



## **“The Task of the Translator”: Comparing the Views of the Client and the Translator**

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As a consequence of globalization and corporate restructuring processes, most translators are now freelancers and generally work for multiple clients on a project basis. The often remote and computer-mediated cooperation can at times result in misunderstandings or dissatisfaction, which stem from different expectations. This article examines the expectations clients and translators have of each other and studies how their differing views shape the cooperation and communication process and, thus, influence the translation process and the translation as a whole. In a case study, a translator and a client were interviewed regarding a specific translation assignment. Six differences between the translator’s and the client’s preconceptions and expectations were identified.

*Keywords: expectations, client–translator relationship, translation process, freelance translation, translation network, translation project management*

### **Introduction**

The translation market has fundamentally changed over the last decades. Globalization, corporate restructuring processes, and cost-cutting measures have led to translations increasingly being outsourced, especially since the late 1980s (Dunne & Dunne, 2011). As a result, in-house translators are gradually becoming a rare commodity. Most translators, proofreaders, and copy editors are now freelancers and work for different clients on a project basis. The often remote and computer-mediated cooperation between such clients and translators can result in misunderstandings, ambiguities, or dissatisfaction, which stem from the different expectations each party has of the other (Abdallah, 2010; Abdallah &

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Koskinen, 2007; Durban, 2010; Risku, 2004; Schrijver & van Vaerenbergh, 2008; Schwarz, 2013; Straub, 2012).

While the audience expectations and perceptions of simultaneous interpreting during media events on television—such as entertainment shows with international guests or political or religious broadcasts (Kurz, 2002; Mack, 2001; Russo, 1995; Viaggio, 2001)—or audiovisual translations (Gambier, 2009; Künzli & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2011) are already receiving some attention in the field of translation studies, little interest has been shown in client expectations of the work or tasks of the translator.<sup>2</sup> Thus, we seek in this article to study the expectations clients and translators have of each other and closely examine the resulting roles and tasks in a translation process. We do so by empirically examining a case of actual cooperation between a direct client and a freelance translator—one particular translation project in which there is no agency involved and in which the author of a text directly commissions a translator to do the job. Our main focus here is on the differences between the client's and the translator's views on the translation job, and we seek to answer the following questions: What steps do they each take during the translation process as a result of their expectations and preconceptions of the mutual tasks? Which activities and phenomena are regarded to be a matter of course? Are there any unfulfilled expectations? To what extent do the differences and commonalities between their views on the translation job shape the cooperation and communication process? Ultimately, our aim is to explain how the views of the different actors shape the cooperation and communication process and, thus, influence both the translation process and the translation as a whole. For this purpose, a freelance translator and one of her clients were interviewed at length about a translation assignment they had worked on together.

Although customer orientation on the part of translators in translation jobs and processes has been studied at length in articles on translation didactics and theory (Holz-Mänttari, 1984, 1996; Nord, 1998; Pöchhacker, 2003; Vermeer, 1997), relatively little research has been conducted into such jobs and processes from a client perspective. Accordingly, we begin this article by examining the relevance of the relationship, interaction, and communication between translation clients and translators based on the view of translation as a *network activity*. The importance of managing these relationships becomes particularly evident in studies of translation *project management*, an aspect discussed in the next section. We then present the findings of two previous studies into the *expectations of clients* in the technical communication sector before presenting the research design, results, and conclusions of the present empirical study.

### **Translation Networks: Trust, Agency, Communication**

Translation-relevant networks potentially include a range of actors: In addition to the translator and the client, subject matter experts, proofreaders, validators in the target country, and translation agency project managers can all be involved in a translation project. This can also apply to direct client–translator relationships: Even small-scale translation projects can involve a network of actors and tools—as was indeed the situation in the empirical case study described in this article (see Risku, 2014; Risku,

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<sup>2</sup> The title of this article refers to Walter Benjamin's (1923/1989) famous essay "The Task of the Translator."

Rogl, & Pein-Weber, in press). However, for the purposes of this article, we have chosen to focus solely on the relationship between the client and the translator in this outsourced translation project.

