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Work content of in-house translators in small and medium-sized industrial enterprises. Observing real work situations

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the impact of the organisational context on the translation activity of in-house translators working in small and medium-sized industrial enterprises. The aim is to answer the question of what the work content of in-house translators is when it is embedded in the whole industrial work process. The paper includes an introductory section that outlines the conceptual background of the sociology of work. The involvement of the translator as a central agent in the execution of the wider work process is analysed in a case study, based on data gathered in 2005 and 2006 using observational methods in a medium-sized Polish company producing ice cream machines. The results obtained are linked with those from other research projects carried out in Translation Studies. The paper concludes with the statement that the more complete the translator's view of the work process is, the better his understanding of his own activity is and therefore the greater his efficiency is.

KEYWORDS

Work content, work process, lean production, small and medium-sized enterprise, translation, in-house translator.

1. Introduction

As my contribution to the diagnosis of the status of translation-related professions and to the discussion on its central or peripheral nature and its boundaries — still fuzzy — in modern societies, I present an analysis of the business translator's work content.[1] This paper focuses on the impact of the organisational context on the translation activity of in-house translators working in small and medium-sized industrial enterprises. The main methodological approach is the case study, based on data gathered in Poland during 2005 and 2006.

The aim of my research is to answer the question of what the work content of in-house translators is and how these translators work when they know the purpose and the steps involved in the whole industrial work process in which their translation is actually embedded.

During 2005-2006, I was employed by a company in Poland through a private agreement with a language consultancy service to define the context of a job for the purpose of staff selection. This company manufactures machinery for the food sector and my role there was to study the characteristics of a specific post that the company wanted to fill. The arrangement between myself and the company allowed me to publish one academic paper in a specialised journal, without including any

confidential data, after a period of five years. The job was for an in-company translator. The person who occupied the post from mid-2004 had to leave mid-2006 and the company was preparing a selection process for the post that would become vacant at that time.

The involvement of this translator in the execution of the wider work process was analysed by means of the observational method. My study included two steps: (1) a general analysis that dealt with all the activities performed by the translator in the job position under study (general analysis section); and (2) an additional analysis which provided a deeper view of his involvement in the sales process (additional analysis section).

This paper contains an introductory section that outlines the conceptual background of the sociology of work and which defines the main concepts; this is followed by an analysis of the empirical data. Finally, the results obtained, mainly in the additional analysis, are linked with those from other research projects in Translation Studies; the detailed results obtained in the general analysis were confidential.

2. Conceptual background

In this section, I discuss the definitions of the work process, Taylorism and anti-Taylorism, followed by a description of changes in jobs and work processes after the 1980s.

2.1. Work process: the concept and its definition

From an economic and social perspective, what is today understood as the work process is the result of historical evolutions beginning with economic trade, moving on to the rise and peak of industrialisation and, finally, current forms of organising production: industries and services (Lozares *et al.* 2004).

Marx (1867/1976) was one of the first proponents of the definition of work and its process for social formations that preceded capitalism, and referred to it as the process through which a primary material acquires a use value. This definition means breaking the work process down into three simple components: (1) the personal activity of the individual or the work itself, (2) the object on which the process is operating and (3) the means that the worker uses to operate.

However, the definition of the productive work process that I have adopted for this research is based on a more recent approach; it is the definition proposed by Verd *et al.* (2007) in the field of the sociology of work, from the theoretical approach of situated activity and socially distributed knowledge:

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(i) A set of interactions of different types (factual, cognitive, etc.),
(ii) between social subjects (individuals or groups) and instruments,
(iii) carried out in a given space-time situation and
(iv) in contexts ranging from the narrowest to the widest and involving different spheres (economics, production, organisation, etc.),
(v) with a view to achieving the material or symbolic modification of a product.
(Verd *et al.* 2007: 150)

The work process defined in this way acquires the main characteristics of a human activity that takes place in the context of personal interrelationships, at a given time and place, in connection with other processes and with an organisational structure; its fundamental objective is the transformation of material. It is not a question of the simple sum of these parts, but their constant and dynamic interaction.

2.2. Taylorism *and* anti-Taylorism

With Taylor and his masterwork on "scientific management" (1911/1970), the separation that is evident today between those who study and plan the work (managers) and those who carry it out (workers) began to emerge. To achieve their proposed performance goals, managers have to carry out systematic studies of work processes and positions, and design standard production routines. Taylor handed down some basic principles of a capitalist organisation that can be summarised in four elements: study of working methods; study of work time (chronometrisation); description and evaluation of jobs and performance motivation (motivation of workers) (Miguélez 1980).

