹⁴ Indeed, many of the industry’s translation needs, and an even bigger proportion of the social uses of translation, are arguably already being covered by machine learning solutions.

¹⁵ The opening quote by Pym (2008) also reinforces this idea of there being a notable gulf between the need for translations and the demand for (or investment on) “translators”.

If the discipline does not meet [...] contemporary challenges adequately, then ironically students trained in translation programmes will be less able to innovate than intelligent, broadly educated people who know about the world, culture, politics, technology and language, even if they have no training in translation per se. (Tymoczko 2009, 419)

Non-professional translators are not “indoctrinated” into the same norms and expectations, which “enhances their sense of initiative, authority and agency in reformulating the material as part of a clear project that they share with the audience” (Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva 2012, 158). This is evidenced in how participants in the study discuss and approach their tasks. When dealing with unrecognised translation, TMs feel at liberty to mould and shape their messages as they see fit. Explicit translation is seen to impose greater constraints but, in some instances, TMs’ pressing communicative goals and proximity to their audience lead to breaks with the expected ST adherence in ways that may not be familiar to professional translators.

The study of NPIT may then offer a path to reclaiming the label of “translation” as a natural ability with many varied manifestations beyond prototypical examples linked to a specialised professional activity:

Translating is happening in the mental processes of all adult language learning, in all presentations of the self across cultural divides, and in the very conditions of cross-language cooperation, from the governance of the multilingual state to the everyday arrangements of family life. In a word, translation is working within our societies, on all levels, and not just between them; it is operating as the fifth language skill, mostly without recourse to paid mediators. (Pym 2017, 342)

Stressing the value and rich diversity of the sometimes intangible and often unacknowledged NPIT practices, however, need not enter into conflict with the defence of professional communities, but can in fact help reinforce their distinct roles in the language landscape. Rather than blindly advocating against non-professionals as unfair competition, understanding the needs that they fulfil may assist professionals in defining their market strategies, empower non-professionals in their careers, and allow users to make informed decisions (Antonini et al. 2017, 9-11):

We should enhance our collaboration to make sure we have a shared understanding of, and a commitment to guaranteeing, appropriate levels of expertise, feasibility and allocation of tasks for the diverse levels of expertise, quality of outputs and services, levels of compensation and, above all, ethics and responsibilities towards end users, workers and clients. (Angelelli 2020, 118)

In the face of increasingly restricted industry and social understandings of translation, it is therefore worth paying attention to more than the “economically and/or institutionally visible or academically prestigious forms of translation carried out by those who are referred to as ‘translators’” (Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva 2012, 158) and considering a developmental notion of translation that nevertheless continues to “name the communicative points at which languages mark out their boundaries” (Pym 2007). This implies a shift in the disciplinary object of study from (assumed expert) *translations* to (all kinds of) *translating*, professional or not, as part of the same overarching cognitive phenomenon of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic decision-making. Translation studies can in this way widen its conceptual scope, thus contributing “to expanding the boundaries of the term ‘translation’ itself, to making it more malleable and less rigid, so that it can cease to function as a straightjacket or a yardstick and instead become available as an illuminating conceptual tool that can be fruitfully applied in diverse areas of research” (Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva 2012, 161-162). Following Delabastita (2013, 21), “this means that translation studies is eventually bound to lose itself but also to impose itself within a much wider, interlinguistically and interculturally based and intertextually inspired research field, where it merges with a wide range of other fields”.

Findings from the present study necessarily concern more than “translation”. Indeed, some readers may remain unconvinced that many of the phenomena considered here could, in fact, be called translation at all. The investigation of such a multilingual business unit as a translation zone, nevertheless, highlights multiple areas of inquiry that should be of import to translation studies. Multilingual text production workflows, translation challenges and criteria, the use of resources, the articulation of communication practices, management and staff views on language and translation competence, and the role of language and translation (as well as non-translation) for identity negotiation are all areas which translation scholars may wish to explore further

in cooperation with related disciplines. After all, as Gambier (2019, 358) points out, “don’t they all wonder about our ways of managing the communicational differences, at the semiotic, linguistic and/or cultural level, although they cope with moving concepts such as culture, context, norms?”

While rapid technological developments are bringing translation closer to signifying the “replacement of user-visible natural-language strings” (Pym 2007) as part of the complex value chain in the language and localisation industry, increased social mobility and internationalisation of business relations stress the need to consider the different practices that allow for the constant negotiation of language and culture boundaries. In such an interconnected social and economic landscape, translation studies cannot therefore limit its object of study to the profession and must pay duly attention to the role of unrecognised forms of translation and other modes of multilingual communication brought about by language learning amongst non-professionals, not as a threat but as examples of everyday strategic language use. In the words of Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva (2012, 158):

Translation and interpreting studies would do well to learn from the interlingual activities of non-professionals, instead of trying to control these activities, or focus excessively on the quality of output and/or perceived loss of status by translators and interpreters vis-à-vis non-professionals translating and interpreting. Otherwise, translation scholars will lose valuable opportunities for enhancing their scholarly knowledge, and translators and interpreters will miss valuable opportunities for professional growth.

As this study aims to demonstrate, translation studies can make a valuable contribution towards the investigation of multilingual business settings and the institutional management of linguistic diversity. But likewise, the discipline, and translation training in particular, can benefit from revisiting the notion of natural translation as it manifests itself in non-professional contexts to further our theoretical understanding of the ways individuals move across their varied linguistic repertoires, addressing explicitly how “translation” is circumscribed and providing legitimacy to the myriad of cross-linguistic communication practices present in today’s global world.

SUMMARY

By conceptualising a multilingual Irish-based business unit as a translation zone, the present study shows how translation studies can contribute to the articulation of corporate language management strategies and the explicitation of underlying assumptions around language and translation competence while, at the same time, benefiting from the novel perspectives that NPIT research offers to the study of translation as a strategic mediation practice in the face of an ever changing social and professional landscape.

On a practical level, the study highlights the connection between the unit's understanding of language skills and its approach to recruitment and knowledge management. Doing business in the international sphere necessitates the fostering of skills that allows citizens and companies to operate successfully in multilingual and multicultural environments, and the continuous demand for staff with language-related expertise in the Republic of Ireland accentuates the need for educational efforts to support the sustained development of these skills. The current policy solutions concentrate on responding to business requirements through diversification (more languages) and enhancement (more and better training). But for a response to skills deficits to be meaningful, needs must first be critically identified, assessed, and communicated. But this audit exercise should be grounded in daily practices and behaviours if we are to understand what employers expect their multilingual staff to be able to do with languages and how employees actually put their skills to use in the workplace, i.e., the potential gap between perceived and actual needs.

On a theoretical level, the simplification of relations amongst languages and their users into binary divisions that separate natives and non-natives, as well as local and global languages, contributes to the low profile of the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic practices which support the more visible production and distribution flows. As a result, the findings highlight the need for translation studies to engage more openly with the translational nature of multilingual communication outside of the profession. Greater focus on NPITs' explicit and unrecognised translation practices reveals the limits of understanding translation exclusively as an expert skill rather than

a developmental one, and calls attention to the presence of all types of translation and their role in the shaping of international communication practices.

