The World of Sports Through the Prism of Translation: Embodied Translation, Lived Experiences and Participation

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Welcome to the *Special Issue of the Journal of Specialised Translation* (Jostrans) on Translation and Sports. This introductory chapter provides an overview of the broader domains involved in sports and translation, pitching various angles on how to tackle the field. Then it presents the call for papers and the rationale behind the selection process first, and the selected chapters and their key themes.

1. The broad conceptual approaches of sports and translation

Sport is an inherently translational arena, a global cultural system shaped by mobility, exchange, and translation (Cronin 2014). Yet, as no comprehensive reference work currently exists on sports and translation, this Special Issue of *JoSTrans* seeks to fill that gap by mapping the various cross-language processes involved across different sports disciplines. The objective is to clarify the interdependent roles within this domain, ranging from participants and athletes to coaches, team support, media, and to position related mega-concepts like translation, interpreting, liaison, and mediation. Together, these elements highlight the complex nature of sports translation. The call for papers therefore sought to encourage diverse contributions that address the many dimensions of this site of translation.

Although Sherry Simon (2012; 2019) does not explicitly foreground sports as a central site of translation, her foundational frameworks provide a productive basis for exploring sports through a translational lens: the idea of cities as dynamic, multilingual spaces opens the door to considering how sporting events – not least in multicultural neighbourhoods, cities and across mediatised multilingual channels – can indeed become arenas for linguistic negotiation and cultural translation. Simon also expands her scope to include a wide range of urban locales (hotels, markets, museums, bridges, and streets) as sites of translation, a framework easily extended to stadiums, pitches, dressing areas, fan zones, and sports commentary as potential translation sites.

The execution of sports games and forms of play involves complex linguistic negotiation. This process includes a varying constellation of intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic communication and frequently also incorporates lingua franca and shared embodied experiences. In this context, all possible transfers of meaning are used to achieve optimal outcomes based on specific goals and challenges. This reflects the sports application of the ‘good enough’ approach and emphasises micro-communications across different linguistic, paraverbal (tone of voice, vocal qualities such as pitch and intensity) and nonverbal (body language, facial expressions and gestures) channels. These communication modes aim to facilitate progress and success in games, play, participation, or competition – all of which are driven by swiftly moving on to the next interaction. Coordination and organisation of individual performances and/or team play, instant action triggered by short messages, team strategies, sports discipline regulations, live commentary etc. all require precise yet flexible information as well as varied modalities.

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Key themes included the role of translation in sports media, live event interpreting, audiovisual content, localisation, as well as ethical considerations, gender and diversity representation, and interdisciplinary approaches. Sports translation, in its broadest sense, also involves technologically driven tools, social media content, sports historiography, and the translation of legal and regulatory texts such as anti-doping policies. Furthermore, contributions were invited to reflect on the roles of ad hoc and paraprofessional interpreters, and on the increasingly blurred boundaries between professionals, amateurs, and intermediaries – covering translation, interpreting, liaison, and mediation alike.

While the outline of approaches offered by the call provided a starting point, a broader range of perspectives was encouraged. The primary focus was on interlingual and intersemiotic processes, while allowing for intralingual approaches when directly connected to access. Topics such as scientific or medical translation, or translating policies into action, were considered outside scope unless they involved significant interlingual or intersemiotic exchanges relating to sports domains.

The boundaries of sports translation, as outlined in the call for this Special Issue, were intentionally broad. With the definition of sports as "physical contests pursued for the goals and challenges they entail" (Guttmann and Rowe 2025), the entry on sports in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* does exactly what an authoritative reference work should do: set the contours of the specific domain. Here, the entry captures the broad conceptual lines shared by all sports, sportive play and aligned games or competitions. Indeed, in its broadest sense, sports translation is a lively, active, and strategic process – an ongoing act of adopting, adapting and improving. Just as athletes adapt their translation strategies in real-time, sports translators continuously interpret and reshape messages to suit the specific circumstances of communication.

Yet, several crucial dimensions are missing: First, core cultural constructs and identity traits such as nation, region and language play a significant role in sports. Second and highlighting their connection to specific communities, cultures, and contexts (including esports!), all sports are rooted in locality. Third, all sports are grounded in immediacy, emphasising real-time engagement and interaction. Fourth, participants in sportive activities communicate their lived experiences through embodied translation and/or paraverbal cues, conveying meaning beyond words. Fifth, participating in sports can provide avenues into increased inclusion but can also serve to express or reinforce power hierarchies. Sixth, sports involve more than physical activity; cognitive skills, mental resilience, and psychological balance are integral, rendering contests as proper lived experiences. Lastly, there is a paraprofessional dimension, acknowledging roles that bridge formal and informal participation.