Breaking production processes down into routine tasks, which is what basically occurs in the Taylorist and Fordist models of work organisation, means the excessively chunked divisions of the activities carried out by workers. As a response to the abuses of Taylorism and Fordism, many criticisms emerged of the atomisation of processes into small tasks, where the worker quickly lost their overview and awareness of the process and product as a whole. Miguélez (1980: 132) states that "historically, workers' opposition to division of work — and more specifically to Taylorist techniques — is profoundly related to the defence of professionalism."

The strong reaction of the defenders of professionalism to the excessive division of the production process into short and very simple tasks, and the resistance by workers against business owners who adopted the Taylorist production system on a large scale, created a great deal of social conflict in the mid-1970s. The later restructuring of work organisation and the emergence of anti-Taylorism resulted in four fundamental technical characteristics (Miguélez 1980: 135): (1) rotation (periodically moving a person between two or more jobs at the same level or the same kind of

technological and/or functional content); (2) work enlargement (increasing the time of the work cycle, resulting in more jobs being carried out at the same level and with the same technological content); (3) work enrichment (creation of new tasks, rearrangement of tasks); and (4) work groups (assigning jobs among members; delegating the production programme, quality control and certain internal administrative tasks to the group).

2.3. Jobs and work processes after the 1980s

From the 1980s onwards, work activity in developed countries has been revolutionised by three very important factors: political and economic globalisation, use of large-scale technological innovation and changes in the organisation of work, specifically the implementation of flexible working systems (Kuznik 2011: 288–289).

As a result of the impact of these three factors on capitalist societies, the following phenomena have been observed:

(1) The expansion of the concept of "job". Instead of talking about jobs, people use broader concepts such as "role" (Pereda and Berrocal 2004: 272), "occupation" (Pereda and Berrocal 2004: 270), "project" or "field of work" (Sennett 1998), "mission" (Terssac 1995: 64–77), "teamwork" and "group work" (Durand 2004: 84).

(2) The supremacy of the work process over other organisational structures. Faced with the disappearance of the traditional concept of jobs, researchers underline the importance of the work process as the dominant organisational principle in a production unit, which determines other organisational elements (Terssac 1995).

The research carried out by Terssac (1995), using real work situations, focuses on the reconstruction of the social system within a company. In automated contexts (chemicals, cement works, electrical plants and printing), they sought to analyse the way that human groups really organise themselves for production, as well as to analyse the process of creating effective rules. Terssac's work concentrates on the analysis of continuous industrial production processes, although the author *does* warn that this continuity is still affected by many variations in production, fluctuations in the work rate and unexpected disruptions during the process.

In the services sector, it is Durand's (2004) work that is most prominent. He studies the organisational aspects of production in a lean, "just on time" production system and the consequences of this method observed in psychological aspects of individual workers (the degree and nature of their

involvement). According to Durand, the lean production system removes the need to accumulate reserves and therefore "squeezes" the production flow, making it "tense". The flow is self-organising and it is therefore the production system itself, and not a human figure, that requires its function. Time is very short, squeezed to the limit, and this systematises the production work. The worker involved in the production process has to be voluntarily self-disciplined to guarantee that the production is carried out "on time," always under tense conditions. The main objective of the production appears to be maintaining the flow in that tense state, since the tenser it is, the better the economic results are[2].

3. The case study: the job content in a small or medium-sized enterprise

In the context of constant changes in the organisation of production processes which lead to the rethinking of the content of the work and the missions entrusted to the workers, case studies carried out in European small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) offer information that can lend specificity to the general assertions mentioned above. In the following section, I present a case study of this type.

3.1. Information about the company under study

The company has its headquarters in Poland, on the outskirts of a medium-sized town of around 150,000 inhabitants. It was set up in the 1990s. During the period of the study (2005–2006), the company employed over 50 permanent staff. At the time of writing in 2013, the company has a permanent staff of about 70. In accordance with the European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC, it fulfilled - and continues to fulfil - the requirements for a medium-sized SME. Its legal status is that of a private limited company. It manufactures machinery for the industrial production of ice creams (i.e. the machines that are used to produce individual ice creams and to fill containers made of plastic or, occasionally, other materials). Its clients are ice cream producers (industrial and small producers), so it has a "business to business" relationship with them. The company sells its machinery in over 50 countries on 6 continents around the world.