CONCLUSIONS

The increased scholarly focus on translation as a profession has left a gap for the investigation of unrecognised mediation practices in common but often overlooked sites of language contact. As a response, this study offers a contribution to the growing body of NPIT and workplace-based translation research by focusing on businesses as “translation zones” (Apter 2006) or spaces of constant linguistic and cultural negotiation with their own implicit language policies and internalised translation cultures. Having set out to investigate what translation looks like in a multilingual team, the values and beliefs that translators hold about their role and their skills, and the way the context of production is reflected in processes and outputs, this thesis provides new insights into translation in international corporations while contributing towards a better understanding of these settings from a translation perspective.

Motivated by public discourse around language skills needs in enterprise in the particular context of the Republic of Ireland, and cognisant of the demands placed on companies looking to consolidate their global presence in the current networked economy, this study explores how management and staff resolve cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication situations within a multilingual B2B customer service unit of a large Irish-based multinational organisation in the IT sector. Qualitative data from interviews, observations, and textual samples are analysed following a grounded theory approach. Through its inductive methods of constant comparison and abstract conceptualisation, an integrated theory is proposed to help explain variation in staff behaviour. In addressing their main concern of GETTING THINGS DONE, or resolving the communicative situations that are part of their day to day job to meet business targets in a way that aligns with their own goals, participants engage in a process of BALANCING BELONGING by POSITIONING themselves and LEGITIMISING others as part of cultural, organisational, or ideational groups through linguistic and pragmatic choices that regulate ACCESS to said groups and reflect SELF-VALIDATION behaviours in response to underlying personal and collective assumptions regarding language hierarchies, language competence, and language value.

While the theory of BALANCING BELONGING is not language-dependent, it offers an explanation of the diverse activities, roles, and positions taken on by NPIT in multilingual exchanges and provides valuable insights into the norms, values and beliefs that inform perceived skills needs as well as language, knowledge, and people management practices in an international B2B IT support context.

The analysis reveals how translation features both in explicit and unrecognised forms which reflect different conceptualisations of the phenomenon. Conceived as a complex and specialist activity, explicit translation is narrowly understood as a formal linguistic task constrained by the start text, in contrast to the myriad of unrecognised translation practices that are seen to allow for more personal and deliberate choices based on participants' views of self and others. Outcomes may not always be perceived as optimal, marred by textual and terminological challenges, inconsistent production patterns, and a lack of disciplinary metalanguage but, as "native translators" (Harris 2017, 34), staff nevertheless demonstrate a clear awareness of audience and purpose, driven by an overarching communicative goal to make progress on their job tasks while maintaining their own motivations and priorities.

Language and translation use are therefore the result of norm-responding purposeful and strategic communication decisions that reflect a continuous negotiation of linguistic, cultural, and professional identity. Language provision emerges as a pragmatic operational choice that has less to do with overcoming linguistic barriers than with personal identification. And the paradoxical expectation for native proficiency in the local languages along with the overlooked role of global English as a second language highlights the complex interrelation between competence and identity, as well as status asymmetries between languages which shape recruitment practices and definitions of expertise, and have consequences for career development and progression opportunities.

Although adapting effectively to various audiences, purposes, registers, channels and languages is at the heart of participants' role, the study brings to light the lack of recognition of NPITs' inter- and intralingual translation practices as a demonstration of strategic competence, which in turn accentuates a view of language as a discrete,

transparent resource, possessed rather than developed, and conceals the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural nature of interactions.

By investigating NPIT in a business setting in Ireland, the project responds to the need for sustained scholarly work on non-professional translation practices in multinational corporations and calls attention to the potential of translation studies to provide novel perspectives into international business communication. In doing so, this work engages with national debates around language skills needs in enterprise, shedding light on the unquestioned expectations around language competence and language use which inform language policy, and proposing practical interventions for more critical language management strategies at the organisational level. The study also taps into key conceptual and methodological issues arising from the articulation of multilingual workplaces as translation zones, which pushes the boundaries of prototypical definitions of translation. Finally, it serves as an example of grounded theory in translation studies for the interdisciplinary examination of under-researched practices in today's complex multilingual environments, and puts forward a theory that can enter into dialogue with literature from a number of fields, such as social psychology, applied linguistics, organisational research, and international business management.

Grounded theory offers a systematic method of analysis to make sense of seemingly inconclusive or contradictory data from a combination of sources by raising individual instances to an abstract level and integrating them into a conceptual model of behaviour, thus making it a fitting methodological choice to match the exploratory impetus of the study:

Grounded theory is particularly well suited for investigating social processes that have attracted little prior research attention, where the previous research is lacking in breadth and/or depth, or where a new point of view on familiar topics appears promising. (Milliken 2010, 549)

However, the use of grounded theory explains one of the limitations of this project. The challenge of balancing the open-ended nature of the methodology with the overarching research objectives inevitably narrows the scope of the discussion. While

the emergent theory allows for connections to be drawn with a number of areas, the implications for each of them can only be dealt with in a relatively cursory manner. Some of the disciplinary depth that a more descriptive method would afford is therefore sacrificed for conceptual coverage.

A second methodological limitation of the study stems from the size of the data sample. Participants are restricted to one unit within one company, and textual materials are limited. While generalisability in the traditional sense is not a concern in GT research, data from other units or multilingual workplaces, as well as additional examples of translation outputs, could have contributed to the theory's explanatory power.

Moreover, there is a marked gap between the time of data collection and publication as a result of the lengthy and recursive coding process. This is in part minimised by GT's emphasis on conceptual analysis, but it does mean that the study does not address the potential impact of social, economic and technological changes that have since taken place such as the introduction of remote work policies, the widespread adoption of new modes of technology-mediated communication, the rise of AI, and the trend towards major layoffs in the technology sector amid a burgeoning cost of living crisis, which could affect both communication practices as well as recruitment and management models. In this sense, the project presents a "slice of reality", "a theory of a core variable which freezes the on-going for the moment" (Glaser 1978, 129), although it does so in a way which can be further refined, expanded, or refuted with additional research.

Indeed, an obvious direction for further research would be to test the emergent theory against data collected under various conditions, like company size, sector, location, or target markets. Within the Irish context, this could mean examining a range of contrasting settings with potentially distinct audiences and priorities, like B2C service centres or SMEs, to provide a comparison between different realities in a shared marketplace. Alternatively, longitudinal studies could be used to explore organisational changes and the effect of local and global trends in work translation practices (Risku, Rogl, and Milošević 2020, 44).

Another avenue for investigation is the study of NPIT as part of the content life cycle in multilingual workplaces. For example, scholars could focus on documenting the processes of multilingual text production, from authoring, text reuse, and technology integration to the articulation of translation decisions in informal collaborative practices. This could also cover the analysis of reception data from translation users to better understand assumptions about quality tolerance thresholds in NPIT and assess the functionality of both process criteria and the resulting products.

Finally, NPIT researchers could seek partnerships with industry stakeholders to carry out “practice-oriented, problem-based and participative” transdisciplinary action research “that bridges the gap between scientific knowledge production and societal knowledge demand” and engages “directly with the beneficiaries of their research to generate new knowledge and solutions to practical life-world problems” (Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey 2019, 364). Examples may include the development of dedicated skills needs auditing programmes or process and tools training sessions. Such research can inform business practices by offering suggestions for increased efficiency and focused recruitment. Likewise, enterprise knowledge can inform research by helping us understand not just the needs of the market, but also those of multilingual professionals acting as non-professional translators, and contributing to a more critical approach to teaching and learning efforts that reflect the reality of the local context.