2. Cultural constructs, shared beliefs and identity

Sports disciplines, professional as well as recreational ones, are arenas in which affective translations of identity emerge: emotions circulate across bodies, communities, and nations. Mediating between joy and frustration of participation – as an active participant or a spectator – is a mechanism through which collective identities are felt, affirmed, and reconfigured. In this sense, sport operates as a medium of affective resonance, translating individual emotion into shared experience: sports events provide a platform for shared emotions and a sense of belonging linked to specific athletes, disciplines, clubs, or teams, which is why iconic sporting moments,

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whether they unify or create division, often symbolize national pride and express cultural identity.

When relating to levels of sports in which participants represent a country, sports obviously are deeply connected to identity, be it local, regional, national or transnational. This not only manifests in sporting competitions through fervent support for athletes and teams, creating a sense of unity and possibly even sublimated patriotism, it also involves political recognition, and cultural expression. It often only takes one or a few good athletes outperforming their field of competitors to provide a boost to this identity construction. Iconic moments in sports shape identity in diverse ways, not just through victories alone. England's 1966 World Cup win might still resonate, but so do the Netherlands' repeated World Cup finals in 1974, 1978, and 2010 highlight national pride. England's 1990 team and Belgium's recent "golden generation" in football provide sentiments of warm nostalgia too. Even a few outstanding athletes can spark collective identification. Despite never winning a Grand Tour in cycling, Raymond Poulidor remains known for his many podium places. Belgian tennis stars Kim Clijsters and Justine Henin, both of whom boosted recreational interest, demonstrate how athletes influence identity. Similar trends can be seen in Dutch volleyball during the mid-1990s. These examples show that aligning with teams and athletes elevates sports well beyond just winning an event or a competition. Notions of belonging and representation shape and reflect collective identities at various levels – local, regional, national, or transnational (Anderson 2006; Antonsich 2010; Bairner 2001; Jenkins 2014; Maguire 1999). These might be experienced by parts of a population who are living within national boundaries but do not feel affiliated with that national entity. Athletes from Northern Ireland may compete for Team GB or for Team Ireland – while no such differentiation exists for Welsh, Scottish or even English athletes who do not align with GB and its assorted British identity.[3] In a more distant Olympic past, such option did not exist at all. At the 1906 Olympics in Athens, Greece, the Irish athlete Peter O'Connor, who had just won gold in the triple jump, climbed up a flagpole holding an Irish flag in protest against being labelled British and therefore representing the then United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (Mulraney 2025). Notions of belonging and representation can also be felt by people affiliating with a sports discipline –or some of its participants– when they are geographically removed as was the case with the hype of Manchester United in Japan in the 1990s for instance, and its specific crush on David Beckham (Watts 2002).

Although the Olympics might prefer to refrain from politics – the Rule 50 Guidelines clearly demand that venues, the Olympic Village and podium remain "neutral and free from any form of political, religious or ethnic demonstrations" (IOC 2020) – participation itself can signify political legitimacy for a country. However, the symbolic power of the Olympics should perhaps not be exaggerated: Palestine – recognised by 147 of the 193 UN member states[4] – has participated in Summer Olympics since 1996 yet has experienced such horrendous fate that the Olympic legitimisation does not reciprocate. Yet, Russia was banned from taking part in the 2024 Summer Olympics over its invasion of Ukraine. The Olympics have also been sites of boycotts and protest. China

[3] In the period prior to the 2016 Rio Olympics, the most-Googled question was "why GB and not UK?", referring to the convoluted situation that Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales – a geographical construct) is not the same entity as the UK (the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland – a political construct as well as a country consisting of four constituent nations). See BBC Magazine 2016.

[4] Figures by both *Al Jazeera* (10 April 2025) and *The New York Times* (11 August 2025).

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refused to take part in the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne because the IOC had allowed Taiwan to take part too. Several countries did not take part in the same Olympics over the Russian invasion of Hungary, whereas Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon boycotted the Olympics over the Suez Crisis (which basically was France, the UK and Israel invading Egypt).[5] The Olympics are therefore seen as platforms where issues of language, cultural identity, politics, and even diplomacy intersect, while at the same time all that can in fact be transcended – as is evident in the existence of a Refugee Olympic Team, established in 2016 and taking part in the 2016, 2020 and 2024 Summer Olympics.

