

Increasing translation awareness A course designed for PhD researchers

Helka Riionheimo, Juha Lång, Juho Suokas, Erja Vottonen & Esa Penttilä
University of Eastern Finland

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Abstract

Multilingualism is so deeply embedded in researchers' everyday work that they may not fully acknowledge how big a role translation plays in it. In this article, we examine PhD researchers' views on research translation through the concept of translation awareness. We demonstrate how PhD researchers as paraprofessional translators see the role of translation in their research projects and what specific translation challenges they encounter. We also examine how taking part in a course on translating research material influences their views. This article aims to continue and expand discussion on the concept of translation awareness.

Keywords: translation awareness, research translation, paraprofessional translation

1 Introduction

Research work is by default multilingual and inevitably includes translation. Multilingualism, however, tends to be so naturally ingrained in researchers' everyday routines that they may fail to acknowledge how big a role translation plays in their work. This consciousness people have of the role and effect of translation in multilingual settings can be called *translation awareness*.

In this article, we examine translation awareness in academic research contexts. We focus on a group of PhD researchers who have participated in our one-day course *Translating Research Material* at the University of Eastern Finland (UEF). The aim of the course is to discuss translation as part of research work and introduce the participants to the basics of translation. Here we concentrate on certain aspects of translation awareness, including how researchers identify the role of translation in the various phases of the research process and how they understand the nature of translation in practice.

The article proceeds as follows: Section two examines the concept of translation awareness. Section three presents the data and methods used in our analysis. In section four, we discuss our results and illustrate researchers' translation awareness with examples. Section five summarizes the results and offers ideas for further research and suggestions for increasing translation awareness among researchers.

2 Translation awareness

Translation awareness was brought to our attention by Päivi Kuusi *et al.* (2023), who used the term to describe the understanding that non-translators have of translation, multilingual communication, and the characteristics, purposes, and functions of language in general. Kuusi *et al.* examine translation awareness from the perspective of crisis communication and how lack of translation awareness can have detrimental effects in such cases. In the academic research context that we examine, low translation awareness may not have as immediate effects as in crisis communication, but the problems are more long-term and epistemological in nature.

The exact definition of *translation awareness* is work in progress, and with this article, we wish to contribute to this discussion. The motivation behind using this notion as a key to our discussion derives from two sources. First, we believe that it helps explicate what is at stake if researchers do not pay attention to translation. Second, after learning about the concept, we noticed how well it describes the aims of our PhD course.

One of the key concepts behind translation awareness is *language awareness*, which emerged in the 1970s and was established in the early 1990s in connection with language learning and language pedagogy (see e.g. Cots & Garrett 2017: 2–5). In its original sense, language awareness referred to foreign languages but soon came to include awareness of one's own language as well (Malmkjaer 2017: 453). According to the Association for Language Awareness, language awareness refers to “explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use” (About n.d.). This relates to language learners' reflection on “how languages work, how they are learnt, and how they themselves can best focus their own learning” (Garrett 2006: 481). So, the phenomenon examines how language learners develop metalanguage, become aware of language learning strategies, and develop critical evaluation skills concerning language learning.

Kirsten Malmkjaer (2017: 453) discusses the notion of *cross-linguistic awareness* (XLA) that derives from Carl James (1996) and refers to a person's ability to transfer positively between one's native language and other languages. Translating is particularly helpful for increasing XLA, and Malmkjaer (2017) gives several examples of how translation helps people develop better language awareness. She illustrates how increased awareness of the functions of language is interrelated with increased awareness of translation.

Another notion that could be linked to translation awareness is *cultural awareness*, especially *intercultural awareness*, which is defined as:

Understanding of the role culturally based forms, practices, and frames of understanding can have in intercultural communication, and an ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context specific manner in real time communication. (Baker 2012: 66.)

Being aware of how cultural aspects influence communication in different languages can increase one's translation competence. However, understanding certain nuances between different cultures does not automatically transfer into understanding how meaning is conveyed between languages.