In translation processes, translators act in accordance with their discipline-specific paradigm (Holz-Mänttari, 1996), and clients base their actions on prior experiences and perceptions (Sobotka, 2000). Although these traits essentially characterize their working relationship, they are also subject, to a certain extent, to a mutual process of adjustment.

Abdallah and Koskinen describe translation networks as “production networks” (2007, p. 674)—that is, “a set of inter-firm relationships that bind a group of firms into a larger economic unit” (Sturgeon, 2001, p. 10; see also Risku, Rossmannith, Reichelt, & Zenk, 2013) and emphasize the relevance of mutual trust in such networks. However, Abdallah and Koskinen also point out that building a relationship of trust and establishing mutual loyalty requires interaction between the parties. As a result, the probability of the emergence of a trusting relationship between a client and a translator is reduced in large production networks, when no direct contact between the two is possible, and other actors (e.g., project managers in translation agencies) serve as intermediaries. Outsourcing and the resultant expanded networks increase mutual dependency (Combe, 2011), but the multiple links involved can lead to delegation problems—information asymmetries and target conflicts, for example—and, in turn, also to “moral hazard and asymmetry of commitment” (Abdallah, 2010, p. 13).

Abdallah (2010) studies the internal view of translators in production networks and approaches the position of and options open to translators from an agency theory perspective (Eisenhardt, 1989; Kivistö, 2007). Abdallah demonstrates that giving “tit for tat” or even opting to “exit” (p. 33) translation—that is, leave the translation business entirely and pursue a radical change in career—can be consequences of the problematic, powerless positions in which translators find themselves in large production networks. In contrast, Abdallah and Koskinen assume that traditional freelance work with direct client contact “can enhance mutual loyalty and trust,” thereby “resulting in a rapid and free flow of information” (2007, p. 680).

Sobotka (2000) questions whether a strong customer bias (Viaggio, 1997) and analysis-driven approach to a translation job (Nord, 1991) suffice on the translator’s part to establish smooth cooperation and prevent misunderstandings. In Sobotka’s opinion, clients and translators tend to communicate and cooperate too little with each other in such scenarios. She maintains that a translation job only takes on clear contours through such communication. In other words, the better a translation product specification (cf. Holz-Mänttari, 1984) is defined in terms of content (e.g., function of the translated text, terminology, material already available), organizational constraints (e.g., deadline, cost), and process requirements<sup>3</sup> (e.g., proofreading, creation of terminology databases), the better it can be executed in line with customer demands (and also later amended if required). Sobotka uses examples to illustrate that no

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<sup>3</sup> In this article, the word *expectation* is used in its general sense of a feeling of what will or should happen. The term *requirement*, however, is a term that stems from product management and refers to a “need or expectation that is stated, generally implied or obligatory” (International Organization for Standardization, 2005).

natural agreement between clients and translators can be assumed with regard to the contracted service. These examples show, for instance, that although some clients may consider the source text to be sufficient specification and view additional questions from translators as unprofessional, others understand that a target text needs to be adapted to a particular situation and audience and that additional information will be necessary. Nonetheless, and regardless of the client's basic attitude toward translation, several aspects must be decided for all translation orders: who can provide the appropriate service, which factors determine this choice, and who assumes which responsibilities in the order process. A common understanding of or standard for what constitutes an appropriate translation service or product seems to be lacking in practice, even though, for example, European and national process standards have already been established (see Abdallah & Koskinen, who stress the importance of "setting standards that guide action towards sustainable practices" [2007, p. 683]). In such a situation, the conditions for a translation project are largely set by the individuals involved, and Sobotka's (2000) concern for the need to communicate, define, and capture them explicitly appears all the more topical.