Linking participants as well as audiences and media such as the previously mentioned Olympics, Baines (2012; 2013; 2018) situates translation in sport as one that operates through the physical, linguistic, and affective exchanges. His analyses of football's multilingual spaces reveal how translation mediates identity, emotion, and power on and off the field and that translation is a lived, performative act central to how sport itself is experienced. These variations show that sports also reveal more complex internal boundaries and identities, expressed and negotiated through languages and meaning – be they textual and verbal, paraverbal, non-verbal or a mixture of those.

3. Locality

Sports span a broad spectrum: from grassroots informal games on local sand pitches to major international competitions at the highest level. The language of sport is inherently local (while participating), global, and all the possible spatial dimension in-between, therefore working in diverging ways. From reaching a broad translocal audience (beyond habitual locales, i.e. on-site as well as afar) to converging into digital communal spaces, sports do not necessarily need to be tied to specific venues or local communities. For example, football is deeply embedded in social fabrics of the respective community from which the venue sprung; it is as well as across borders, when broadcast to wider audiences. Except for track and closed-circuit competitions[6], cycling often functions as a translocal yet communal activity detached from any such single locality as the respective events tend to go from point A to point B.

All sports are grounded in specific localities. These localities can be shared physical spaces such as pitches, fields, courts, or arenas. These spaces are typically organised in three areas: the sports activity space, the changing rooms, and the spectator areas. In contrast, e-sports exist in hybrid virtual locales where participants generally do not share changing rooms or other areas. E-sports participants tend to be their own and sole immediate audience too, unless the competition is streamed and provided with commentary. Regardless of the format, the element of place remains central. In physical contests, the event's locality often acts as a focal point, especially in popular and mediatised sports, that expands into a translocal venue which involves on site spectators, coaches, team support, logistics, media coverage, and fans, fans who connect to the initial locality directly or remotely through various channels. . For e-sports, locality instead tends to be converging. The primary site of the contest relates to the wider, immediate, and often distant audience. In digital multiplayer online sports games (like Zwift or Rouvy for cycling), players from all over the world interact in a shared virtual environment. They compete in a virtual world, therefore converging into

[5] For a fine overview of protest and the Olympic games, see The Council on Foreign Relations (2024).
[6] Although barely popular outside a few countries, cyclocross events for instance typically happen on closed circuits that cover an area barely the size of several football pitches.

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a single communal space that is virtual, but the locality remains grounded in the individual participant's real-world physique.

Either way, in the domain of sports the local and supralocal (up to global) undergo complex interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic communication and create a sense of connectedness "characterised by hybridity, translation and identification" (Kytölä 2015). Because of the idea that "each culture has its own definition of sports" (Guttmann and Rowe 2025), cross-cultural or communicative differences are intrinsic aspects across all sports that shape how sports are understood, named, and practiced.

Sports are universally present across all cultures, but each culture interprets and defines what constitutes a sport based on their unique values, social structures, and their own historical practices (see Horne et al. 2005; Jarvie et al. 2013). Rooted in local languages and cultural contexts, cultures develop their own terms and traditions for sports and physical contests in different ways (Tomlinson 2005, 17, 91-98). When these sports are introduced translocally, i.e. beyond their habitual locales, their names and associated vocabulary are often borrowed, translated, or adapted, creating several interlingual connections (many English football terms in non-English languages come to mind). Since each culture's definition of sport may differ in terms of rituals (cricket as well as tennis spring to mind), social functions (including physical fitness and teamwork), or specific physical activities (like the Marathon des Sables), this influences the way the activity is linguistically expressed and understood in different languages beyond the locality where the contests happen but equally so within the confinements of that locality. Furthermore, sociology plays a crucial role in understanding how origin influences the formation of terms and concepts within a sport, but linguistic capital also significantly impacts this process – sometimes leading to the dominance of certain variants over others. This diversity in cultural approaches to sports, play, games, competition and participation creates a vast landscape for language contact in several ways. It also involves interlingual, intralingual, and intersemiotic processes, therefore emphasising the importance of situated, multimodal understanding in diverse settings.

4. Immediacy

Immediacy – in terms of physical interaction as well as linguistic needs – is a defining feature of high-pressure contexts such as healthcare, humanitarian aid and in the asylum system, where the demand for real-time, accurate, and culturally resonant information influences both the process and strategies of translation. Sports translation is equally a field of specialisation that requires adapting to live events (Uyanik 2014). Research on interpreting during high-pressure, live sports interactions – such as football press conferences (Sandrelli 2012a; Sandrelli 2012b; Sandrelli 2015) – suggests that translation in sports is fundamentally a dynamic, real-time activity that shapes how participants, athletes, coaches, and media communicate. This aligns with Itaya's work (2021) on Japanese professional baseball interpreters, which highlights the crucial role interpreters play in managing immediate, complex interactions that demand strategic interpreting skills, such as rapid decision-making, understanding sports-specific terminology, and cultural nuances.