An alternative perspective into translation awareness is offered by translation competence models, which focus on professional translators. For instance, PACTE (2008) introduces the sub-competence *knowledge about translation*. It is defined as declarative knowledge (implicit or explicit) about the principles of translation and the aspects of translation profession (PACTE 2008: 111). Knowledge about translation can be either dynamic or static (PACTE 2014). Dynamic translation refers to textual, interpretative, communicative practice, whereas static translation is considered a linguistic and literal language change process (PACTE 2014: 98). Knowledge about translation can be based on education or one's own experience and assumptions on translation. PACTE's notion relates to professional translators, but in our opinion, adopting a dynamic view of translation may increase the translation awareness of anyone operating in multilingual contexts.

Yet another related concept is *translator awareness*, which refers to the forms of intelligence that professional translators are expected to have in order to function properly (Wilss 1997). These include creativity, intuition, static and procedural knowledge, and various cognitive capacities that help translators do their work. Translator awareness is further discussed by Triin van Doorslaer (2015), who argues that one of the most important aims of translator training is to help students conceptualize translation and understand the nature of translation as an activity and process. Part of this awareness is understanding that the translator is a performer who actively constructs meaning when translating, not merely transforms someone else's meaning (van Doorslaer 2015: 21–23).

We consider that understanding the interpretive and performative nature of translation is a central aspect of translation awareness. However, where PACTE, Wills, and van Doorslaer discuss similar phenomena in professional or translator training contexts, we examine contexts where translation is mostly performed by non-translators. As translators, researchers could be regarded as *paraprofessional*. They are not translators by training, but translation is expected of them as part of their professional duties (Koskela *et al.* 2017: 466). Other typical paraprofessional translator groups include journalists, officials in bilingual communities, and professionals working in international NGOs (see e.g. Bielsa & Bassnett 2009; Koskela *et al.* 2017; Tesseur 2017). Of course, not all translation in research context is paraprofessional, but a significant amount is (see e.g. Penttilä *et al.* 2021).

The observations above by no means exhaustively describe the dimensions of translation awareness but provide a starting point for the following discussion, where we analyse our data to find features that reflect researchers' translation awareness. We do not have a working definition for the concept yet, but in section 4.4 we present what we consider as key features of translation awareness in research context, based on our data presented in the next section.

3 Methods and material

This section comprises four parts: First, we introduce the course *Translating Research Material*, then present the data collected from the course, followed by the method used to

analyse it. Finally, we introduce the themes that arose from the data and will be discussed in more detail in section 4.

3.1 Translating Research Material course

The material studied in this article is collected from our course *Translating Research Material* (TRM), taught to doctoral researchers at UEF annually since 2018. The course introduces its participants to the basic concepts of translation and helps them understand the role of translation in research work. The course offers viewpoints and advice for dealing with common translation problems and promotes a dynamic view of translation (PACTE 2011: 31), emphasizing the context of use, target audience, and function of translation. It offers tools for dealing with multilingual issues and raises awareness of the questions and risks involved in translation in research contexts. The lectures also include a section on professional translation that summarizes professional translators' competences, gives advice on when to hire a professional, and how to ensure a smooth process and good product quality when working with one.

Originally, the course was offered to PhD researchers at UEF in the Doctoral Programme in Social and Cultural Encounters (SCE), comprising humanities, theology, and social sciences, but doctoral researchers from other fields have attended the course as well. As of 2023, the course is offered for PhD researchers in other Finnish universities via <https://www.doctoralcourses.fi/>.

So far, 52 PhD researchers have taken the course, representing educational sciences, social sciences, theology, cultural studies, translation studies, history, environmental science and forestry, and psychology. The research materials they deal with have included research interviews, group interviews, questionnaires, archive materials, audiovisual materials, and text corpora. Their translation needs have included data excerpts for articles, conference presentations and funding applications, data produced in different languages for data analysis, and questionnaires for data collection.