In the face of rapidly evolving and expanding communication pressures, the prevalence of NPIT across a wide variety of settings cannot be ignored, but there is still a dearth of studies devoted to the translating that takes place in multilingual workplaces without dedicated resources. As Angelelli (2020, 117) points out:

To date, industry and research have not had the opportunity to discuss and work together directly on NPITs, their expertise, their needs for professional development, the quality of their work and its impact on the communicative needs of a linguistically diverse population.

In the case of Ireland, little is known about how languages are actually put into use in business settings to help provide an informed response to enterprise needs. Against this backdrop, the timeliness of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of multinational corporations' linguistic practices becomes increasingly obvious (Janssens, Lambert, and Steyaert 2004). As an area of inquiry concerned with issues of linguistic and cultural mediation, translation studies can make a valuable contribution to the work of scholars in international business management research by highlighting the interlingual nature of multilingual practices and the part that translation plays in shaping business communication in today's information-based global economy.

The complex linguistic ecosystem of modern workplaces requires more than the mapping of language needs at a macro-level to capture how individuals negotiate positions through everyday interactions, how language choice relates to questions of identity, expertise, power, and status, their effect on access to decision-making, recruitment, retention, and career advancement opportunities, and the implications for language teaching and the preparation of students for the demands of increasingly multilingual organisations (Mahili and Angouri 2015). The study of translation at work therefore not only “offers a window to the language ideologies, power structures, hierarchies and cultural affiliations in and between organizations and stakeholder groups” (Koskinen 2020, 75), but also “highlights mediation as an employability issue, raising its status on the current political agenda” (Koskinen and Kinnunen 2022, 10).

Following Pym (2002b), in its endeavour to help resolve social problems, translation studies should focus on translation as linguistic mediation without forgetting alternatives such as language learning. It should promote cooperation and consider questions that originate from social disagreements. Advancing the translation studies scholarship on NPIT, not as a threat to the professionalisation of translation but as an essential activity of interlingual and intercultural mediation with an important economic, social, and political impact, can therefore widen our disciplinary understanding of both multilingual environments and translation itself beyond the modern focus on the profession:

One can even argue that it is professional – rather than non-professional – translation that should be taken as the exception within the wider context of translation. Looking at the issue from this angle, professional translation becomes merely one sub-type of translation, rather than the norm-setting, prototypical form. (Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva 2012, 157)

This study provides valuable insights into an under-explored form of translation activity and the norms, values, and beliefs it rests on. By shedding light on practices that are often overlooked in institutional training, it can contribute to discussions of competence models and the often-uncontested assumptions that underpin aims and objectives not only in translator education but also in language pedagogy. From an applied perspective, the work has the potential to enhance dialogue between academia and industry and inspire further research to inform educational efforts and suggest new methods for the analysis of skill needs in an ever-evolving professional landscape. The findings underscore that the proverbial “language gap” in Ireland is as much the result of a lack of alignment between industry and education, as it is the consequence of conflicting monolingual and multilingual frames of reference in a context marked by the increasing complexity of linguistic transactions. As such, a case is made for the explication and critical assessment of NPIT’s mediation practices and language management strategies in international organisations:

The problem is not as simple as monolingual policies and multilingual practices. It is necessary to look beyond the monolingual-multilingual dichotomy to focus instead on what kind of multilingualism is promoted by policies and enacted in practice, and crucially, how management policies support workers’ daily tasks and their professional opportunities. (Lønsmann and Kraft 2018, 423)

Ultimately, the study aims to encourage interdisciplinary conversations around how we understand and define the developmental potential of translation as a strategic skill that allows citizens and business to operate successfully in multilingual and multicultural environments, and the role that translation studies can play in furthering our understanding of the development, application, and management of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic practices in business contexts.

Appendix A. Team distribution by language

Team distribution is based on geographical areas, with several inconsistencies (namely, Spain and Italy) which seem to reflect decisions on people and workload management to ensure an overall balanced number of staff members across teams. The following table shows the number of team members covering each of the languages in the unit and their team distribution as of December 2017, based on data provided by management. These figures include shift leads, but not managers.

TEAM	LANGUAGES	NO. OF STAFF
DACH (Germany, Austria, Switzerland)	German (DE)	12
TEEAM (Turkey, Eastern Europe, Africa, Middle East)	Turkish (TR)	2
	Arabic (AR)	2
	Polish (PL)	2
	Russian (RU)	2
	Czech (CS)	1
NORD-WEST (Nordics, Benelux, Spain)	Spanish (ES)	3
	Dutch (NL)	3
	Swedish (SV)	1
	Norwegian (NO)	1
	Finnish (FI)	1
	Danish (DA)	1
MEDI (France, Israel, Portugal, Greece)	French (FR)	8
	Hebrew (HE)	2
	Portuguese (PT)	1
	Greek (EL)	1
UKIT (United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy)	English (EN)	9
	Italian (IT)	4
TOTAL	18	56

Appendix B. Participant distribution by language

From the 18 different languages covered in the unit, 15 are represented in the study except for Portuguese, Greek, and Swedish due to staff being on annual or sick leave at the time of the fieldwork. In addition, team members reported fluency in three further languages not employed officially in the unit (Lithuanian, Latvian and Tagalog). Outside of the English-speaking monolingual managers, most staff members in the unit are first language (L1) users of the main language in the market they serve and have English as a second language (L2). Exceptions to this are marked by an asterisk (*) on the table below to represent those cases where the main language in a team member's market is their L2. For example, SL1-FR has English as a first language but works for the French market, while TM9-ES is an L1-Spanish and L2-French user covering both the Spanish and Belgian markets regularly. Nevertheless, it is important to note that determining multilingual users' first, second or additional languages is not always straightforward. In this instance, the classification has been made based on chronological order of acquisition, and it does not intend to be indicative of proficiency level, particularly in cases of early bilingualism (TM8-DE and TM10-HE) and long-term migration (TM2-RU and TM11-DA). Moreover, it is likely that the number of participants with a degree of competence in other languages is higher than recorded. Additional languages (L3) have only been included where participants mentioned them explicitly. For all L3s other than English and Swedish, participants reported either elementary or limited working proficiency.

CODE	ROLE	L1	L2	L3
MN1-EN	Manager	English	N/A	N/A
MN2-EN	Manager	English	N/A	N/A
MN3-EN	Manager	English	N/A	N/A
SL1-FR	Shift lead	English	French*	N/A
SL2-DE	Shift lead	German	English	N/A
SL3-FI	Shift lead	Finnish	English	Swedish, Spanish
TM1-CS	Team member	Czech	English	Slovakian, Polish, Italian
TM2-RU	Team member	Lithuanian	Russian*	English
TM3-PL	Team member	Polish	English	N/A
TM4-AR	Team member	Arabic	English	French, Spanish
TM5-TR	Team member	Turkish	English	N/A

TM6-FR	Team member	French	English	N/A
TM7-IT	Team member	Italian	English	N/A
TM8-DE	Team member	Tagalog	German*	English
TM9-ES	Team member	Spanish	French*	English
TM10-HE	Team member	Latvian	Russian, Hebrew*	English
TM11-DA	Team member	English	Danish*	N/A
TM12-NO	Team member	Norwegian	English	N/A
TM13-NL	Team member	Dutch	English	N/A
TM14-ES	Team member	Spanish	English	N/A

Appendix C. Ethics documentation

Ethics agreement

I, _____ (contact person), commit to the following:

- To act as the main contact person between the researcher and the organisation.
- To act as the main contact person between participants and the organisation.
- To nominate another person within the organisation to take on said role when and where necessary.
- To ensure that an individual's choice to participate or not in any part of the study will not have any direct effect on their relationship with the organisation.
- To inform the researcher of any changes to this agreement.