Immediacy in sports translation is not merely linguistic; it is embodied (see below). The physicality of sport introduces dimensions to translation where gestures, gaze, tempo, and even silence become communicative acts. Translators and interpreters often operate in spaces charged with kinetic energy and emotional intensity, where meaning is negotiated through both words and movement. This effectively positions translation

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as an act of performance. The interpreter or translator thus becomes an active participant in the rhythm of sport, synchronising with athletes' bodies, crowd reactions, and if present media timing. In this way, immediacy bridges linguistic and corporeal responsiveness, making translation in sports a lived, situated practice rather than a detached linguistic operation.

Adaptation to immediacy does not only occur in live sports broadcasting, media interpreting and real-time subtitling, but also on the pitch, among team members and within the cognitive confinements of lone participants (such as chess). Under time constraints, this immediacy often leads to condensation, omission, or reformulation to maintain coherence and audience engagement and participant commitment in contexts of activity. Admittedly, immediacy is less physically manifest in written sports journalism, but it still compels translators to quickly localise headlines and match reports to meet publishing deadlines. In this pressurised context, transediting often occurs, allowing journalists to swiftly adapt content while preserving essential information for their audience.

The hybrid practice of combining translation and/or interpreting with editing captures the dual pressures of immediacy and mediation in sports communication. Translators, interpreters, mediators, and participants are not merely conveyors of meaning; they are also curators of immediacy. They reshape, condense, and reframe texts to maintain excitement, tension, and cultural relevance for local audiences in translation and interpreting while enhancing performativity for the participants. This practice often involves prioritising the affective tempo of the event over strict textual fidelity. In sports, transediting therefore parallels the athlete's adaptive responsiveness. Just as athletes make split-second adjustments during play, translators and editors working under immediacy conditions continuously recalibrate their linguistic strategies. They perform cognitive "micro-movements" of negotiation: deciding what to omit, where to emphasise, and how to preserve the communicative momentum. In sports, the transediting approach becomes both a textual and embodied response to urgency, echoing the physical immediacy inherent in sporting performance itself.

5. Lived experiences

Sport has long been considered an activity where the body serves as the primary biological and cultural entity (Besnier and Brownell 2012). Embodied translation emphasises how the body plays a crucial role in translating meaning across linguistic barriers within situated practices of lived (partial or fragmented) multilingualism. By recognising that cognition is rooted in bodily experience, this embodied translation challenges traditional views of translation as merely mental or linguistic. It encompasses movements, sensations, emotions, and interactions with the environment, including team members, referees, coaches, audiences, and the spatial dynamics of the activity.

Braun and Clarke's work (2006) provided a foundation for exploring how meaning, identity, and socially situated processes are negotiated in sports translation contexts and how translation practices shape athletes' and mediators' lived experiences. The idea of embodied translation also challenges the notion of language as a fixed system, emphasising a fluid negotiation between languages and varieties. This negotiation occurs through situated applications of different forms of translation and interpreting, including paraprofessional practices, such as code-switching, translanguaging, lingua franca use, paraverbal and non-verbal occurrences.

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If embodied translation refers to the process of translating physical sensations, movements, and sensory engagement into understanding or expression through the body, then lived experiences relate to individuals' personal perceptions and emotions during events. Mona Baker's foundational works provide the conceptual and methodological grounding to understand translation as an embodied, socially situated practice. Her development of corpus-based approaches (1993, 1996) illustrates patterns of linguistic behaviour that reveal translators' presence and agency, resonating with the idea of translation as a dynamic, embodied process. Building on this perspective, Hanna Risku's work on embodied and distributed cognition highlights translation as an activity shaped not only by the translator's bodily engagement but also by the ecosystem surrounding them—tools, environments, social actors, and material artefacts (Risku 2010, Risku 2014, Risku & Rogl 2020). Related conceptual propositions, such as Karen Barad's agential realism (2007) or Tim Ingold's notion of 'correspondence' (2011, 2013), also see translation as a relational practice emerging from interactions between humans, materials, and contexts rather than a purely mental or linguistic operation.