The languages used by course participants in their research work has included the following 30 languages: English (n=39), Finnish (34), Russian (7), Greek (5), Spanish (3), French (2), German (2), Hebrew (2), Swedish (2), Turkish (2), Afrikaans (1), Amharic (1), Anishinaabemowin (1), Bahasa Indonesian (1), Bali (1), Cree (1), Church Slavonic (1), Gbagyi (1), Hausa (1), Indonesian (1), Japanese (1), Latin (1), Old Swedish (1), Pidgin English (1), Polish (1), Quechua (1), Romanian (1), Sámi languages (1), and Tiv (1).

The course consists of a preliminary assignment, lectures and workshops, and a post-course reflection. The pre-assignments and reflections are used as the data of this study and are described in more detail next. Based on the course feedback collected afterwards, the workshop discussions have been insightful.

3.2 The data

The data of this study comprises the TRM course participants' assignments from 2018–2023. Of the 52 doctoral researchers who have completed the course, not all have given their informed consent. Consequently, the data includes 41 preliminary assignments and 38 reflective essays (see Table 1 for details). The assignments were not primarily designed for research purposes, but to encourage participants to consider the role of translation in their dissertation process and to reflect what they have learned. This has both advantages and disadvantages: on one hand, the data can be regarded as authentic, since it is genuine course work; on the other hand, the instructions have guided and limited the scope of the answers. Furthermore, some participants have reflected on their work in detail while other texts are very brief. A few participants have been trained translators, but in the analysis, we focus on the participants without translator training. In hindsight, we regard our data as a valuable, although relatively narrow, window into how doctoral researchers ponder on translational issues.

Table 1. Distribution of the data

Year	Course participants	Preliminary assignments	Reflective essays
2018	10	7	5
2019	6	6	5
2020	26	15	15
2021	20	5	5
2022	7	6	6
2023	3	2	2
Total	52	41	38

The preliminary assignment consists of four tasks. First, the participants present a short abstract of their research project (including research questions, data, and methods). Second, they describe the need for translation in their work; this includes such considerations as the purposes of their translations, the languages involved, and whether they analyse translated or original data. They were also asked to evaluate their language and translation skills. The third task was to provide an excerpt of the participants' data or other materials, explain why it needs to be translated, what they consider challenging for translation, and who are the expected audience. Finally, the preliminary assignment included a translation exercise¹ where the participants translated a set of reader comments to a political article in *The Times*. The translation was from English to a language of their choice (usually their native language, with a few exceptions). The source text offers multiple translation issues such as slang, culture-specific items, and ungrammaticalities. The exercise was followed by a set of questions about the translation process, such as which aids and tools the participants used, how they resolved translation problems, how

¹ The translation exercise was not a part of the preliminary assignment for the first year but was included in 2019. For the first year, the participants translated a part of their own data.

they considered the purpose of the translation, and how they would evaluate their translation.

In the post-lecture reflective essays, the participants were instructed to write a commentary on the topics discussed in the course. They were free to write about any issues they felt relevant, but the instructions included suggestions, such as “How did your views on translating change?” and “Did you identify new translation-related issues in your research?”

All personal information was omitted when preparing the data for analysis. The details of the research design remained in the data, as we needed this information to form an overview of the participants’ situation. However, in the examples presented here, we have removed all identifying factors. Any changes in the quoted material are marked with square brackets. The participants are referred to by a code that consists of the type of the assignment (PRE for preliminary assignment, POST for reflective essays), the year of the course, and an identifying number (e.g. PRE 2018 001). The assignments were written in Finnish or English (which was more common) and have been analysed in the original language. Here, we have translated all Finnish quotes into English, and the originals are presented in footnotes.

3.3 The method of analysis

In our data, aspects of translation awareness are typically manifested in small fragments, often implied between the lines, and described with varying wordings. As our method of detecting signs of translation awareness, we have applied inductive content analysis (Saldanha & O’Brien 2014: 188–194).

