



At the Intersection of Translation Studies and Textual Scholarship
Conference Report on *Trextuality – Interdisciplinary Approaches to
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Abstract

The Finnish Literature Society and the University of Turku organized an international conference in Turku in September 2023, aimed at scholars with an interest in translation, transmission, and textual scholarship. Translation studies and textual scholarship share many research interests, such as the processes involved in creating translations, the production of multilingual texts, and the networks related to translation. These themes were well-represented throughout the conference, with the most prevalent topics among the presenters including archival research, materiality, and genetic criticism. Articles based on the presentations are currently being collected for an edited volume.

Keywords: Trextuality, translation studies, textuality

Avainsanat: Trekstuaalisuus, käännöstiiede, tekstuaalitiiede

1 Introduction

As part of the Kone Foundation-funded project *Traces of Translation in the Archives* (Finnish Literature Society – SKS, 2021–2025), the Finnish Literature Society and the University of Turku organised a three-day conference in September 2023. The theme of the conference was *Trextuality*, which, according to Ivaska and Katajamäki (2020: 125), means combining the perspectives of translation studies and *textual scholarship*. Textual scholarship takes interest in transcription, explanation, editing processes and commentary of different texts (Hallamaa et al. 2010; Van Hulle 2019: 19–30; University of Copenhagen s.d.).

In the Call for Papers (*Trextuality* 2023), the theme was motivated with the fact that translation studies and textual scholarship often deal with similar phenomena, which is why the disciplines have a lot to offer each other. The organisers welcomed papers related

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to the study of multilingual texts, their creation processes, perspectives on transmission and translation, and the use of archival materials. At the conference, there were three keynotes and 52 individual presentations, and nine other researchers presented at two panels and one round-table discussion. The programme featured many intriguing and partially overlapping themes, of which I have chosen four for this report. I start with literary translators' invisible communities, move on to the creation processes of multilingual texts and then to materiality, and finish with publishers' archives.

2 Traces of translators' communities

The conference began with Outi Paloposki's (University of Turku) keynote on the translators' drafts and correspondence in the archives of the Finnish publishing house WSOY between 1888 and 1944. The correspondence revealed invisible aspects of the translation practice, of which Paloposki highlighted negotiations, linguistic choices, networks surrounding the translator, the roles of various actors and efforts in publishing translations.

Translators' networks were discussed in several presentations. For example, Giada Brighi observed in Selma Lagerlöf's correspondence that Lagerlöf's German translator was actively looking for a German-language publishing house for her works. Archival materials are a window into the everyday life of past publishers and other actors in the translation field, which makes it possible to discover individuals who otherwise might go unnoticed. There are several kinds of invisible actors, but one example of them includes the women close to the translators and authors, whose role was highlighted in Joanna Sobesto's and Heidi Grönstrand's presentations. Looking into the archives of Paweł Hulka-Laskowski, a translator who worked in Poland at the turn of the 20th century, Sobesto discovered Hulka-Laskowski's wife and daughters' involvement in his translations. Similarly, Grönstrand observed Mia Berner's input in the manuscript of Pentti Saarikoski's bilingual poetry collection.

These examples illustrate how archives may help scholars map out different networks surrounding the actors involved in the creation of multilingual texts and translations.

3 Multilingual writing processes

Creation processes of translations and multilingual texts are central to both translation studies and genetic criticism (the study of the process of literary creation), with the latter being well represented at the conference. In his keynote, Dirk Weissmann (University of Toulouse - Jean Jaurès) discussed the multilingual phases in the creation of seemingly monolingual works and the symbolism behind language choices. According to Weissmann, Paul Celan wrote in French to distance himself from the German literary atmosphere of his time.

The benefits of combining multilingualism and translation studies with genetic criticism became evident in several presentations, of which I highlight the panel organised by the Institute of modern texts and manuscripts (Institut des textes et des manuscrits

modernes ITEM) where Anne-Laure Regade, Chiara Montini and Pascale Sardin shared their observations concerning women's multilingual writing and translation. Studying archives, they had made intriguing discoveries about women working in several languages and their influence, which had earlier not been fully identified.

4 Material realities

As for other phenomena often left on the sidelines, materiality entails the material characteristics of resources and creative processes. These characteristics include illustrations, markings, formatting and working environments. In her keynote, Guyda Armstrong (University of Manchester) showed how digitising manuscripts allows contemporary researchers to read the materials in detail and examine their physical properties.

Additionally, two other aspects of materiality were explored. Firstly, the importance of sound and form in translation took centre stage in Till Dembeck, Juliette Taylor-Batty, and Adrian Wanner's panel discussion on multilingualism in multidisciplinary research and Karen Bennet's presentation on modernist translators. Secondly, Riku Haapaniemi presented his observations concerning translators' working environments and tools, such as translation memories and artificial intelligence. The reality surrounding the translator may not be evident in the final output, and looking into the working environments helps us better understand how translations are produced.

Moreover, working environments at the disposal of contemporary researchers are not limited to the present day. In their panel, Rozanne Versendaal, Anton Bruder and Natalia Petrovskaia discussed multilingual communities in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and the role of worldviews in the printing and dissemination of texts.

5 Gatekeepers of the Canon

As indicated in section 2, not everyone involved in the distribution of translations has their names printed on the published works. The power to publish and disseminate texts is concentrated in publishing houses, whose archives provide valuable information about their decisions and the connections these decisions have with the surrounding society. An interesting example of this was Tatsiana Haiden's presentation on the history of an Austrian publishing house during the Third Reich. Through correspondence between publishers and translators, Haiden found out how the surrounding ideology was reflected not only in the translations chosen for publication, but also in the changes in the translators working for the publishing house.

However, not all decision-making is related to national politics. Publishers also monitor the aesthetic aspects of texts. Daniele Monticelli pointed out how a publishing editor gained notoriety in Estonian literary circles; her red pen markings on the manuscripts guided the form and content of many translations. Manuscripts reveal traces of different actors' decision-making and studying them sheds light on the distribution of

authorship in the final product. There is still plenty to explore in publishers' archives, and even in Finland there are hundreds more in addition to the one Outi Paloposki discussed.

6 Conclusion

The presentations at the conference demonstrate the advantages of combining the perspectives of textual scholarship and translation studies. The materials and methods used by textual scholars create more opportunities to study translation, and the concepts of translation studies enable scholars to conceptualise these resources in new ways.

Articles based on the presentations will soon be compiled into a book that will offer a more in-depth picture of the rich field of trextuality. The volume will give readers the opportunity to engage further with several of the papers mentioned in this report, alongside others. What is more, in September 2025, the discussions started in Turku will continue when the University of Galway organises a second trextuality conference, *Trextuality 2. Material Turns in Translation: Hybridity, Media and Circulation*.

Trextuality is here to stay: the intersection of translation and textual scholarship offers a compelling perspective to examine a most diverse set of materials, and through them, translational activities at different times. Textual scholars traditionally use a wide range of materials from digitised pre-modern manuscripts to various writings stored in libraries, archival institutions and public Internet archives. While the presenters also employed research materials common in translation studies, such as published books and interviews, archival materials provide an opportunity to supplement the information from these sources. Through the archives, we can access unpublished history and activities, as well as settings where the researcher is not involved.

By combining different methods, materials and perspectives from textual scholarship and translation studies, it is possible to build an increasingly coherent understanding of both the history of translation and the importance of multilingualism and translation in the creation, distribution and canonization of written works.

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About the author

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