In the context of sports and broader forms of translation, including interpreting and ad hoc mediation, embodied translation and lived experiences are interconnected. Embodied translation in sports and interpreting then emphasises the physical and sensory aspects of conveying meaning. For example, athletes, coaches, or interpreters use gestures, body language, and tone to communicate, especially in immediate situations where verbal language may be limited or insufficient. This bodily engagement helps bridge language barriers and facilitates understanding. Lived experiences provide the personal context and background that influence how individuals and subcultures or specific segments of society approach and perform tasks, be they sportive or relating to translation and interpreting. Embodied translation can therefore be seen as a manifestation of lived experiences expressed through physical cues, particularly in spontaneous or dynamic settings like sports. Conversely, lived experiences inform how embodied translation is enacted. Together, both embodied translation and lived experiences highlight the importance of both physical embodiment and personal background in effective communication and translation within sports. Blackledge and Creese's work (2017, 2020) foregrounds the body as central to meaning making, showing how language and gesture intertwine in social interaction. Their 2017 study on translanguaging and the body conceptualises communication as a fluid, embodied process, an idea that resonates well with the multilingual, performative exchanges of sport. Pym's work provides conceptual tools to understand how translation in sports functions under pressure, adaptation, and embodied decision-making: in his 2008 discussion of Toury's laws, he highlights the translator's need to balance norms and risks. This dynamic is reflected not only in the performances of interpreters and translators but also in the communication situations that arise in sports.

Communication in sports contexts extends beyond language and verbal signs, being embedded in an ecology of gestures, rhythms, and bodily signals that facilitate meaning-making. This translation of embodied intent and emotion into visible or audible action constitutes paraverbal translation, underscoring the immediacy of sports performance and participation. The raised eyebrow of a referee, the non-verbal choreography among teammates, or the modulation of crowd noise all contribute to a semiotic negotiation, decoding tone, pace, gestures, and spatial orientation. Ultimately, this paraverbal translation drives the mediation between intentions and recognition.

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6. Participation versus hierarchy

Participation in sport and physical activity also embodies social interaction, meaning making, and belonging. When individuals engage in collective sport or physical activity, processes such as in-group identification enhance the group's shared efficacy through experiences of emotional synchrony and 'flow' (Zumeta et al. 2016). Although language was not explicitly the focus of their study, Zumeta et al. noted that coordinated expressive manifestations (such as singing, yelling and uttering particular words or sentences) help produce a "we feel the same, we are the same, we are one" dynamic (2016). Participation in sport and physical activity also has the potential to assist in the integration of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) migrants (Smith, Spaaij, and McDonald 2019). Indeed, access to participation and information about sports activities has opened new avenues for inclusivity.[7]

Research shows that access to participation and information about sport and physical-activity programmes opens new avenues for civic and social inclusion (Smith, Spaaij and McDonald 2019). Yet this potential depends on more than physical access, it hinges on participants' ability to navigate the linguistic and cultural codes embedded in sporting environments. Formal structures (coaching, refereeing, institutional communication...) often rely on dominant or official languages, while informal interactions (on the pitch, in the locker-room, among fans...) are characterised by ongoing with translational practices. These include code-switching, gestural communication, simplified registers and lingua francas, all of which enable participants to co-construct meaning and belonging despite linguistic asymmetries. In this way, participation becomes a translational act; inclusion is not only being present but also being able to participate in meaning-making, aligning with the concept of translational habitus proposed by Moira Inghilleri (2005), where individuals in multilingual/migrant contexts develop adaptive communicative repertoires to engage meaningfully. In this way, sports become not only a site of physical engagement but also of linguistic negotiation and social cohesion, including for CALD individuals.

7. Cognitive skills, mental resilience and psychological balance

Participation in sport is not just about physical exertion, it thrives on cognitive engagement, mental resilience, and psychological balance. These elements are crucial not only for athletic performance but also for how participants think, adapt, recover, and communicate. They play a strategic role in higher-order thinking, applicable not only in activities like chess and other mind games but also in the intricate relationship between language and thought that defines translation.

Sport disciplines place distinctive demands on cognitive functions, such as attention, concentration, reaction time, decision-making and information processing. For example, a recent study of youth athletes found that combat sports performers scored significantly higher on attention and concentration measures compared to other sport types, while racquet sport athletes exhibited the fastest reaction times and highest internal-balance coherence (Alagoz 2005). These findings highlight the necessity for the athlete's brain to function at an elevated level: filtering distractions, rapidly interpreting situational cues (from opponents, environment, team-mates), and adjusting strategy on the fly. Alongside cognitive capacity, athletes must cultivate

[7] Of immigrants, asylum seekers, stateless people, displaced people, and other related vulnerable groups.