Work in the company is organised according to the lean production paradigm where no stocks of machinery are manufactured, since each machine is produced on a personal order by the client. Machine sales, which are subject to a sales contract, form the start of the company's production process. Normally the sales and production activities take place in winter so that the machines can be up and running in summer when the demand for ice cream is highest.

The work processes are divided into the following sub-processes:

(1) Promotion and sales of the machines;
(2) Machine design according to the specific needs of each client;
(3) Machine manufacture;
(4) Transport and setting up of the machines in the clients' ice cream factories;
(5) Post-sales technical service where necessary.

Staff members are distributed between the design, production, sales and post-sales departments. There is a technical director and a commercial director. In 2005–2006, several in-company translators worked for the commercial director and were allocated to the geographical areas of the highest sales: Eastern Europe (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Bulgaria, etc.), Middle East (Arabic-speaking countries), African countries, Scandinavian countries, Italian-, German- and English-speaking areas in Europe, Spain and Latin America, the USA, Canada, etc. Both the directors and the translators spoke two or three foreign languages in addition to their native Polish, with varying levels of competence.

The commercial and linguistic policy of the company was to ensure that communication in the client's language (Russian, Italian, Arabic, English, German, Spanish, etc.) was possible and therefore it insisted on employing multilingual in-company staff, whose jobs were defined as in-house translators. The company occasionally commissioned translations in other languages using translation agencies, but its preference was to use the in-house translators as much as possible.

All this information was gathered by the author of this paper in a preliminary interview session.

3.2. Methodology used in the general analysis

My role in the company was to study the characteristics of the job of an in-house translator for Spain and Latin America, who had Polish as his mother tongue and Spanish, Portuguese and English as foreign languages. To that end, I followed the general stages of an audit for a language company that I had identified in the early part of the research for my doctoral thesis (Kuznik 2012: 222–224). Since the post had already been named "in-house translator" by the company, the underlying assumption was that the main activity was the translation of written texts. In the course of 2005, I completed the following stages:

(1) Drawing up a list of text types that the translator tended to work most with over the year, i.e. 1st January – 31st December 2005. To do this, I

studied and classified the source texts and translations which were filed on the translator's personal computer (documentary source analysis).

(2) Drawing up a list of communicative situations in which the translator undertook interpreting during the year, i.e. 1st January – 31st December 2005, on the basis of an interview with the translator.

(3) Drawing up a list of activities associated with translation and interpreting that the translator carried out during the year, i.e. 1st January – 31st December 2005, on the basis of an interview with the translator.

In my analysis, I did not look for any activities that were not associated with translation or interpreting.

3.3. Results of the general analysis: translation, interpreting and associated activities

In general, I was able to identify the following text types that the translator worked with (listed in alphabetical order):

(1) Circumstantial communications: invitations to trade fairs, Christmas greetings, etc.;
(2) Commercial correspondence;
(3) Confirmations of the receipts of orders;
(4) Drawings of the machinery and the final product (the ice creams produced by the machines);
(5) Invoices;
(6) Machine set-up instructions;
(7) Product offers;
(8) Promotion and information material (some included on the website and on CD): catalogues, letters of presentation in the catalogue, machinery presentation files;
(9) Sales contracts;
(10) User manuals.

The translator had to (1) write these texts in the foreign language (basically Spanish) based on the instructions of the commercial director or (2) translate them from Polish into Spanish (or occasionally from another language known to the translator depending on the availability of the document) or (3) update the existing Spanish version. The last of these operations (updating) was the most common. The relationship between the writing, translation and updating of commercial and technical texts in SMEs in the industrial sector is worthy of a separate in-depth study, which may be planned for in the future.

I also obtained information about the communicative situations in which the translator had undertaken interpreting:

(1) Presentation of the company during trips, trade fairs and factory visits by foreign clients;
(2) Negotiations;
(3) Language guidance to technicians for the setting up of machines in the clients' factories and in post-sales situations;
(4) Telephone conversations with clients.

The activities associated with translation and interpreting were:

(1) Updating a computer application with the record of contact with clients;
(2) Organisation of events: commercial missions abroad and the reception of foreign clients in Poland;
(3) Secretarial activities.