The data was coded in several stages by members of our team using Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis tool. The coding was performed inductively, first by two researchers, who marked parts of the data that were relevant to our research questions and created initial names for codes and suggestions for general emergent themes. Once this stage was finished, our team discussed the initial codes and themes, which were then modified and refined for the next stage of coding. At the second stage of coding, individual parts of the data were grouped to reflect broader themes. Three relevant themes are discussed in this article, yet there are more themes in our data. The three themes are presented in the next section.

There are, of course, limitations to our method. The number of examined texts is limited, and the number of participants each year has varied. Similarly, our course instructions may have influenced the answers, possibly over-representing the participants’ translation awareness (as this was an assignment for a course on translation). A similar bias may affect the analysis, as the course creators also participate in the research. The course participants’ input has been applied to improve the course, which may lead to variation between answers from earlier and later years. The coding was focused solely on qualitative analysis and was performed iteratively by several people. On the other hand, the shared responsibility of coding and analysis could be seen as an asset since the result is the work of multiple researchers.

3.4 Themes

Through inductive analysis, we identified three broad themes that relate to different aspects of translation awareness. They are: 1. *role of translation in research*, 2. *specific challenges*, and 3. *development of translation awareness*. Themes 1 and 2 emerged from the preliminary assignments while theme 3 manifested in the reflective essays.

The first theme, *role of translation in research*, demonstrates the participants' awareness regarding the significance of and the need for translation within their research projects, and the implications translation has on their research. Specific topics include collecting data in English to minimize the need for further translation, the multifaceted role of researcher-interviewer-translator, and translation of various research materials, such as research instruments, consent forms, background literature, data excerpts, seminar presentations, and funding applications. A further subtheme here is *who translates*.

The theme of *specific challenges* highlights the difficulties encountered when translating research texts. It demonstrates the participants' awareness of the complexity of translation processes and specific translation-related problems. These include structural disparities, equivalence issues, translating low-resource languages, and translating data into non-standard languages such as spoken language, non-native language, children's language, and language used in social media. Within the theme, there are two broader subthemes: *language matters* explores language-specific topics such as researcher's language skills, dealing with data in low-resource languages, syntactic differences between languages, and other language-related considerations. The second subtheme, *cultural matters*, consists mostly of culture-bound concepts and expectations associated with multilingualism and translation in research, such as culture-specific items and target audiences' cultural expectations.

The third theme, *development of translation awareness*, showcases examples of how participants' awareness of the topics highlighted in the previous two themes evolved during and after the course.

4 Results and discussion

In this section, we discuss the three themes – the role of translation in research, specific challenges of translating within research projects, and how the course participants' translation awareness developed. They are discussed in respective subsections. Each theme is illustrated with examples highlighting the PhD researchers' translation awareness. This section ends with our conclusion of what translation awareness is in research. As mentioned in section 3.2, all examples are either in their original English form or translated from Finnish into English with the source text in footnotes.

4.1 Role of translation in research

When designing the course, we anticipated that the most common type of data that needs to be translated would be examples for research reports. This proved correct: whenever

the data was in a different language than the research report, examples need to be translated and participants were often aware of possible issues. Some participants even demonstrated a deeper understanding about the importance of translation in terms of validity or transparency (example 1).

- (1) The purpose of the translated material is to give examples of the qualitative discourse analysis done by me to the reader of the published article in English. It aims to give the reader transparency into how I have ended up with my interpretation of the data and a chance to follow my thinking— this is what was being said, and this is what I dissected from it. (PRE 2020 012)

In addition to data excerpts, the assignments also revealed other needs for translation. For example, research proposals (2) and consent forms (3) are needed in the research participants' languages. Sometimes interview questions or questionnaires need to be translated (4).