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mental resilience. The ability to maintain or regain optimal performance under pressure, adversity or unpredictable conditions requires emotional regulation and self-awareness. Research shows that resilience in athletes strongly correlates with mindfulness and self-regulation. In one study, higher levels of mental resilience and mindfulness among athletes were linked to better coping, focus, and long-term sporting engagement (Stoyanova et al. 2025). Emotional intelligence plays a key role too. Even among semi-professional athletes, emotional intelligence predicted self-esteem, motivation and resilience, while anxiety negatively impacted them (Trigueros 2019). Studies of youth athletes even show that resilience is negatively associated with somatic anxiety and positively linked to acceptance and self-confidence (González-Hernández et al. 2020).

In multilingual or multicultural sport settings, psychological balance becomes even more pivotal (see also Schinke and Hanrahan 2010; Ryba, Schinke and Tenenbaum 2010). A participant joining an activity from a non-dominant linguistic background must not only process fast-moving tactical cues and physical stimuli, but simultaneously decode team instructions, adjust to likely unfamiliar registers and use translational habitus to align with the group's communication norms (Eccles and Tenenbaum 2004; McEwan and Beauchamp 2014). The cognitive load is therefore dual: mastering sporting routines and negotiating meaning. Participants' resilience supports the psychological 'translation' process by enabling them to switch between mental sets, cope with ambiguity, manage stress from language or culture misalignments, and remain effective team members in dynamic sporting contexts.

8. Paraprofessionals

The multilingual and improvised communication found in sport demands a perspective that goes beyond the formal translating and interpreting professional categories. Early work by Harris (1978; 1990) distinguished between natural or untrained translators and professional practitioners, suggesting that intuitive, embodied skills can effectively enable mediation in everyday contexts. In sport settings, athletes, coaches and staff often act as socially embedded paraprofessional translators or interpreters. A range of paraprofessional roles abound (liaison staff, coaches doubling as cultural brokers, event mediators, technical assistants…) who operate at the intersections of sport, language, culture and mediation. This layer often goes unnoticed yet is vital as these actors facilitate communication and logistical translation (rulebooks, training briefs, press-conferences, athlete support) while often not occupying the traditional "translator/interpreter" label.

According to research by Tobias et al. (2020), around 15% of current holders of certifications in translation or interpreting still align with their previous paraprofessional credentials, mainly for interpreting. The National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) defines a professional interpreter as someone who "represents the minimum level of competence … for work in most settings including banking, law, health, social and community services." Under this definition professionals are "capable of interpreting across a wide range of semi-specialised situations … using the consecutive mode to interpret speeches or presentations". By contrast, paraprofessional interpreters generally undertake interpretation of non-specialist dialogues (Wang 2018). On the translation side NAATI's credentials place paraprofessional translators at "a level of competence enabling the production of a translation of non-specialised information" (Qian 2017).

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In contexts relating to support for displaced people, refugees and asylum seekers, the role of paraprofessionals has been conceptualised somewhat differently. For example, Dubus (2009) in a study on Cambodian refugee women argued that paraprofessionals are professionals who may not have clinical training but are familiar with the language and culture of the communities being served. They therefore act as interpreters, outreach workers and often co-counsellors at the same time. The use of bilingual paraprofessionals in therapeutic or mental-health provision is important because they bring cultural as well as linguistic competence and so enable more appropriate treatment for vulnerable people. Similar work appears in broader interpreting/translation literature (Musser-Granski and Carrillo 1997). The paraprofessional label covers a wide spectrum (from community interpreters to linguistic mediators in semi-institutional settings and ad hoc liaisons at venues) and increasingly includes technology-mediated roles.

At another level, the expansion of sports has generated a growing paraprofessional sphere of translation and linguistic mediation: interpreters, fixers, agents, journalists, commentators and ad hoc liaisons operate between linguistic, cultural and institutional systems. These figures occupy an ambiguous space between formal professionalism and embodied participation. Their work foregrounds the socio-economic and ethical dimensions of sport translation: Who is authorised to speak for whom? Where are the boundaries of representation drawn? By highlighting this often-overlooked dimension, we see translation in sport as distributed practices that sustain the transnational life of sport itself.

Seen through the lens of translation and interpreting studies, paraprofessionals in sport do “translation” in a broad sense and their invisibility often masks their centrality to how sport is translated in real time, on site, and in the lived experience of participants. Moreover, research on sports commentating by Ghignoli and Torres Díaz (2015) shows that much of what looks like interpreting is in fact performed by professionals outside the core translation field (broadcasters, journalists), often labelled as paraprofessionals. Their interactional and performative work extends beyond word-for-word conversion, requiring specialised interactional expertise (note the differentiation from NAATI’s often non-specialised categories) to ensure clear and accurate communication within time constraints, yet leaving space for emotions and condensation of information.