After making this general analysis, following the suggestion of the commercial director and according to my own professional intuition, I did not consider the three categories (translating commercial correspondence, interpreting during telephone conversations with clients and secretarial activities) to be exhaustive for the results in each group and I wanted to study them in more depth. I therefore designed an additional analysis of the parts of work in each job using a self-observation technique in which the translator observed himself.

4. Methodology and results of the additional analysis: monitoring a part of the sales process

I asked the translator to select some segments of his working day in which the following activities overlapped: translating commercial correspondence, interpreting telephone conversations and secretarial tasks. On considering the translator's proposals, we decided together upon a more detailed study of part of the sales process.

4.1. The sales process: contextualisation and stages

Part of the sales process for a machine which produced "Viennetta" and "Cortina" type ice cream cakes, ordered by a client in Madrid (Spain), was chosen. It was the first ice cream machine that this client had ordered from the company. The sale took place in January and February 2006.

The sales contract document, created in duplicate and which is bilingual in cases of foreign sales, is the legal document for this transaction and consists of three parts: the main body of the contract, drawings of the

type of ice cream to be made by the machine (Appendix 1) and a list of the parts not covered by the guarantee (Appendix 2).

The complete sales process was divided into two stages:

(1) Business trip to Madrid (end of January 2006): Face-to-face negotiations between the commercial director and the client, which took place at the client's head office in the ice cream factory in Madrid and in which the translator took part. At this stage, the translator carried out liaison interpreting in Spanish and Polish and took care of the organisation of the trip which he had previously planned. Moreover, during the time at the Madrid factory, the translator amended the Polish and Spanish versions of the sales contract and Appendix 2 (list of parts exempt from the post-sales guarantee), in accordance with the agreements reached during the negotiation phase. This business trip concluded with the signing of the Polish and Spanish versions of the contract and Appendix 2.

(2) Return to Poland (February 2006): There were consultations between the commercial director and the technical director about technical details and the relationship between the client's freezer capacity and the ice cream machine manufactured by the Polish company. The translator was directly involved in the process of approving the ice cream designs (described in the section below) so that they could be attached to the contract as Appendix 1. During this stage, the task of the translator was to achieve a single objective: the client's approval of the electronic designs for the ice creams that would be produced by the machine and the signing of each by the client. The production of the machine in Poland could not begin without these signatures and they were the last and only thing left to obtain.

During the first stage, in addition to being a translator, or more specifically an "amender" of the two parallel versions of a document, the translator acted as an interpreter and as an organiser of commercial missions.

During the second stage, defining the function of the translator was very difficult, which is why I undertook an in-depth analysis of this part of the process. The translator had to obtain the validation of the appendixes, but implicitly continued the process of negotiating the ice cream designs because they were not approved during the first stage of the sales process. The translator's activities during this stage, as recorded during the self-observation, bring together translation of commercial correspondence, interpreting of telephone conversations with clients and secretarial work.

4.2. Methodology of the additional analysis

The methodology of the additional data acquisition consisted in self-observation. The translator was asked to fill in a self-observation chart using an established methodological protocol (Table 1.), in which he noted down the different steps in the selected sales process. This provided a monitoring of his involvement in the process. This study used qualitative analysis.

Nº	Date and time	Sender and receiver	Type of contact	If e-mail, attachments	Language of communication	Content of communication
1.	[day of the week, dd/mm/yyyy, hh:mm]	[who is contacting whom]	[e-mail / text message / fax / telephone conversation]	[number, name and type of attachment]	[PL and/or ES]	[exact content of the written communication or a summary of the oral communication]

Table 1. Self-observation chart used in the additional analysis

4.3. Description of the corpus

The data collected covered 19 calendar days from Thursday, 9th February 2006 to Monday, 27th February 2006. There were a total of 33 points of contacts (PCs) between the translator and either the client or the commercial director in Spanish or Polish, from Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, and Saturday 9am to 12pm. These PCs consisted of 27 e-mails (of which nine had a few attachments), four telephone conversations and two faxes.

Only the PCs between the translator and this particular client and the commercial director (for this particular sales process) were taken into account. The translator's contact with other clients and other members of the company staff over the 19-day period, which formed part of other working processes carried out in parallel, were not considered.

4.4. Analysis of the communicative process: results

The corpus analysed represents a complex communicative process that takes place in a social context, consisting of the transmission of information between the commercial director and the client. This constant flow of information goes through an intermediary — the translator. These are the three people involved in the communicative process.