I, _____ (researcher), commit to the following:

- To seek ethical approval from the UCC Social Research Ethics Committee before the start of the study and to provide the organisation with proof of said approval.
- To inform participants of the purpose and nature of every element of the study.
- To seek written consent from participants before the start of the data collection process and provide them with a copy for their own records.
- To keep raw data confidential, securely stored, and available only to the researcher and academic supervisors.
- To guarantee the anonymisation of all data collected in order to disguise the identity of participants in any reporting of findings.
- To disguise the name of the organisation where requested.
- To treat any customer data and sensitive organisational information beyond the scope of the study with the upmost confidentiality.
- To answer any questions regarding participation.
- To inform the organisation of any changes to this agreement.

Information sheet

MULTILINGUAL PRACTICES IN THE WORKPLACE

Thank you for participating in this study, which is part of my PhD research at University College Cork.

The purpose of this study is to explore the range of multilingual activities carried out in a professional setting, and the skills that are employed to perform them. You have been asked to participate because you are specifically suited to provide valuable insights into the language needs of multilingual organisations in today's global economy.

As part of this study, I invite you to participate in an interview concerning your experiences using languages in the workplace. The interview will last around 30 minutes and will be audio recorded to ensure your views are accurately reported.

Participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point without repercussions. You can withdraw consent and ask for the destruction of the data within one week of participation.

All data collected from this interview will be anonymised so that no clues to your identity appear in the subsequent analysis. Data will be kept confidential and securely stored for the duration of the study, and only I and my academic supervisors will have direct access to them. On completion of the project, data will be retained for a minimum of ten years in accordance with the UCC Code of Research Conduct, and then destroyed.

The results of the study will be part of a thesis submitted for the award of a PhD and may also be used for other research purposes such as publication or presentation, always with the conditions of anonymity stated above.

This research has received the approval of the Social Research Ethics Committee at UCC. I do not envisage you will experience any form of distress as a result of this study. If you have any queries or need additional information, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

If you agree to take part on the study, please sign the consent form overleaf. Your participation is very much appreciated.

Consent form

I, _____, agree to participate in the research study conducted by Estefanía Muñoz Gómez as a PhD candidate at University College Cork.

The purpose and nature of the study, data collection methods, and data storage protocol have been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any point without repercussions.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use my data within one week of participation and ask for them to be destroyed.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured to disguise my identity.

I understand that I can ask questions and will be given answers regarding my participation at any stage of the study.

I give permission for my interview to be audio recorded.

I give permission for anonymised extracts from my interview to be used for research publication.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D. Job description sample

The screenshot below shows a job advertisement for a TM position in the unit under investigation published in a popular professional network and job search platform in early 2018. Company details have been redacted for privacy purposes.



German Account Services
 [Redacted] Cork, IE
 Posted 2 weeks ago · 34 views
 Be one of the first 10 applicants

Save
 Apply

Job description

Why Work at [Redacted]?

Endless challenges and rewards. Opportunities on six continents. A team of colleagues fueled by collaboration. All this, and a company deeply committed to integrity and responsibility.

German Schedule & Account Services, Command Centre

Competitive salary

[Redacted] Cork

People make [Redacted] – so wherever in the world they work, everyone is rewarded for their contribution. Ready to develop your career in a truly global company? [Redacted] we are looking for an Account Services representative to join our team in Cork.

Are you a brilliant problem solver who could provide front-line support for a game-changing, enterprise-wide support service? Do you want to be a hero to [Redacted] customers by resolving their account issues? [Redacted] we are looking for an Account Services representative to join our remote team in [Redacted] Cork, as well as providing telephone, chat and email assistance to our EMEA customers: [Redacted]

Account Services Requirements

- Creative, outside the box thinker. Able to solve problems without constant supervision.
- Manage own workload, following up on cases when required and being responsible for the timely completion of assignments and work.
- Approaches complex problems or tasks by breaking them down into their component parts and considering each in detail.
- Takes responsibility for actions and outcomes, delivers on commitments, makes ethical decisions.
- Works well as part of a team to achieve common goals, while also being able to effectively work on own initiative.
- Great communicator, face to face, on the phone and via email and chat.
- Able to handle a high volume of work and frequent changes in direction with ease.
- Be quick and eager to learn, organised, and keep up to date with new procedures and processes.
- Monday to Friday standard business hours (subject to change should the business require it)

Desirable Requirements

- Microsoft Excel skills
- General awareness of [Redacted] portfolio of enterprise storage products and services
- Ability to identify gaps and improvement opportunities and bring concise, achievable resolutions to your management team.

Benefits

Our people are the most critical component of our long-term success and their health and wellbeing are our priority. You will enjoy a comprehensive, locally competitive benefits package.

Seniority Level
Not Applicable

Industry
Computer Hardware,
Computer Software,
Information Technology and Services

Employment Type
Full-time

Job Functions
Business Development, Sales

Appendix E. Email templates and sample translations

This appendix includes two different email templates for the upgrade of a company product and their translations into French, Spanish and German (TEMPLATE 1), and French and Spanish (TEMPLATE 2). TEMPLATE 1 is for a routine upgrade, sent as a result of a customer raising a service request. For this template, three English versions are analysed: one older instance which is the start text for the French and Spanish translations (EN ST1 V1); an edited version created individually by TM6-FR and not used for translation (EN ST1 V2); and a newer, updated version employed as the basis for the German translation (EN ST1 V3). TEMPLATE 2 is an example of a bulk email sent to customers to notify them of the need to undertake a critical upgrade. Two versions in English are also included: the start text for both the French and Spanish translations (EN ST2 V1), and an edited version from TM6-FR (EN ST2 V2). Ten texts are considered in total, presented in four tables for ease of comparison.

TABLE 1: TEMPLATE 1 (ROUTINE UPGRADE) – EN VERSIONS

1. English Start Text 1 Version 1: EN ST1 V1 (PRIMARY)
2. English Start Text 1 Version 2: EN ST1 V2 (EDITED)
3. English Start Text 1 Version 3: EN ST1 V3 (UPDATED)

TABLE 2: TEMPLATE 1 (ROUTINE UPGRADE) – EN > FR, ES

1. English Start Text 1 Version 1: EN ST1 V1 (PRIMARY)
2. French Translated Text 1: FR TT1
3. Spanish Translated Text 1: ES TT1

TABLE 3: TEMPLATE 1 (ROUTINE UPGRADE) – EN > DE

1. English Start Text 1 Version 3: EN ST1 V3 (UPDATED)
2. German Translated Text 1: DE TT1

TABLE 4: TEMPLATE 2 (CRITICAL UPGRADE) – EN > FR, ES

1. English Start Text 2 Version 1: EN ST2 V1 (PRIMARY)
2. English Start Text 2 Version 2: EN ST2 V2 (EDITED)
3. French Translated Text 2: FR TT2
4. Spanish Translated Text 2: ES TT2