Increasingly, the capabilities and pervasiveness of language technology tools provide opportunity not only to enhance the ability of paraprofessionals in sport translation and mediation (augmented paraprofessionalism) by extending their reach, but the availability also opens up possibilities for paraprofessional in sports to take up paraprofessional translation and interpreting modes. Technology functions as both amplifier and equaliser: it multiplies opportunities for mediation and strengthens existing paraprofessionals by giving them access to technology such as AI-assisted translation, speech recognition, and visual analytics. Digital training environments and virtual-reality simulations also equip paraprofessionals further to manage the fast, data-rich and emotionally charged spaces of modern sport. Yet, updating through of technology also shifts expectations. Speed, accuracy, and digital literacy – as well as expectations and anticipations of those – become part of the paraprofessional’s toolkit.

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9. Mapping the chapters

With their call for issues, *Jostrans* received 13 proposals on a broad variety of topics (Biel 2024). Our Call for Papers attracted 72 abstracts, mostly from Western Europe, the Middle East and Asia. After an initial selection based on formal criteria and the omission of incomplete submissions, 67 abstracts were reviewed by both editors. From these, 17 were longlisted and received feedback.

Following peer review, one chapter was declined, another withdrawn for health reasons, and several others dropped out due to workload. In the end, 13 chapters were fully peer-reviewed. Not only did we select peer reviewers we believed were most suitable for the respective papers, but we also aimed to include one peer reviewer per chapter from outside the wider translation studies networks, eyeing the interdisciplinary approaches of each piece. This proved more difficult and slower than anticipated, often resulting in silence even when introductions were included in the requests.

We would like to extend our gratitude to those peer reviewers who performed their duties diligently and clearly helped strengthen the chapters and guided editorial decisions. Although the numerous and ongoing editorial suggestions, edits, comments, and queries may have been overwhelming for some of the contributors, we saw this stage as the primary and perhaps only means of engaging in (delayed) dialogue about the chapters, their intentions, and contents. Among the selected contributions, there has been a great deal of conceptual work and pilot projects, but no truly large-scale explorations yet. Nevertheless, there is a clear scope and momentum to further expand these efforts.

The responses also reveal that many of the investigations are characterised by a strong ‘personal’ engagement, often rooted in a deep love or passion for a particular sport. However, this brings with it the potential danger of a ‘blurring effect’—where the intense emotional involvement and love for the sport might start to influence or even undermine the scientific objectivity and rigour. In other words, the risk is that personal biases or emotional attachments could cloud the analysis or interpretation of the research, which is why a careful and rigorous selection is crucial to preserve the integrity of the investigations.

Collectively, the selected contributions establish a comprehensive, interdisciplinary framework that views sports not merely as physical activity but as a social space for multimodal, embodied, and socially impactful translation and interpreting. A wide range of methodologies are included in these chapters – such as ethnography, corpus linguistics, and functional analysis – highlighting the importance of an interdisciplinary perspective. These approaches emphasise lived experiences, locality, and immediacy, showing how language, gesture and material cues mediate meaning. Several chapters examine how translation practices reproduce or challenge social power structures, therefore influencing emotional, social, identity and inclusivity negotiations.

In **Franz Pöchhacker**’s article sports interpreting is presented as a paradigm case exemplifying many core features of interpreting. It highlights that sports interpreting has received limited scholarly attention and is not only underrepresented in key translation and interpreting literature, but what there is is quite fragmented and not always peer reviewed. Using a systematic, bibliographic-based scoping review, the paper maps the current state of research and identifies diverse settings, methods, and levels of professionalism involved in sports interpreting.

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Vanessa Amaro and **Júlio Reis Jatoba**'s ethnographic study investigates how multilingual athletes in Macau's roller hockey and football teams translate strategy, affect and identity through physical, linguistic, and material boundaries. This research emphasises the fluid, improvisational nature of collective activity in sports competitions. Drawing on translanguaging, intersemiotic, and experiential translation, the research reveals that multilingual communication in sports is multimodal, embodied, context-dependent and possibly even hierarchical.

Iryna Adrusiak, Piotr Blumczynski, and **Anne O'Connor**'s ethnographic study examines how community-based, non-professional sports settings in Ireland create informal, ad hoc translation practices that establish a sense of belonging through participation and inclusion, as well as add to social cohesion among diverse and migrant populations. Focusing on volunteer-led, bodily, and technological modes of translation, the research highlights how sports serve as spaces where enabling meaningful interaction through translation also goes beyond words.

Joss Moorkens and **Lucía Pintado Gutiérrez**'s article examines the development and impact of audio-described commentary for blind and partially sighted spectators at an Irish football club. Through ethnographic research, including interviews with staff, volunteers, and users, the study highlights how the commentary that is mainly delivered by volunteers enhances accessibility and therefore wider enjoyment of football matches.