- (2) This piece of writing [research proposal] will be seen (and hopefully approved) by every major stakeholder and party involved with the research. Some of these stakeholders only speak Finnish, one of the [X] languages, or [language Y]. This means that I will need to translate my research project proposal into one or more of these languages, in order for non-English speaking stakeholders to receive it. (PRE 2022 001)
- (3) This [consent] form is among the ones obligatory in any research involving human beings. Its original text is in English, but if the research participants are not fluent in English, it seems reasonable to translate the form into their mother tongues (Finnish or [language X] in my project). (PRE 2020 008)
- (4) First, there is a questionnaire for foreign-language teachers who work with primary school students in [state X]. Although it is expected that foreign language teachers are proficient in the English language, the questions were translated into [language X] to avoid misunderstanding. (PRE 2023 002)

These examples demonstrate the researchers' awareness and willingness to make their research setting understandable and accessible to the participants; in other words, we can see a connection between target audience orientation and ethical and transparent research practices.

A recurring need for translating arises when previous research has been mainly written in a different language. Translation needs may range from new concepts (5) and excerpts to whole articles (6).

- (5) I am now mostly working with English literature and trying to write a Finnish article based on that; this article includes a lot of novel concepts from untranslated theoretical literature. This is the reason and task for my current work; to introduce novel concepts and a novel approach to the [research field removed] academic community in Finland. (PRE 2020 015)
- (6) I'm going through a considerable amount of research articles from relevant fields. As a part of constructing the theoretical framework of my research I also read a lot of literature which is mostly in English. So I am translating excerpts from the literature, in addition to translating the articles. Some of the articles I translate as a whole, of some I construct summaries with the relevant information. (PRE 2020 009)

While most translation work is done by researchers themselves, language professionals are also present. A few assignments reveal personal experiences or preconceptions about professional translators. One participant refers to professional translators neutrally (7), but others show signs of prejudice or misconception (8), or reminisced previous negative experiences (9).

- (7) At first such translation seems easy, but this document will provide the foundation for future work with personal data, so its wording should be straightforward and unambiguous. Hence, professional translation is needed. (PRE 2020 008)
- (8) If the text is translated by someone who is not an educational scientist, terms that are “incorrect” from the perspective of educational sciences might easily sneak into the text. So we need to walk side by side and look for the right terms together. This probably is not possible with an official translator! (PRE 2018 002)²
- (9) I have some negative experiences from past where we used professional translation services in our research project. They made numerous errors as they clearly did not understand the context. In the end we did not save any time as we had to rework big parts of the translation. (PRE 2020 011)

These cases suggest that many participants were not aware of the way professionals work.

4.2 Specific challenges

This section examines specific challenges mentioned in the preliminary assignments. Examples are found in several parts of the assignment, for instance, where the participants describe their research projects, ponder on an excerpt of their data, or reflect on their experiences after the translation exercise. As mentioned in section 3.4, the specific challenges identified by the participants may revolve around the subthemes of language matters, cultural matters, or both.

Scientific terminology is an obvious translation issue: the participants may struggle to find other-language equivalents for English terms, or vice versa (10). Additionally, idioms and metaphorical phrases cause difficulties if they carry culture-specific meanings and do not have literal equivalents in other languages (11).

- (10) Currently I have added definitions for the [Finnish pedagogical] terms 'liikuntaloikka' and 'digiloikka' as I was unable to find their translations despite asking around. (PRE 2018 003)³
- (11) The biggest problem is that I don't know how I can translate some metaphors, for example: [nostaa tikun nokkaan, pitääköön tunkkinsa, istua tuppisuuna] (PRE 2023 001)

Researchers who translate spoken material face specific challenges: Interviews contain incomplete sentences, colloquial vocabulary, and filler words (12). Dialects and

²Toisaalta, jos tekstin kääntää muu kuin kasvatustieteilijä, termeihin livahtaa herkästi oikeita termejä, mutta ”väärää” kasvatustieteiden käytännön kannalta. Silloin tarvitaan rinnalla kulkemista ja yhdessä oikeiden termien löytämistä. Se ei taida virallisen kääntäjän kanssa onnistua!