TABLE 1: TEMPLATE 1 (ROUTINE UPGRADE) – EN VERSIONS

ENGLISH ST1 V1 (PRIMARY)	ENGLISH ST1 V2 (EDITED)	ENGLISH ST1 V3 (UPDATED)
Dear [CUSTOMER] We have received a request to perform an upgrade on your [COMPANY] equipment, and I will be serving as your primary contact point for its planning.	Hello, I am contacting you as I have received a request (SR [NUMBER]) to perform an upgrade on your [COMPANY] equipment, and I will be serving as your primary contact point for its planning.	Dear [CUSTOMER] We have received a request to perform an upgrade on your [COMPANY] equipment, and I will be serving as your primary contact point for its planning.
For awareness, it generally takes several business days for all scheduling and pre-work to be completed, and we will do our best to make this process as straightforward as possible.		For awareness, it generally takes several business days for all scheduling and pre-work to be completed, and we will do our best to make this process as straightforward as possible.
		For Upgrade Lead Times, please refer to this Knowledge Base Article [LINK].
		In order to begin, there are a few important items to address. If you have any questions, please refer to the linked Knowledge Base Article [LINK] and attached FAQ document.
		1. NEW: Providing System Logs allows [COMPANY] to perform an expedited health check. Please extract logs and attach them to your Service Request so that we can perform an

		accelerated health check on your system, which allows us to confirm Upgrade readiness and generate an Upgrade plan. Extracting logs will also significantly reduce the scheduling time and complexity, increase scheduling accuracy, and alleviate potential planning conflicts. To learn how to extract logs, please see our Knowledge Base Article [LINK], as well as the attached “Pre-Upgrade Assessment FAQ” for more detail.
		Please Note: • The Accelerated Assessment is available for all [PRODUCT MODELS], except for [PRODUCT MODELS]. If you have a [PRODUCT] array, please let us know, as a Technical Consultation will be needed. In these cases you are not required to upload logs. • [COMPANY] can arrange a Technical Consultation for instances where you are having any issues or technical questions that require assistance.
Attached is our Upgrade Preparation Guide for your review. While your Upgrade Engineer will discuss this document with you upon the completion of the pre-checks, we recommend you review it ahead of time to determine what,		2. Review the attached Preparation Guide, which provides direction to identify and mitigate potential issues that could cause data unavailability during your Upgrade. As stated above, [COMPANY] will be performing a

if anything, within it is applicable to your environment, and what actions you may need to take as a result.				system health check. However, there are checks specific to your unique system configuration that may require your attention.	
Ideally, the pre-check will be followed by a phone conversation between you and our Upgrade Engineer to review:					
1. The upgrade plan 2. The attached preparation guide 3. The results of your pre-check					
This will be an opportune time for you to ask any upgrade-related questions you may have. While we strongly recommend participating in this conversation, please let me know if you would like to proactively opt out so I can explain what will then be needed.					
In order to expedite, please help us by completing or verifying the following information:		In order to expedite, please provide the following information that I will need to schedule the activities:			
1. I retrieved certain system and contact details from the service request. Is the information below still accurate, or do any changes need to be made?				3. Complete and verify the system and contact information below:	
Serial Number †		Serial Number		Serial Number	

Requested Code Level		Requested Code Level		Requested Code Level	
Pre-check		Pre-check		For guidance on the latest Code Levels, please click here [LINK]	
Time / Date / Time zone		Time / Date / Time zone			
Upgrade		Upgrade		Current Code Level (if attached)	
Time / Date / Time zone		Time / Date / Time zone			
Connection Type		Connection Type		Requested Upgrade Window	
Contact Name(s)		Contact Name(s)		Date / Time / Time zone (+/- UTC)	
Phone Number(s)		Phone Number(s)		We advise planning to perform the activity at most 10 to 14 days after the Technical Consult/Pre-Check is completed.	
Email(s)		Email(s)		Connection Type	
				Contact Name(s)	
				Phone Number(s)	
				Email(s)	
				Confirmation Required To Start Activity? (Y/N)	
				By default, our upgrade engineers will call you at your preferred phone number and verify the activity details with you before any change action – they will request your permission to proceed with the upgrade, or else they will postpone. Please select ‘No’ above if you anticipate you will not be available or do not require	

		final confirmation before the engineer begins at the scheduled time. Preferred contact method (phone/email) Backup? (Full/Partial/None)									
† In the case of [PRODUCT] either the Server's Fully Qualified Domain Name or Unique System ID.											
2. Secondly, please confirm your engagement preferences moving forward:	Secondly, please confirm your engagement preferences moving forward:										
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Confirmation Required To Start Activity? (Y/N) ††</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Preferred contact method (phone/email)</td><td></td></tr> </table>	Confirmation Required To Start Activity? (Y/N) ††		Preferred contact method (phone/email)		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Confirmation Required To Start Activity? (Y/N) ††</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Preferred contact method (phone/email)</td><td></td></tr> </table>	Confirmation Required To Start Activity? (Y/N) ††		Preferred contact method (phone/email)			
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†† By default, our upgrade engineers will call you at your preferred phone number and verify the activity details with you before any change action – they will request your permission to proceed with the upgrade, or else they will postpone. Please select 'No' above if you anticipate you will not be available or do not	†† By default, our upgrade engineers will call you at your preferred phone number and verify the activity details with you before any change action – they will request your permission to proceed with the upgrade, or else they will postpone. Please select 'No' above if you anticipate you will not be available or do not										

require final confirmation before the engineer begins at the scheduled time.	require final confirmation before the engineer begins at the scheduled time.					
3. Lastly, please confirm whether you currently have a back-up solution for this system we will be upgrading: <table><tr><td>Backup? (Full/Partial/None)</td><td></td></tr></table>	Backup? (Full/Partial/None)		Lastly, please confirm whether you currently have a back-up solution for this system we will be upgrading: <table><tr><td>Backup? (Full/Partial/None)</td><td></td></tr></table> Please find attached our Upgrade Preparation Guide. While your Upgrade Engineer will discuss this document with you upon the completion of the pre-checks, we recommend you review it ahead of time.	Backup? (Full/Partial/None)		
Backup? (Full/Partial/None)						
Backup? (Full/Partial/None)						
	Ideally, the pre-check will be followed by a phone conversation between you and our Upgrade Engineer to review: 1. The upgrade plan 2. The attached preparation guide 3. The results of your pre-check This will be an opportune time for you to ask any upgrade-related questions you may have.					
Thank you again, and I look forward to hearing from you soon. If at any time there is anything further I can do to assist – please do not hesitate to let me know.	I look forward to hearing from you.	Thank you again, and I look forward to hearing from you soon. If at any time there is anything further I can do to assist – please do not hesitate to let me know.				