It is also not uncommon, however, for clients to be confounded by their own role. Indeed, in a workplace study carried out by Risku (2009; Risku & Pircher, 2006), one project manager in a translation agency pointed out that clients themselves also must contend with increasingly complex orders and that they have less time available to do so—a situation that can lead to deficient and fragmented source texts. Indeed, when discussing the expectations and needs of companies that find themselves increasingly confronted with new technologies, automation, innovation, and the continual adaptation, (re)organization, and standardization of their business processes, Fleury (2009) notes that there is a growing demand for translation professionals who can act as all-round service providers and facilitators. Given this demand, Fleury contends that—in addition to competent translations—successful translation service providers now have to extend their portfolios to include proactive requirements management, professional communication techniques, a well-conceived service offering, far-sighted technology-based support, and process automation in order to remain competitive and stay in the market. Dunne and Dunne also point to the expansion in the range of services offered by language industry companies and name "editing, terminology management, localization, internationalization, proofreading, testing, cross-cultural design, cultural assessment and project management, among other services" (2011, p. 2) as examples. It is thus clear that the expectations of the services and products offered and provided by translators and translation service providers have changed greatly in recent decades.

### **Managing Relationships in Translation Projects**

According to Combe (2011), relationship management is particularly important for outsourced translation and localization projects, because a translation project is essentially dependent on activities that precede the actual translation. These activities can range from the specification of target market demands to the definition of translation milestones in the product release schedule (Combe, 2011). Because these activities are prerequisites for a functioning project, but are typically not carried out by the translators, they are dependent on the persons who handle these tasks. Translators and translation project managers, therefore, must manage these relationships in order to be able to fulfill their own tasks appropriately. Combe refers in this context to a "degree of collaboration (or mutual accountability)" (2011,

p. 322), Sikes to a "healthy relationship and open communication" (2011, p. 247), while Abdallah and Koskinen (2007) emphasize the importance of "trust" as a factor of influence.

The notion that relationship management and trust building form part of translation project management is confirmed by Risku (2009). In a participative observation study in a translation agency, she observed that the agency's project managers always add personal comments and notes in any telephone conversations and e-mails to clients and translators—that is, to their customers and suppliers. They do so with the specific strategic goal of strengthening the personal relationship and, thus, building loyalty and trust. The fact that the agency's regular translators frequently begin working on a translation before they receive the order confirmation confirms that such a relationship of trust has been established. The case study by Risku (2009) illustrates that all clients have specific expectations with regard to the type of service they require, the responsibilities, the time frame, and the form of the target text. As one member of the agency's team notes: "Every client has different expectations. Some focus on the finer points of grammar, others just want a functional text" (Risku, 2009, p. 222). The agency staff see it as part of their role to educate their clients and always endeavor to be diplomatic (Risku, 2009; Combe speaks in this context of "raising stakeholder awareness" [2011, p. 323]). Their clients are also frequently large multinationals where the internal structures are often unclear. With its external view, the agency is, at times, more familiar with the departments involved than the company's own staff. Indeed, some of the people they deal with in these companies may even have a stronger relationship with their regular contacts at the agency than they do with people in other departments in their own company. As visible indications of its relationships to its regular clients, agency staff use desk diaries and other gifts given to them by clients (Risku, 2009).

According to Risku (2009), these personal exchanges with their narrative elements are taken up repeatedly and feature in all contacts with clients and translators and via all forms of media. They establish continuity across time and space, particularly in situations where projects change rapidly. By creating a continuous story with each communication partner, they help the actors to pick up where they left off, even if a long period of time has passed. The image of the underlying processes shifts: It is no longer the personal relationship that serves to permit an uninterrupted flow of information (Abdallah & Koskinen, 2007); instead, the uninterrupted information flow keeps the relationship going. Thus, the problem in a faltering information flow is not primarily the missing information but lies on another level altogether—on the level of the social relationship, of being able to trust that one will not be forgotten or overlooked (Risku, 2009).

Translation agencies specialize in project management and make sure that projects are "completed on time, within budget and according to the client's specification" (Dunne & Dunne, 2011, p. 5). As Risku and Pircher (2006) note, this demands particularly strong communication skills: Managing translation projects is above all about managing people, and not just about managing texts and deadlines. This is confirmed by Dunne and Dunne, who note that "project managers do not manage projects but rather people who perform project work" (2011, p. 10). According to Dunne and Dunne, translation practice could learn a lot from the software engineering sector, where different project management approaches are already par for the course. They consider "the philosophy of continual improvement" by "providing feedback loops and establishing connections between team members," which "enables each

project participant to receive continuous, useful feedback about his or her performance and to improve over the course of the project" (p. 7) to be a cornerstone of project management per se. This approach, which is inherent in project management, could be considered an expectation of the function of a translation agency, but also of the cooperation between clients and translators. Dunne and Dunne do, however, concede that it is not easy to meet these expectations "given the uniqueness and uncertainty inherent in any project undertaking" (p. 8). They also point out that there is no single correct way to do so, and that a project manager "must use his or her considered judgment and expertise to balance the competing constraints of scope, cost, time, quality and resources" (ibid.).