³Tällä hetkellä artikkeliin lisättyä on liikuntaloikan ja digiloikan selitykset, joille en ole löytänyt kyselyistä huolimatta käännöksiä.

contextual connotations may also present problems (13) as do speakers with only rudimentary language skills (14).

- (12) I got a Finnish native speaker to check over the above translation and we made some minor changes. We discussed how *tota* could probably be translated as ‘well’, ‘yeah’ ‘like’ or ‘y’know’ (ie as a choice of filler words). (PRE 2018 007)
- (13) The colloquial nature of the language used and the use of dialect may make it difficult to translate as I will need to consider how well the translation conveys the meaning intended by the original word or phrase even more so than would be the case with standard Finnish/English. (PRE 2020 004)
- (14) Furthermore, many of the students use very elementary Finnish and thus it would make sense only to analyse the original data and not the translated one. (PRE 2020 007)

As these examples show, translating transcribed speech is not as straightforward as translating written standard language. Such observations demonstrate sprouting translation awareness, as participants are aware of these issues and seek strategies to solve them.

Some comments indicate conscious reflection on the challenges that translations pose in research. For example, participants emphasized that it is important to base the analysis on original, untranslated data (15). One mentioned how information can be lost when material is translated between local pidgins and more standard varieties of English (16).

- (15) There may also be a need to rely on the original data obtained by other researchers who have raw untranslated information related to my research, depending on their translated data may lead to data that is not trustworthy as a lot of things get lost in translation. (PRE 2020 005)
- (16) Translating related materials and my line of questions or discussion points from the ‘Educated-level’ of English, which I speak and I refer to as my native language, to either ‘pidgin or broken english’ and the mother-tongue languages and then back to English will require skillsets that I must confess I do not possess at the moment. I am adept at understanding pidgin English or broken English, however, translating the same to the educated-level English may mean losing some remarkable things that make no sense in English. (PRE 2020 005)

Signs of translation awareness are evident when participants describe their aim to make the translation exercise in the preliminary assignment more readable and natural in the target language. This was often elicited when the participants translated into their native language. For instance, a literal word-for-word translation did not result in a good target-language text – neither linguistically nor culturally (17). This realization implies that the participants view the translation process as dynamic, rather than static, albeit they may lack the skills to produce an adequate translation.

- (17) I found translating quite difficult, as I have before, and I find the end result in Finnish quite clumsy and “bad Finnish”. I don’t think I succeeded very well. Biggest problems are the British cultural references, and the clumsiness of the resulting Finnish (e.g. slang phrases, typos, should run-on sentences be fixed or not). (PRE 2020 012)

All in all, the analysis of the preliminary assignments showed seeds of translation awareness, often based on previously acquired language awareness and awareness of cultural differences. Some participants even demonstrated awareness of the broad and

dynamic nature of translation in research, which extends beyond prototypical translation. However, we should keep in mind that many who enrolled in our course were already likely inclined to consider questions of languages and cultures.

4.3 Development of translation awareness

This section examines the development of translation awareness by looking at the reflective essays the participants wrote after the course. As mentioned in 3.1, the course emphasizes the importance of function, context, and target audience for justifying translation choices. The analysis of the reflective essays suggests that this viewpoint was received well and offered most participants a new awareness of translation.

Many participants confessed to having a static view of translation before the course – considering translation as a cross-linguistic communication process where verbatim translation is regarded as faithful rendition of the original in another language. According to one participant, this static view is common especially within theology (18). A possible reason may be that theological research often involves old, even extinct, languages and that previous translations hold an established status.

- (18) It appears that in this particular field of study, whenever translation of research material is required, the aim for precision often makes scholars—myself included—attempt a verbatim translation of the texts. The unspoken assumption seems to be that by employing this approach it is possible to produce a translation which is faithful to the individual words and expressions found in the source. (POST 2020 013)

A change from a static to a more dynamic view of translation was a recurring theme in the reflections. This suggests that participants became aware of the complexity of the notions of faithfulness and equivalence, and many realized that there is more room for creativity in translating than they had thought (19).