TABLE 2: TEMPLATE 1 (ROUTINE UPGRADE) – EN > FR, ES TRANSLATIONS

ENGLISH ST1 V1 (PRIMARY)	FRENCH TT1	SPANISH TT1
Dear [CUSTOMER] We have received a request to perform an upgrade on your [COMPANY] equipment, and I will be serving as your primary contact point for its planning.	Bonjour Monsieur [CUSTOMER], Je vous contacte suite à la SR [NUMBER] que vous avez ouverte récemment concernant la mise à jour de votre [PRODUCT]. Je serai, à partir de maintenant, votre premier point de contact pour la planification de celle-ci.	Buenas tardes, Espero que todo esté bien. Soy [TM] y le escribo porque hemos recibido una petición para llevar a cabo una actualización en su [PRODUCT], por lo que le escribo como contacto primario para su planificación. Ya que la comunicación con los ingenieros será en inglés, continúo en inglés.
For awareness, it generally takes several business days for all scheduling and pre-work to be completed, and we will do our best to make this process as straightforward as possible.		For awareness, it generally takes several business days for all scheduling and pre-work to be completed, and we will do our best to make this process as straightforward as possible.
		Find here the average activity lengths and lead times: [LINK]
Attached is our Upgrade Preparation Guide for your review. While your Upgrade Engineer will discuss this document with you upon the completion of the pre-checks, we recommend you review it ahead of time to determine what, if anything, within it is applicable to your	Vous trouverez ci-joint l'Upgrade Preparation Guide pour vous aider à préparer la mise à jour en question. Je vous invite à le lire <u>avant</u> la consultation technique afin de vous familiariser avec la procédure et les mesures à prendre. Si vous avez besoin de plus amples informations, n'hésitez pas à en discuter avec	Attached is our Upgrade Preparation Guide for your review. While your Upgrade Engineer will discuss this document with you upon the completion of the pre-checks, we recommend you review it ahead of time to determine what, if anything, within it is applicable to your

environment, and what actions you may need to take as a result.	l'ingénieur à distance lors de la consultation technique.	environment, and what actions you may need to take as a result.
	Veillez noter que toute communication avec notre équipe à distance lors de la consultation technique et de la mise à jour se fera en anglais.	
Ideally, the pre-check will be followed by a phone conversation between you and our Upgrade Engineer to review: 1. The upgrade plan 2. The attached preparation guide 3. The results of your pre-check	La consultation technique sera suivie d'un email ou d'une conversation téléphonique (selon vos préférences) avec notre Upgrade Engineer afin de revoir: 1. le document ci-joint, 2. le plan d'action concernant la mise à jour, 3. les résultats de la consultation technique (du précontrôle).	Ideally, the pre-check will be followed by a phone conversation between you and our Upgrade Engineer to review: 1. The upgrade plan 2. The attached preparation guide 3. The results of your pre-check
This will be an opportune time for you to ask any upgrade-related questions you may have. While we strongly recommend participating in this conversation, please let me know if you would like to proactively opt out so I can explain what will then be needed.		This will be an opportune time for you to ask any upgrade-related questions you may have. While we strongly recommend participating in this conversation, please let me know if you would like to proactively opt out so I can explain what will then be needed.
In order to expedite, please help us by completing or verifying the following information:	Je vous prie de bien vouloir remplir les tableaux ci-dessous avec les informations dont j'ai besoin pour planifier ces activités.	In order to expedite, please help us by completing or verifying the following information:

1. I retrieved certain system and contact details from the service request. Is the information below still accurate, or do any changes need to be made?			1. I retrieved certain system and contact details from the service request. Is the information below still accurate, or do any changes need to be made?	
Serial Number †		Numéro de série		Serial Number †
Requested Code Level		Consultation technique / précontrôle		Requested Code Level
Pre-check Time / Date / Time zone		Date + tranche horaire + fuseau horaire		Requested Technical Consult/Pre-check Window Date / Time / Time zone (+/-UTC) (Engineer will also call you to discuss attached form)
Upgrade Time / Date / Time zone		Mise à jour Date + tranche horaire + fuseau horaire (<i>minimum 12 heures après le précontrôle</i>)		Requested Upgrade Window Date / Time / Time zone (+/-UTC) We advise planning to perform the activity at most 10 to 14 days after the Technical Consult/Pre-Check is completed.
Connection Type		Type de Connexion		Connection Type
Contact Name(s)		Nom du/des contact(s)		Contact Name(s)
Phone Number(s)		Numéro(s) de téléphone		Phone Number(s)
Email(s)		Adresse(s) email		Email(s)
† In the case of [PRODUCT] either the Server's Fully Qualified Domain Name or Unique System ID.				† In the case of [PRODUCT] either the Server's Fully Qualified Domain Name or Unique System ID.

2. Secondly, please confirm your engagement preferences moving forward:		Préférences de communication:		2. Secondly, please confirm your engagement preferences moving forward:	
Confirmation Required To Start Activity? (Y/N) ††		Confirmation requise pour commencer l'activité? *	OUI / NON	Confirmation Required To Start Activity? (Y/N) ††	
Preferred contact method (phone/email)		Téléphone ou email?		Preferred contact method (phone/email)	
†† By default, our upgrade engineers will call you at your preferred phone number and verify the activity details with you before any change action – they will request your permission to proceed with the upgrade, or else they will postpone. Please select ‘No’ above if you anticipate you will not be available or do not require final confirmation before the engineer begins at the scheduled time.		* Par défaut, l'Upgrade Engineer vous appellera au numéro de téléphone fourni pour vérifier les détails des activités avant toute action. Votre autorisation sera demandée pour procéder à la mise à jour, sinon elle sera reportée. Sélectionnez NON ci-dessus si vous ne serez pas disponible et une confirmation de votre part n'est pas requise, afin que l'activité puisse commencer à l'heure prévue.		†† By default, our upgrade engineers will call you at your preferred phone number and verify the activity details with you before any change action – they will request your permission to proceed with the upgrade, or else they will postpone. Please select ‘No’ above if you anticipate you will not be available or do not require final confirmation before the engineer begins at the scheduled time.	
3. Lastly, please confirm whether you currently have a back-up solution for this system we will be upgrading:		Solution de sauvegarde pour le système qui sera mis à jour:		3. Lastly, please confirm whether you currently have a back-up solution for this system we will be upgrading:	
Backup? (Full/Partial/None)		Backup? (Complet/partiel/aucun)		Backup? (Full/Partial/None)	
Thank you again, and I look forward to hearing from you soon. If at any time there is anything further I can do to assist – please do not hesitate to let me know.		D'avance je vous remercie de votre réponse. Cordialement,		Thank you again, and I look forward to hearing from you soon. If at any time there is anything further I can do to assist – please do not hesitate to let me know.	

TABLE 3: TEMPLATE 1 (ROUTINE UPGRADE) – EN > DE TRANSLATION

ENGLISH ST1 V3 (UPDATED)	GERMAN TT1
Dear [CUSTOMER]	Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,
We have received a request to perform an upgrade on your [COMPANY] equipment, and I will be serving as your primary contact point for its planning.	Wir haben Ihren Service Request für ein Microcode – Upgrade auf Ihrem [COMPANY] Equipment erhalten. Ich werde Ihr Hauptansprechpartner für die Planung sein.
For awareness, it generally takes several business days for all scheduling and pre-work to be completed, and we will do our best to make this process as straightforward as possible.	Zur Ihrer Information, es braucht in der Regel einige Arbeitstage um die Planung und die Vorarbeiten abzuschliessen. Wir tun unser bestes um diesen Prozess so einfach wie möglich zu gestalten.
For Upgrade Lead Times, please refer to this Knowledge Base Article [LINK].	Für Upgrade Lead Times (Vorplanungszeit), sehen Sie bitte in diesem Knowledge Base Article [LINK].
In order to begin, there are a few important items to address. If you have any questions, please refer to the linked Knowledge Base Article [LINK] and attached FAQ document.	Vor Planungsbeginn, gibt es einige wichtige Dinge zu erwähnen. Für Rückfragen, sehen Sie bitte den verlinkten Knowledge Base Article [LINK] und angehängtes FAQ Dokument.
1. NEW: Providing System Logs allows [COMPANY] to perform an expedited health check. Please extract logs and attach them to your Service Request so that we can perform an accelerated health check on your system, which allows us to confirm Upgrade readiness and generate an Upgrade plan. Extracting logs will also significantly reduce the scheduling time and complexity, increase scheduling accuracy, and alleviate potential planning conflicts. To learn how to extract logs, please see our Knowledge Base Article [LINK], as well as the attached “Pre-Upgrade Assessment FAQ” for more detail.	1. NEW: System Logs zur Verfügung zustellen, erlaubt [COMPANY] einen beschleunigten Health Check durchzuführen. Bitte ziehen Sie Logs und hängen Sie diese an den Service Request an, damit wir den schnelleren Health Check für Ihr System durchführen können. Dies ermöglicht uns, die Upgrade Bereitschaft des Systems zu bestätigen und einen Upgrade Plan zu erzeugen. Logs sofort bereit zu stellen wird ausserdem die Planungszeit und Komplexität signifikant reduzieren, wird die Planungsgenauigkeit erhöhen und potentielle Planungskonflikte mildern. Um zu lernen wie man Logs zieht, sehen Sie bitte unseren