Joke Daems' study examines how using gender-inclusive language in translations of referee certification tests across multiple languages affects test-takers' performance, readability, and time. The findings show that, although inclusive language influences the textual content, it does not have an impact on the speed or success rate of completing the tests. The study therefore rightly emphasises that, in multilingual sports contexts, gender-inclusive language should be accepted as a normal practice.

Xinlei Jiang's study analyses linguistic differences between translated and non-translated sports news using quantitative corpus linguistics methods. Building on a corpus analysis, the research identifies key lexical and syntactic features that distinguish the two types. The findings reveal that translated sports news tends to have lower lexical density and diversity but longer words than non-translated texts. The findings also provide evidence that supports some translation universals, such as normalisation and simplification.

Rocío García Jiménez's study examines the interpretative acts performed by Spanish sports journalist Carlos de Andrés during post-stage interviews at the Tour de France. The focus lies on his role as a non-professional media interpreter. Using a qualitative and functional approach, the research analyses how de Andrés employs different interpreting modes and manages challenges such as emotional speech, technical terms, and time constraints.

Julián Zapata, Gys-Walt van Egdom, and Christophe Declercq challenge the traditional view of translation as a sedentary, solitary activity by exploring the potential benefits of integrating physical activity into translators' routines. Building on interdisciplinary research, they argue that movement and exercise can improve cognitive function, physical health, and overall well-being, making translation practices more sustainable in terms of professional endurance.

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10. Conclusion

The overview of themes and approaches covered by the contributions in this Special Issue shows that sports translation is a complex and multi-layered field. Key themes like multimodality, embodied actions, power, and mediation appear frequently across many chapters and highlight that sports translation is not just about changing words and transferring meaning; it involves gestures, visuals, space, and materials working together to communicate meaning, typically in fast-paced and high-pressure situations. The findings resonate with views of translation as an embodied and situated activity (Kinnunen and Koskinen 2010; Risku 2017), while also reaffirming the idea of sport as a translational arena made up of multiple, intersecting micro-universes.

The chapters also showcase a wide range of approaches, from ethnography and linguistics to technology and cognitive science, proving how diverse and interconnected sports translation practice really is. Topics such as multimodal communication, embodied coordination, and the evolving roles of mediators appear across contributions, while more focused discussions of translation strategies, training, and quality assessment reveal the practical diversity of contemporary sports translation.

A recurrent theme across several contributions is the prominence of paraprofessional and volunteer mediation, showing that not all actors in sports translation are formally trained professionals. Many operate in hybrid or improvised conditions, balancing linguistic and social competence with situational adaptability. This underscores the often collective and collaborative nature of communication in sport, an arena that fuses physical, cognitive, technological, and ethical skills in ways that challenge traditional notions of professionalism as well as restrictive ideas of translation (see also Cronin 2014). These dynamics also expose key challenges: managing specialised terminology (for instance, in anti-doping discourse), addressing cultural and gender diversity, and engaging with digital platforms and automated translation tools to reach global audiences.

Looking ahead, several areas emerge as particularly promising for future research. First, automation as well as artificial intelligence are reshaping the landscape of sports communication: from live translation in press conferences to AI-assisted captioning and wearable translation technologies for athletes, the interplay between human and machine mediation demands increased close scrutiny, not least for its ethical and affective implications. The 2024 Paris Olympics, for instance, offered a glimpse of this hybrid ecology, where automated systems coexisted uneasily with human interpreters and commentators (Lodie and Juarez 2023; Zatespina and Ludvigsen 2024). Further attention should be paid to the ethical dimension of sports translation: issues of impartiality, confidentiality, and emotional engagement remain central to how translators, interpreters, mediators and commentators negotiate accuracy and empathy. As sport continues to serve as a site of both passion and protest – which became evident again in recent demonstrations on the course of the Vuelta a España, preventing several stages from concluding along the anticipated organisation – the broader conceptualisations of translation in sports can become possible vehicles for articulating activism – be it dissent or solidarity. Third, as commentary, fan discourse, and social media also co-construct narratives of participation, just how ambiguously they reproduce inclusion and belonging or, conversely, inequality and exclusion, remains a huge domain. Finally, theoretical advances in embodied cognition and affect

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theory may offer new ways to conceptualise how movement and emotion co-produce meaning in sport, along an increasing use of technology. By embracing these directions, the study of translation and sports can continue to move beyond linguistic paradigms and established ideas of translation and interpreting.

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