- (19) I had the idea that translation should always be as truthful to the original text as possible. However, on this course I learned that it is not always necessary to translate everything exactly this way and it is also acceptable to leave bits out of the translation if they are not relevant for the analysis. (POST 2019 004)

This idea was present especially in the essays of those participants who dealt with spoken data. For many of them, the main motivation to take the course was the need to translate data excerpts for publication, with special attention on the properties of spoken language (colloquialisms, dialect, idiosyncrasies, etc.). By highlighting translation as a communicative process and emphasizing the importance of the communicative function, the course gave the participants a new approach (20).

- (20) I received good advice for translating data excerpts: verbatim translation is not always needed. As I do not analyze the structure of the discussion, and the speaker's tone or speech rhythm are not

relevant, the excerpt can be condensed in translation. There is no need to translate every filler word or other sign of hesitation. (POST 2018 003)⁴

Adopting a dynamic view on translation appeared to give the participants confidence in their own competence as translators. One contributing factor was the introduction to the basic translation tools and strategies, but equally significant was the realization that different situations call for different translations. For example, the requirement for grammatical accuracy and idiomaticity is less strict if the translation is for a researcher's own use instead of scientific publication. The participants also realized that, as experts in their special field, they possess vital knowledge that is not always available to professional translators (21). This may be one of the reasons why some participants had negative experiences when working with professionals. In some cases, the course revealed the complexity of translating and increased the participant's appreciation towards professional translators (22).

- (21) In a way, I also gained confidence in relation to my own research material and its translations. I would not feel very comfortable giving it to an external professional for translating, because while they are the expert when it comes to language, I might have important knowledge relating to the cultural references and the music culture the text is exploring. (POST 2020 012)
- (22) I have always respected professional translators highly and this course made me respect them (you) even more. (POST 2021 002)

As participants learned that translation is not a mere mechanical process of decoding language, they became aware that translation always involves interpretation (23). Because of this, they felt they are better equipped to take translation into account and to minimize the effect of cross-linguistic transfer in their analysis, results, and interpretations. This realization was important especially for participants who deal with multilingual data or gather data in their foreign language or with the help of an interpreter.

- (23) The translation is the translator's interpretation of the source text and translations are not the same thing as source text. Depending on the type of analysis, translation can contaminate the results: lead to specific outcomes or effects that are not present in the original; when reporting this can cause readers to disagree with the findings. It is important to understand that even small differences may have a big impact. (POST 2020 002)

As examples 18–23 demonstrate, one of the main insights in the translation awareness of the course participants is the shift in their conceptualization of translation. Instead of viewing translation as static, they started to regard it as a dynamic concept that is in constant interaction with its context, purpose, and function. This helped them realize the role that translation plays in their work. In this sense, understanding the dynamic nature of translation could be viewed as one of the essential elements of translation awareness.

⁴ Omalla kohdallani sain hyvän ohjeen sitaattien kääntämiseen: sanatarkkaa käännoästä ei välttämättä aina tarvita. Koska en tutki keskustelun rakenteita tai puhujan äänensävyllä tai puheen rytmillä ei ole merkitystä, voidaan sitaatti kääntää myös lyhyemmässä muodossa. Jokaista ”niiku” tai muuta epärointiä ei välttämättä tarvita.

4.4 What is translation awareness in research

To sum up our views on what constitutes translation awareness in research, there are at least four key aspects that emerge from our data. The first one is understanding translation as a dynamic form of communication with a high level of context-dependency. This is a view many participants developed during the course, although they might never have thought of translation in this way before.

The second aspect is awareness of the role of and need for translation in research projects. Especially in multilingual research settings, translation needs to be consciously considered. This includes understanding when a professional is needed and when the researcher's skills are enough.

The third key aspect is understanding that translations are always interpretations of the source text and therefore, when translating research data, it should be explicitly mentioned when data is translated and by whom. This has both ethical and epistemological implications for research.