		Knowledge Base Article [LINK] und den angehängten “Pre-Upgrade Assessment FAQ” für mehr Details.	
Please Note: • The Accelerated Assessment is available for all [PRODUCT MODELS], except for [PRODUCT MODELS]. If you have a [PRODUCT] array, please let us know, as a Technical Consultation will be needed. In these cases you are not required to upload logs. • [COMPANY] can arrange a Technical Consultation for instances where you are having any issues or technical questions that require assistance.		Note: [COMPANY] kann eine Technical Consultation für Sie planen, in Fällen, in denen Sie Probleme oder jegliche technische Fragen haben, die die Aufmerksamkeit eines Technikers benötigen.	
2. Review the attached Preparation Guide, which provides direction to identify and mitigate potential issues that could cause data unavailability during your Upgrade. As stated above, [COMPANY] will be performing a system health check. However, there are checks specific to your unique system configuration that may require your attention.		2. Im Anhang finden Sie den Preparation Guide zur Ansicht. Dieser bietet Hinweise um potentielle Probleme, die zu Datenunverfügbarkeit während des Upgrades führen könnten, zu erkennen und zu lindern. Wie oben beschrieben wird [COMPANY] einen System Health Check durchführen. Es kann jedoch Checks geben, die für Ihre Systemkonfiguration einzigartig sind und Ihre Aufmerksamkeit benötigen.	
3. Complete and verify the system and contact information below:		3. Bitte füllen Sie unten stehende Informationen aus bestätigen Sie die System und Kontaktinformationen:	
Serial Number		Serial Number	
Requested Code Level		Requested Code Level	
For guidance on the latest Code Levels, please click here [LINK]		For guidance on the latest Code Levels, please click here [LINK]	
Current Code Level (if attached)		Current Code Level (if attached)	

Requested Upgrade Window Date / Time / Time zone (+/-UTC) We advise planning to perform the activity at most 10 to 14 days after the Technical Consult/Pre-Check is completed.		Requested Upgrade Window Date / Time / Time zone (+/-UTC) We advise planning to perform the activity at most 10 to 14 days after the Technical Consult/Pre-Check is completed.	
Connection Type		Connection Type	
Contact Name(s)		Contact Name(s)	
Phone Number(s)		Phone Number(s)	
Email(s)		Email(s)	
Confirmation Required To Start Activity? (Y/N) By default, our upgrade engineers will call you at your preferred phone number and verify the activity details with you before any change action – they will request your permission to proceed with the upgrade, or else they will postpone. Please select ‘No’ above if you anticipate you will not be available or do not require final confirmation before the engineer begins at the scheduled time.		Confirmation Required To Start Activity? (Y/N) By default, our upgrade engineers will call you at your preferred phone number and verify the activity details with you before any change action – they will request your permission to proceed with the upgrade, or else they will postpone. Please select ‘No’ above if you anticipate you will not be available or do not require final confirmation before the engineer begins at the scheduled time.	
Preferred contact method (phone/email)		Preferred contact method (phone/email)	
Backup? (Full/Partial/None)		Backup? (Full/Partial/None)	
Thank you again, and I look forward to hearing from you soon. If at any time there is anything further I can do to assist – please do not hesitate to let me know.		Vielen Dank für Ihre Rückmeldung im Voraus. Für weitere Rückfragen stehe ich Ihnen jeder Zeit gerne zur Verfügung. Mit freundlichen Gruessen / Best regards	

TABLE 4: TEMPLATE 2 (CRITICAL UPGRADE) – EN > FR, ES TRANSLATIONS

ENGLISH ST2 V1 (PRIMARY)			ENGLISH ST2 V2 (EDITED)	FRENCH TT2	SPANISH TT2		
Dear Customer,			Dear Customer,	Bonjour,	Estimado cliente,		
[COMPANY] takes product quality and data availability very seriously. We believe it is part of value proposition to our customers to keep your systems up to date with current quality enhancements.				[COMPANY] s’efforce de maintenir à jour et le plus précisément possible ses informations clients.	[COMPANY] toma muy en serio la calidad del producto y la disponibilidad de datos. Creemos que es parte de la propuesta de valor de [COMPANY] a nuestros clientes mantener sus sistemas al día con mejoras de calidad.		
Our database indicates that you are not running the latest code for your [PRODUCT] with SN:			I am contacting your company as our database shows that your [PRODUCT] with SN [NUMBER] is running an old version of the microcode. Hence [COMPANY] recommends that you upgrade it.	Notre base de données indique que le microcode est dépassé ou que nous ne possédons pas d’information à jour concernant le microcode que vous utilisez. Nous vous recommandons donc de mettre à jour le microcode de votre [PRODUCT] avec SN [NUMBER] vers la version la plus récente.	Nuestra base de datos indica que su [PRODUCT] no está en la última versión de código disponible:		
Serial	Current code	Target code			Número de serie	Su código actual	última versión de código disponible
We would like to offer our assistance to bring the code to the target version.							
As this box is covered by a Premium contract, this activity will be free of charge. We strongly suggest you upgrade to the latest			This can be done with our Remote Upgrade Engineer team, this service is included in your Premium support contract. I have	Votre contrat de service pour cette machine étant un contrat Premium, ce service est inclus. Notre équipe de maintenance à distance	Por ello le sugerimos que lleve a cabo una actualización de código ya que contiene corrección de errores detectados en códigos		

code, as it contains all the latest bug fixes and offers the most stable operating environment. The activity can be completed remotely.	included below information about the upgrade, and tables that you would need to fill in order to schedule this upgrade.	procédera à un travail de vérification de viabilité de la baie (précontrôle) avant de procéder à la mise à jour <u>à distance</u> .	anteriores y optimización del funcionamiento de la máquina por lo que ofrece una mayor estabilidad en su entorno operativo. La actividad se puede completar de forma remota y es totalmente gratuita al estar incluida en su contrato de mantenimiento Premium.
If you wish to proceed, just follow the link(s): [LINK]	If you wish to proceed, just follow the link(s): [LINK]	Si vous souhaitez planifier cette mise à jour, merci de bien vouloir ouvrir une SR en cliquant sur le lien suivant : [LINK]	Si desea continuar, puede crear SR con los links de abajo: [LINK]
Click “Create Service Request” on the right Tick the box “Check this box if this is a new product operating software upgrade” Copy the completed table below into “Detailed Description” field Click “Submit” button	Click “Create Service Request” on the right Tick the box “Check this box if this is a new product operating software upgrade” Copy the completed table below into “Detailed Description” field Click “Submit” button	Choisissez à droite « Create Service Request », puis cochez la case « Check ... software upgrade ». Dans le champ « Detailed Description », collez le tableau ci-dessous que vous aurez rempli au préalable.	Haga clic en ‘Crear SR’ en la derecha Marque la casilla ‘comprobar si la cabina es un producto nuevo que opera una actualización del software’ Copie las tablas de abajo rellenas en la descripción Por último haga clic en el botón de submitir.
		Autrement, vous pouvez aussi tout simplement répondre à ce message	