The original corpus with the 33 PCs is confidential and cannot be reproduced in this paper. Throughout the 33 PCs between the three agents analysed, only on two occasions did the translator actually do a translation, represented in intervention Nºs 14 and 26 in the form of e-mails to the commercial director. In both messages, the translator copied the original e-mail from the client in Spanish and attached the translation in Polish below, indicating the separation between the two messages with a line of slashes.

The remaining 31 PCs consisted mainly of a freer transmission of information.

The e-mail in PC Nº 1 (in Polish) is recognisable as the original text for writing the Spanish e-mail in PC Nº 2. However, the translator changed some words and expressions ("products" for "ice creams") and added information that was not directly present in the previous message ("which we will attach to the contract").

In PC Nº 5, in an e-mail addressed to the client, the translator transmitted the intention of the commercial director to speed up the process of the formal approval of the ice cream designs, expressed in PC Nº 3 ("It's urgent"). The same situation was repeated in PC Nºs 8 and 10.

In PC Nº 7, the translator wrote an e-mail to the commercial director in Polish containing the main elements of a telephone conversation he had had with the client (PC Nº 6). He also added his own interpretation of the client's attitude ("He probably hasn't done his calculations yet about the ice cream according to the capacity of his freezers.").

In the e-mail in Polish, registered as PC Nº 17, the translator interpreted and clarified the situation for the commercial director, because it appears that there were more contextual elements about the client that he needed to understand ("[the client] did it like that because in the fax (which he approved and signed) he just wanted to show how he wants the ice cream colour and flavour to be distributed").

This Polish e-mail, registered as PC Nº 21, can be considered a translation of the e-mail in PC Nº 19. However, the translator left out several pieces of information because they were already included in an attachment (comment by the technical department on drawings Nºs 415 and 416).

In two telephone conversations (PC Nºs 23 and 25), the client communicated the printing problems for the jpg files of the ice cream drawings to the translator. They attempted to reach a solution. In the e-mail (PC Nº 26), the translator told the commercial director about the problem and in PC Nº 27 we see that a solution was finally reached

because the company took the client's problem into account and adapted to it.

The PCs Nºs 4, 9, 13, 18, 20, 32 and 33 can be considered confirmations of the receipt of information (feedback) between the three agents of communication. In PC Nºs 29 and 31, the postal address of the factory is confirmed so the signed paper documents can be sent.

The PC Nº 22, which was a telephone conversation, covers the same content as the e-mail in PC Nº 21. At that moment, the telephone conversations overlap with the main channel of communication, written e-mails, as a result of a growing situation of urgency.

In PC Nº 30, the client communicates his mistake to the translator.

Following this analysis, it can be confirmed that the 31 remaining PCs, which are not explicit translations proper with recognisable original texts, basically bring together pieces of information dispersed throughout the communicative process, including the presuppositions acquired in PC prior to 9th February 2006 (in other words before the data was recorded). I am therefore inclined to think that it is better to describe this process as liaison interpreting rather than the translation of written texts. Liaison interpreting therefore provides a functional macrostructure. The analysis carried out enables most of the interventions by the three communication agents to be focused as a macrodialogue in two languages (Polish and Spanish), which is made possible by a translator as the main communicative node.

4.5. Priority given to achieving the objective: effectiveness in the machine sales process

In the communicative process established among the three agents, the translator has the most active participation, applying the following strategies:

(1) Choosing the mode of discourse, the communication channel and the type of translation. It was the translator who chose these elements from the large variety of communication channels available (land line telephone, mobile phone, e-mail, fax) and types of translation employed. In the face of such variety, the translator is aware that, in fact, the method of transmission is not as important as ensuring that it is communicated rapidly and efficiently. The modes of discourse, channels of communication and translation types are secondary to the premise of executing the work process in the best possible way in the context of urgency, which is typical of lean production companies.

(2) Using tacit knowledge about the clients and the subject that has been accumulated to date to reformulate the information (substitution of "products" with "ice creams" or "cakes", changing to a more formal style when the situation becomes tense), interpreting the situation (assuming that the client has yet not calculated the freezer capacity in relation to the volume of ice creams; assuming that the client has printed and faxed only the relevant designs in terms of the combination of colours) and emphasising the most important information (underlining the importance of signing the contract and Appendix 1, which are essential for beginning the process of manufacturing the machine; emphasising the written approval of the designs). Hence, the translator has accumulated a great deal of tacit knowledge, which allows him to be more persuasive or to intervene in the work process more effectively.