According to Sikes (2011), if the management of translation projects in companies and organizations is not seen as a strategically important task, it is often only held together by the individual efforts of one person who "serves as 'glue'" (p. 236). In outsourced translation projects without a translation agency as intermediary (as in the case study described in this article), it is uncertain in the beginning who will actually assume responsibility for the tasks that Sikes considers to be part of the role of the project manager in a translation agency. Sikes maintains that such project managers are responsible for ensuring that their translators receive materials and instructions in a form they can work with quickly and easily, for answering questions, for consolidating and maintaining terminology, for checking the translations, for supporting and campaigning for their translators, and for ensuring that they get paid quickly. In contrast, Sikes does not appear to expect much of freelance translators in this respect, noting that "freelance translators are primarily linguists for whom proper business practices play a very secondary role," unlike their translation endeavors, in which they pay "excruciating attention to detail" (p. 248).

### **Client Expectations in the Technical Sector**

As mentioned earlier, translation studies have shown little interest in client expectations of the tasks of the translator (see Havumetsä, 2012, for a rare exception). In the field of technical communication, however, technical writers (as clients) have been surveyed regarding their expectations of translators as service providers (see Görs, 2012; Straub, 2012). Görs (2012), for example, conducted an informal survey of technical writers (who were working for technical communication service providers, as freelancers, or in industry) and asked them about their expectations of translators. Despite their different working situations (industry, service providers, freelancers), the responses provided by the technical writers scarcely differed. According to Görs, technical writers who contract work to translators evidently do also welcome questions from these translators. The following statement by one survey participant confirms in particular the importance of a close cooperation between the technical writer and the translator:

Every individual case of doubt must be clarified, regardless of its source—be it an unclear source text or a lack of knowledge of the subject on the part of the translator. I generally view my translators as my best proofreaders. (Görs, 2012, para. 4)

The results of Görs' study indicate that clients in the technical sector expect translators to have proven knowledge of the subject matter and prefer translators to be native speakers of the target

language. However, they adopt different approaches to the validation of translations: Around 40% check the translations themselves,<sup>4</sup> another 40% forward the translation to their branch office in the target country or to a native speaker in their company, and 4% make use of an external proofreading service. Görs concludes that a "discussion of expectations" could result in "new cooperation options"—for example, the translator producing the translation on site, an option that would facilitate direct communication. Likewise, the translator could play a new role in the technical documentation drafting process—for example, if he or she were involved in the testing of such materials.

According to Straub, who also surveyed the expectations of translators' clients in the technical communication field, clients strongly demand and expect translations to be accurate and free of errors: "Companies cannot afford the risk of legal consequences as a result of poor translations. Accordingly, the quality of translations and source texts is a serious economic factor" (2012, p. 4). They also expect translations to be produced and delivered quickly. Straub's analysis of technical communication client expectations using the KANO model<sup>5</sup> shows that orthographic accuracy, completeness, and grammatical correctness are "expected requirements" (p. 13). In addition, "normal requirements" (ibid.) include the checking of the translation by the translator, formatting, the conversion of any units used in the text, adherence to style guides, correct word structures, a source versus target text content check, the use of native language expressions, subject matter expertise on the part of the translator, and appropriate technical language and terminology. "Delightful requirements" (ibid.) (i.e., characteristics of the product that will delight the client) include a review of the translation by a subject matter expert and the proofreading of the final text by a native speaker.

On the whole, it can be concluded that the sociologically based studies by Abdallah and Koskinen, the ethnographic study by Risku, as well as the examples provided by Sobotka and the surveys conducted by Görs and Straub all point to the issues of cooperation and mutual expectations in translation networks as core factors of influence in the translation process.