				avec le tableau rempli et j'ouvrirai la SR pour vous.			
Pre-check Time / Date / Time zone	ASAP?	Pre-check Time / Date / Time zone		Numéro de série		Número de serie	
Upgrade Time / Date / Time zone		Upgrade Time / Date / Time zone		Consultation technique / précontrôle Date + tranche horaire + fuseau horaire (durée : 2h max)		Código deseado (recomendado)	target
Connection Type		Connection Type		Mise à jour Date + tranche horaire + fuseau horaire (minimum 12 heures après le précontrôle) (durée : 6h max)		Pre-chequeos Hora/día/zona horaria	
Confirmation Required To Start Activity? (Y/N) ††		Confirmation Required To Start Activity? (Y/N) ††		Type de Connexion		Actualización de código – Upgrade Hora/día/zona horaria	
Preferred contact method (phone/email)		Preferred contact method (phone/email)		Nom du/des contact(s)		Tipo de conexión	
				Numéro(s) de téléphone		Persona de contacto(s)	
				Adresse(s) email		Teléfono (s)	
						Correo (s)	
†† By default, our upgrade engineers will call you at your preferred phone number and verify the activity details with you before any change action – they will request your permission to proceed with the upgrade, or else they will postpone. Please select 'No' above if you anticipate you will not be available or do not require final confirmation before the engineer begins at the scheduled time.		†† By default, our upgrade engineers will call you at your preferred phone number and verify the activity details with you before any change action – they will request your permission to proceed with the upgrade, or else they will postpone. Please select 'No' above if you anticipate you will not be available or do not require final confirmation before the engineer begins at the scheduled time.		Préférences de communication:		Confirmación requerida antes de comenzar la actualización (Sí/No)	
				Confirmation requise pour commencer l'activité? *	OUI / NON	Método de contacto (teléfono/correo)	
				Téléphone ou email?			
						Backup? (Full/Partial/None)	

		* Par défaut, l'Upgrade Engineer vous appellera au numéro de téléphone fourni pour vérifier les détails des activités avant toute action. Votre autorisation sera demandée pour procéder à la mise à jour, sinon elle sera reportée. Sélectionnez NON ci-dessus si vous ne serez pas disponible et une confirmation de votre part n'est pas requise, afin que l'activité puisse commencer à l'heure prévue.	
		Veillez noter que la langue par défaut pour la consultation technique et l'upgrade est l'anglais. Bien que nous puissions noter votre préférence pour un technicien francophone, nous ne pouvons pas le garantir.	
Attached also find Upgrade preparation guide and Upgrade Plan. If you are unable to create the service request yourself, please reply to this email with the table above filled in and we will be happy to schedule the upgrade for you.			Le adjuntamos la guía de preparación y el plan de actualización. Si no puede crear la SR, por favor responde a este email y estaremos encantados de planificar la actualización con usted.

Alternatively, if you have time and willing to do so, you can upgrade the system yourself, using the procedure generator here: [LINK] Choose “[PRODUCT] Series”—“Update [PRODUCT] Software” and follow onscreen instructions. Please remember, it is very important to reply this email <u>after</u> you upgraded [PRODUCT] yourself – we need to update our data base with the new version you installed.			
Best regards	Best regards	Je reste en attente de votre réponse. Cordialement,	Un saludo.

Appendix F. Recruitment translation test

An email template used in interview processes as a translation test provided further insights into translation criteria from the point of view of the SLs. The original English text was pre-edited, machine translated into French and German, and then lightly post-edited before being presented to SL1-FR and SL2-DE. All three texts are available below. SLs were unable to confirm who was responsible for authoring the original text but agreed on it being a “very bad example in English” (SL2-DE) which did not represent the work in the unit, both in terms of text type and purpose, in addition to showing issues with register, cohesion, punctuation, and syntax. At the time of data collection, the text was still used for recruitment, albeit with L2-LL candidates only and not in a consistent manner.

English ST

Hello [CUSTOMER NAME AND SURNAME],
My name is [NAME] and I’m calling on behalf of [COMPANY] Customer Support, regarding your [PRODUCT] system serial number [NUMBER]. Following a dial home by the [PRODUCT] we have identified that a part requires onsite replacement. Please be rest assured that the failure is not disruptive to the services provided by the [PRODUCT] , nor the replacement of the part. In line with our maintenance contract with your organisation I am looking to arrange for the spare part to arrive on Monday 20th May, at 9am, via [COURIER]. I also plan to schedule our field engineer, [NAME AND SURNAME], to also arrive at a similar time to replace the part. Should this schedule present an issue to your business please contact me by return email or [TELEPHONE] to arrange. Thank You.

French TT

Bonjour M. [CUSTOMER SURNAME],

Je m’appelle [NAME] et j’appelle au nom de service clients d’[COMPANY], concernant votre système [PRODUCT] (numéro de série [NUMBER]). A la suite d’une notification du [PRODUCT], nous avons identifié qu’une pièce doit être remplacée sur place. Soyez assuré que ni la panne ni le remplacement de la pièce perturberont les services fournis par le [PRODUCT].

Conformément à notre contrat de maintenance avec votre organisation, j'espère que la pièce de rechange arrive le lundi 20 mai à 9h via [COURIER]. J'ai aussi l'intention de faire venir notre ingénieur de terrain, [NAME AND SURNAME], pour qu'il arrive au même moment pour remplacer la pièce. Si ce calendrier présente un problème à votre entreprise, veuillez me contacter par e-mail ou par téléphone au [TELEPHONE].

Merci

German TT

Hallo Herr [CUSTOMER SURNAME],

mein Name ist Alan, von [COMPANY] Kundensupport. Ich rufe Ihnen bezüglich Ihrer [PRODUCT] System (Seriennummer [NUMBER]) an. Wir haben eine Benachrichtigung vom System erhalten und ein Teil identifiziert, das vor Ort ausgetauscht werden muss. Seien Sie bitte versichert, dass weder der Ausfall noch der Teilsaustausch werden der [PRODUCT]-Leistungen stören.

Im Rahmen unseres Wartungsvertrages mit Ihrer Organisation möchte ich, dass das Ersatzteil am Montag den 20. Mai um 9.00 Uhr per [COURIER] eintrifft. Ich habe auch vor, unseren Aussendiensttechniker [NAME AND SURNAME] so zu planen, dass er zu einem ähnlichen Zeitpunkt eintrifft, um das Teil zu ersetzen. Sollte dieser Terminplan ein Problem für Ihr Unternehmen darstellen, kontaktieren Sie mich bitte umgehend per E-Mail oder [TELEPHONE], um einen anderen Termin zu vereinbaren.

Vielen Dank

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