The fourth and final aspect of translation awareness suggested by our data is the researcher's skill to identify the specific challenges translation presents in their individual research projects, be it on a micro (e.g. translating terminology) or macro level (e.g. cultural adaptation).

5 Conclusion

This study examined translation awareness in the case of PhD researchers who took part in our one-day TRM course. The aim of the course was to discuss translation as a part of research work and introduce the participants to basic concepts, tools, and strategies of translation. Translation awareness is particularly important in research where crossing linguistic and cultural borders is an intrinsic part of data gathering or analysis. For instance, sometimes data may only be available via translation and using interpreters in data gathering is a common procedure in many fields.

The preliminary assignments demonstrated that some researchers are aware of the issues translation may induce in research settings. Nevertheless, the post-course essays imply that this is not always the case, and we argue that lack of translation awareness can have negative effects on the quality of research. Understanding the interpretive nature of translation may help researchers make more justifiable and ethically sound decisions when faced with multilingual matters in their work. Obviously, it is not always possible to avoid the issues translation may cause, nevertheless researchers should at least acknowledge the role of translation in their research and make it more visible.

The analysis of post-course essays showed that the course has succeeded well in delivering its message. The participants seemed to adopt a more dynamic view of translation and become more aware of the complexity of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication. Focusing on the function of the target text was a particularly liberating realization for many, especially in cases where data excerpts are translated for reporting purposes.

By highlighting the complexity of translation, the course managed to increase the participants' awareness of professional translators' competences and work processes as well. Many participants reported having negative experiences with professional language services. The reasons for these should be explored in a separate study, but we argue that increasing clients' translation awareness can help alleviate at least some of the issues.

This study provides only a glimpse into the concept of translation awareness from the viewpoint of academic researchers, who we view as paraprofessional translators. The data is limited as it consists of texts collected from one university and mostly one faculty. Furthermore, all participants were early-stage researchers and evidently conscious of the importance of translation, since they took part in this type of course. Future studies should look at the topic from different viewpoints, including different fields and researchers in different stages of their careers.

We argue that, as translation is a prominent part of nearly all research work, an introductory course in translation would be a valuable addition to all research training. Our data shows that even a one-day course can effectively increase its participants' translation awareness. Of course, we do not yet know whether the increased awareness is transferred into their everyday practices and whether it has lasting effects in the quality of their work.

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Research material

41 preliminary assignments and 38 reflective essays produced by the participants of Translating Research Material course organized at the University of Eastern Finland in 2018–2023.

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About the authors

Helka Riionheimo is Professor of Finnish and Karelian at the University of Eastern Finland. She has published various articles with translation scholars and led the Kiännä! project, which organized translator training for the endangered language of Karelian.

E-mail: helka.riionheimo(at)uef.fi

Juha Lång is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Eastern Finland. Currently he is working in the project Democratic Epistemic Capacities in the Age of Algorithms (DECA) where he studies the epistemic capacity of linguistic minorities. In previous research projects he has examined the reception of audiovisual translation using various experimental methods.

E-mail: juha.lang(at)uef.fi

Juho Suokas is a University Lecturer at the University of Eastern Finland. His 2022 dissertation examined user-centered translation and usability methods. His other research interests include non-professional translation, functional translatoriality, and the internal and external properties of translations.

E-mail: juho.suokas(at)uef.fi

Erja Vottonen is finalizing her doctoral dissertation at the University of Eastern Finland. Her dissertation focuses on the relationship between theory and practice in translator training. Her other research interests include the role of translation in research process and the reception of translated Russian literature in Finland.

E-mail: erja.vottonen(at)uef.fi

Esa Penttilä is Professor of English language and translation and head of the School of Humanities at the University of Eastern Finland. His research interests include non-professional translation, cognitive translation studies, multilingual communication, and metaphors in thought and language.

E-mail: esa.penttila(at)uef.fi