### **Research Design and Implementation**

To compare the views and expectations of a translator and a client regarding an actual translation process, a case study was carried out. Given that the client–translator relationship is seldom researched in translation studies and cannot be easily distinguished from its specific real-life context, we adopted a case study methodology for the present explorative investigation. Data were collected through both participant observation and qualitative semistructured interviews, but we draw in the present analyses only on the interview data, because these proved to be relevant and sufficient for our research questions.

The interviews were conducted with a British freelance translator of German to English and one of her German-speaking clients, both resident in Austria, and both acting as direct individual actors without

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<sup>4</sup> Presumably, this depends on the language pairs in question. However, the survey does not contain any information on the specific languages concerned.

<sup>5</sup> The KANO model was developed by Noriaki Kano and allows categorizing client expectations and determining their impact on client satisfaction.

the involvement of an agency.<sup>6</sup> A qualitative analysis was then conducted using the method proposed by Gläser and Laudel (2010), which focuses on the data-oriented development of themes, categories, and patterns. Relevant topics were identified in the material. These were then contextualized and the relationships between them analyzed. The first coding and analysis was carried out by two researchers, each working independently. To provide intercoder reliability, a consensual categorization was achieved through common coordination sessions in a second analysis step.

The interviews took place after the completion of the translation project and recapitulated the process in retrospective. The interviewees were reporting afterward on their preconceptions and expectations at that time. The fact that thoughts and experiences are only accessible and able to be verbalized to a limited extent, and increasingly so in retrospection, implies that their reports will inevitably be only partial and selective (see also Englund Dimitrova & Tiselius, 2014).

### **The Case**

The client, who works for a nongovernmental organization, needed a translation of a 120-page German text dealing with safety issues. The text had been written by the client himself in the context of a research and development project in his organization. The translation was required for an international audience. To find a suitable translator for the job, four translation service providers were asked to submit test translations of the same text. The translator was selected for the job because (a) the client and his project lead (a colleague) liked her translation best (it was “consistent and coherent”—“*stimmig*”), (b) they felt that she was the one who expressed what they wanted to say most accurately, and (c) she is a native speaker of British English (the use of British English was a requirement in this project).

### **Results**

We were able to identify six clear differences between the translator’s and the client’s preconceptions and expectations regarding the translation process. These concerned:

1. Their assessment of the level of specialization and use of specialist terminology in the source text.
2. Their expectations regarding the responsibilities for terminology research.
3. Their assessment of the type of file to be translated.
4. Their assumptions regarding time frame, working hours, and deadlines.
5. Their expectations regarding responsibility for layout.
6. Their expectations regarding responsibility for quality management.

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<sup>6</sup> Both interviews (1 hour and 20 minutes and 1 hour and 8 minutes, respectively) were transcribed using an adapted version of the GAT conventions (conversation analysis transcription notation; see Selting et al., 2011).

***Difference 1: Assessment of the Level of  
Specialization and Use of Specialist Terminology in the Source Text***

The client describes the source text as a complex text that contains specific technical vocabulary:

Complex insofar as the German sentences were long and complex and in that it also contained quite a lot of very specialized [. . .] safety-specific terminology.

The translator, however, describes the source text as follows:

It was not very technical, I would say. It was a report on a specific topic. I didn't think it was so technical that I couldn't do it, that I wouldn't be able to do it. I read it and that was the main thing. Normally I don't do very technical translations, because I just . . . that's not my field. This one was . . . it was a lot of general and social issues and it was, well . . . it was a nice mixture.

This discrepancy regarding the assessment of the level of the use of specialized terminology and the complexity of the text raised different expectations regarding responsibilities for terminology research and target text quality (Differences 2 and 6 below).

***Difference 2: Expectations Regarding Responsibilities for Terminology Research***

When asked explicitly about what he thought the translator expected from him as a client, the client mentions delivering the specialized terminology in the target language and working closely with the translator:

My expectations were that we would deliver the subject specific terminology as far as possible and that we would communicate closely if there were any open issues or need for further clarification.