(3) Solving collateral problems (disruptions to the work process), especially helping the client to print and fax the image files correctly (something which he does not manage until the company decides to solve the problem and send the information in the .doc format). The translator as communication intermediary takes on disruption to the work process with the main aim of getting the designs approved as quickly as possible.

All actions carried out by the translator are subordinate to the priority of maintaining the operation of the work process and contributing to carrying it out. This priority originates from the company's production system itself, but in order to carry out the activities, the translator requires a certain degree of independence in his work.

Also, tacit knowledge about the client is new knowledge, acquired by the translator on this occasion, which forms part of the presuppositions in any future contact with the same client. Thanks to the problems that arise, the translator learns several new things about the client: (1) this client has two local competitors in the market for "Viennetta" and "Cortina" type ice creams and wants to follow (copy) those products; (2) the competitors work with Italian machines; (3) the client only takes important decisions with his brother; (4) he works on Saturday mornings; (5) he does not know how to calculate the capacity of his freezers in relation to the volume of ice creams; (6) he does not know how to handle .jpg files, even when offered help. None of these elements are recorded in the computer application for the history of client contact, which the translator updates on an ongoing basis.

5. Definition of job content under study: discussion

In this section I have grouped the definition and the discussion of the in-house translator job content in two parts: findings from the additional analysis and findings from the general analysis.

5.1. Findings from the additional analysis

Defining the job content for the in-house translator, as visible in the translation of commercial correspondence, interpreting telephone conversations and secretarial activities, has been difficult because in the second stage of the machine sales process he did neither translations nor interpreting *per se*. In any case, liaison interpreting could act as the macrostructure for his mediation task. In the translator's points of contact, there was not always a clear and complete ST (source text) from which to produce an adequate TT (target text) to be able to talk about translating activity. Sometimes there was no ST at all and sometimes it was not recognisable as such; sometimes it was dispersed and on other occasions it did not constitute a text with signs of coherence and cohesion, but elements of the translator's tacit knowledge.

The activities of the in-house translator comprised the following components:

(1) Linguistic mediation (with changes in language) together with commercial mediation (transmission of information between director and client, independently of the changes in language).

(2) Action through participation in the work process, with a certain degree of independence.

5.2. Findings from the general analysis

The general analysis demonstrated the highly heterogeneous nature of the job content of the in-house translator in an industrial SME. The organisational element that dominates and structures the heterogeneous content is the production process.

5.2.1. Heterogeneity of activities

The heterogeneity in the jobs of in-house translators was studied by Gouadec (2007) from various angles, such as professional profiles, organisation of work, workplace and working processes. Gouadec places special emphasis on the complexity of language service markets and the fuzzy edges of the work of translators, including in-house translators, and on the need for flexibility in referring to this hybrid nature. The same heterogeneity in the jobs of in-house translators was demonstrated by Lebtahi and Ibert (2004) in France and Choi and Lim (2000) in Korea.

I also studied the eminently hybrid character of the jobs of in-house translators in the translation companies in Barcelona and the

organisational context in which they work (Kuznik 2012). I also collected the main indicators of the heterogeneous nature of the job of in-house translators independent of the type of employer (see Kuznik 2011). The indicators I identified were the following: (1) a rise in hybrid internal positions in job advertisements; (2) quantitative and qualitative measurement of real dedication to translation proper activities; (3) a mixture of translation activity proper and management of translation processes; (4) the heterogeneous nature of work placements in translation services. I completed this analysis with a study of the hybrid nature of administrative staff in a translation agency in Poland (Kuznik and Verd 2010).

This analysis focuses on the work of an in-house translator in a medium-sized industrial company that is not specialised in translation services. The results show that the job is composed of the following roles (missions): writer + translator + reviewer + interpreter + organiser of commercial events + commercial secretary, with all activities being mixed and inseparable. The common denominator for all of them is the processing of multilingual information.

The name of the job under study, "in-house translator", given by the company itself, does not seem to match the true situation very well. The explanation of this is historical: the company was first looking for a translator in 2004, because it considered that translator training was the most appropriate for the position; other functions were gradually added. The best name for the real content of the job might be "multilingual personal assistant" or "expert in multilingual communication" – a name that emphasises the strategic value of the employee. The fundamental mission ascribed to the job is the management of multilingualism in business and commercial situations. In fact, following my analysis, the company changed the name of the job internally and, at the time of writing in 2014, the post is called "expert in international trade and exports" ascribed to specific geographical areas. On the other hand, instability in the denomination of jobs is not that surprising since management, coordination, administration and commercial assistance are the most difficult tasks to analyse and put a name to (Kuznik 2011).