Due to his perception that this is a very specialized and complex text, the client reports having completed the following tasks:

- He provided the translator with parallel texts and a commented version of the source text with preferred target language terminology.
- He made sure he was always available for the translator if she had any questions regarding specific vocabulary in his area of expertise.
- He followed the translation process step-by-step. The translator delivered the translation in parts, which he proofread and commented on.

Given his disappointing prior experiences with other translation projects (in which the translations did not meet his quality requirements), the client tries to make sure that everything works well this time:

This translation process was different from all the previous ones in that I worked through the final version of the PDF again from start to finish and added every technical term I was familiar with as a comment in the PDF, which presumably was a great help to the translator or accelerated the translation process.

At the same time, he very much appreciates and seems to be positively surprised by the way the translator works to ensure the correctness of her solutions:

She sent me questions in the form of comments, in the form of WinWord "Track Changes" comments, about whether something was correct, whether she had understood it correctly, whether the term was commonly used in that way in English. These comments were quite numerous, and they were always justified and allowed us to very quickly raise the quality to a very high level.

The translator praises the support she received from the client:

They also said that they would supply me with some specific terminology that they wanted me to use. Some that might be odd. Words and terminology that I might not know. And some terminology they had to use because it was defined that way by the EU project. So they said they would send me that as well. I had quite a lot of regular contact with the project coordinator, because I did need his help with some terminology. He worked through the complete final document and sent me a new version with comments. . . . But he was still working on that while I was already working on the text. So there was quite a lot of an interaction anyway.

She states that this is not something she usually gets from her customers:

The help . . . that was very helpful, and not something I requested. So it was a really nice touch to get that. . . . So by the time I got to those pages, I already had his comments. That was a very unusual process for me. . . . [There were comments] in the source text. Terminology in particular. Very specific terminology that they wanted me to use. Or references to laws or explanations of what they were trying to say. And it was very helpful. It was nice. I have never had that before. None of my other customers ever do that.

The translator also reflects on the reasons for the client's engagement:

From that I could deduce that he had some problems before. Some terminology issues before. So he made sure that the right terminology was used this time.

The translator is positively surprised by this working mode and even intends to suggest to some of her other customers that they might consider working that way in future.

***Difference 3: Assessment of the Type of File to be Translated***

According to the client, the fact that the source text was sent as a PDF file was another aggravating factor for the translator. Noting that he had previously had to translate texts in his work, the client identifies with the translator and points out that his own experience has given him some insight into what can make the translation process more difficult and complicated for the translator:

The translator had to initially start working on the basis of the PDF, which is understandably an added complication.

Since he perceives having to work with a PDF file to be an aggravating factor, the client asked the research and development project sponsor to provide a WinWord file containing the final version of the source text. In his view, this greatly facilitated the work of the translator.

The translator, on the other hand, did not request a WinWord file or say that working with a PDF file was more difficult than working with a WinWord version. Instead, she assumed that the client had sent her the WinWord file—laid out as a table with the source text in one column and an empty column for the target text—so that it would be easier for the graphic designer to identify the corresponding paragraphs in German and English and, thus, facilitate production of the final publication layout.

***Difference 4: Assumptions Regarding Time Frame, Working Hours, and Deadlines***

The client estimates the schedule for the translation to have been quite tight:

It had to be done quickly, but not very quickly.

Which, of course, was pressure enough for the translator. 120 pages are 120 pages.

He spent fewer hours on translation management than he had expected he would:

The translation process probably cost me less time than calculated in this instance. This was the first time that it was in proportion for me . . . as far as time is concerned. In previous translation processes, it was usually the case that it took me more time than I had calculated.

The translator, in contrast, does not feel that the schedule was tight. Instead, she considers it to have been surprisingly comfortable and had expected the time pressure to be greater:

It worked very well. It was a long document. It always gave me a bit of a breathing space if I had some questions as that meant I could go on and catch up with what had come in before.

It was a nice project and it wasn't tight, the deadline was comfortable, and there was no need to work at weekends on it. It wasn't a rush job, it was all very nicely timed.

She was particularly delighted about the fact that the client explicitly told her there would be no need to work on weekends:

This was nice. I was not required, in fact, I was specifically instructed not to work at weekends. I think one of his comments was: "Please don't; we can do that next week." Which was nice.