For this study, I have used the job name used by the company, but there are also other criteria for defining the job of the in-house translator: the type of employment contract, how the employees describe themselves, how their job is described by their boss, how they are described informally by colleagues, what training they have received and their predominant activity within the company. All these criteria and the possible relationships between them may provide the subject of future studies.

5.2.2. Responsibility for ensuring continuity in the production process

The heterogeneity of the job means that the translator can learn more about the entire industrial production process and therefore gain a broader view of it: he can be involved, anticipate events, attend to and solve any disruptions that may occur.

This study demonstrates how, in his involvement, the translator uses his tacit and explicit knowledge (Risku *et al*. 2010). The text that the translator was working with and the computer application showing the record of contacts in the Polish industrial SME formed the basis for explicit knowledge, generated in the company and distributed among different workers. On the other hand, during the interpreting sessions and throughout the related activities, the translator accumulated tacit knowledge. By combining the two types of knowledge, the translator was able to be more flexible and convincing.

The task of the in-house translator at the SME analysed involves a strategic function, directly reporting to the commercial manager and forming part of the core business (Kuznik 2011, 2012). He has an overview of the entire process and is aware of what his translation and interpreting, as well as his other tasks, are needed for. The quality of his work (among other things, his translations) is calculated in terms of efficiency, i.e. the speed and appropriateness of his involvement in the operation of the production process. Therefore, the translator takes part in the main stake of the whole company: his translations and interpreting contribute to the success of a much larger sales project (Kuznik 2012: 333–334).

6. Conclusions

The research presented here subscribes to organisational process research approaches. It was carried out in a business context and is highly applied since it originated from a real need of the SME to prepare a selection process for the post of in-house translator. It demonstrates once again that multilingual communication is an important tool for the internationalisation strategy of an SME, even when it involves lesser used pairs of languages that do not include English.

The methodology used in this study consisted of the observation of part of the work process as it was carried out for a specific job. It therefore falls at the crossroads between the measurement of activities carried out by process and by task. On this occasion, the measurement was carried out using the occurrence of the translator's points of contact on a qualitative level, without any quantification. The method of observing real work

situations enabled the work of the in-house translator to be situated in the work context of an SME in Poland in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century and, in doing so, to detect the wealth of activities undertaken, their variety and complexity, moments of tension produced by the tight flow involved in lean production and the emergence of disruptions in the production process.

The results of this study underline the value of the in-house translator. He is presented as a qualified, competent, multi-tasking, independent, involved (committed) and active worker. He is an employee who, with a great deal of patience and expertise, participates in the production process and takes responsibility for the results. He accepts the great challenge of carrying out very different activities simultaneously, with the added pressure of a very tense work flow. He is also a worker who contributes to the growth of intellectual capital in the company that employs him: he puts all his coded and tacit knowledge into practice for the benefit of his employer and constantly learns to cope in new situations. Finally, he is a worker who commands respect; he is well-paid and valued, he has good working conditions and a full-time contract.

The activity of translating proper in the job analysed is not the only one carried out by the translator since, being involved in the company's general production process, this is complemented by other linguistic and commercial mediation activities.

This demonstrates the complexity and hybridism of in-house jobs in multilingual communication, especially in SMEs and in cases where the language combination does not include English. In cases such as this, where the combination is between Polish and Spanish, there is not such a great demand for written texts that they would fill the role of an in-house translator whose job was solely doing written translation. However, this is not the only reason for the hybrid nature of these posts. The second reason, and perhaps a stronger one, is that the involvement of in-house translators in the production processes is one of the SME management strategies, since the broader the worker's view of the overall work process, the more effective the subordination of all activities to the main work process is.

The hybrid nature of the job of the in-house translator in these organisational conditions therefore has economic and structural roots and cannot be typical or unique to the activity of translating. The boundaries of business in-house translators' work content remain fuzzy, but the involvement and the effectiveness of these multilingual communication knowledge-workers in the entire work process put them in a very central position.

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Biography

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[2] For the paradigms of work organisation (artistan production, scientific management and mass production, flexible specialisation, lean production, socio-technical focus and the reflective production system) see Köhler and Martín (2005) and Kuznik (2012: 72–90).