Other customers tend not to be quite so accommodating, so that was nice. It was odd for me to have a huge project, a project going on for a number of weeks, where I didn't have—and wasn't expected—to work on it at weekends.

#### ***Difference 5: Expectations Regarding Responsibility for the Layout***

The client takes it for granted that he assumed sole responsibility for the layout and production process after receiving the translated text in WinWord from the translator.

So the translation went to the graphic designer, and that—as usual—required a bit of effort on my part, another two or three rounds of correcting errors, omissions, or shortcomings caused by the graphic designer. In this stage, you always get things like bits of the text being left in German because the corresponding English text was not copied over, etcetera. So it took, as I said, about at least a month, perhaps even six weeks, of the text going back and forward to eliminate all those mistakes.

He regards the translator's involvement to have ceased before this point in the project. He did not think, for example, of showing her the layout proofs or the final product. Likewise, the responsibility for proofreading (prior to or after layout) was not specified in the written contract. This is not what the translator had expected:

Normally I proofread them in layout as well. I do so for most of my regular customers, even to the extent of going to the graphic design company and sitting beside them watching them lay out very complicated texts.

Indeed, at the time of the interviews, the translator had not yet seen the final product, even though it was already available in print and online format.

#### ***Difference 6: Expectations Regarding Responsibility for Quality Management***

The client sees quality management for the text as his responsibility and decided to dedicate the peace and quiet of a weekend at home—away from the distractions of the phone and his colleagues in the

office—to go through the whole translation at the end of the project. He explicitly notes that he would have felt personally responsible for any errors in the target text.

I would definitely see that to be my responsibility, or at least primarily my responsibility, because I—or we—worked on the text together and I did the quality assurance on the whole text, that is, also on the whole English text, by reading it and checking it in its entirety. That means that if I missed anything, the failing was naturally on my part.

What the client had not known—and had not expected—was that the translator had also felt responsible for the quality of the end product, as she points out:

I wanted to deliver a good job as well and be asked to work for them again in future. Because it was interesting.

She had had her translation proofread by another translator with whom she routinely cooperates—for example, in proofreading each other's translations. This proofreading loop was neither expected by the client nor known to him after the project was completed.

#### ***Another Unfulfilled Expectation: The Unusually High Quality of the Source Text***

The translator notes that she often translates source texts that are essentially of a relatively low quality. Indeed, she routinely informs her clients on mistakes in the source texts, a service which is greatly appreciated by her clients. In this case, however, she was surprised by the high quality of the text to be translated:

The German was very well written as well. It was easy to take the lead from that. The source text, the source material, was very good, which was refreshing.

I don't remember finding any mistakes in it. Which is very unusual. Normally you often find mistakes in the source text.

#### ***A Happy End to an Unusual Project***

In the case studied, many of the discrepancies and different preconceptions did not reduce the mutual trust; on the contrary, they contributed to the fact that the mutual expectations were exceeded. Not surprisingly, the cooperation partners were very satisfied with the overall project—the process and the product—at its conclusion. The client stated:

So I certainly made it known to her on several occasions that the whole process had been very positive, and that we were very happy with the project.

In the meantime, we have also received very positive feedback from different countries and from various different experts regarding both versions.

The translator was equally pleased:

I got the feeling he was very pleased with the text. And I have been asked to quote on another project for his organization, so I guess the quality of the product was what he wanted.

Both of them started the project on the basis of prior experiences of time pressure, defective source or target texts, and insufficient cooperation: The client had expected the text to be difficult in content and form, that the translator would be stressed by the project, and that he would have to take care of terminology and quality. The translator had expected to be left predominantly alone with the translation (from initial terminology research to proofreading and layout) and had anticipated having to work seven days a week with an erroneous and incoherent source text. These assumptions on the part of the cooperation partners formed the initial basis for their cooperation and communication process and directly influenced their activities, for example, by causing the client to provide parallel texts, comments, and terminology help, and the translator to have her translation proofread and be surprised by the lack of mistakes in the source text. Thus, they affected both the translation process and the translation product as a whole.

Sadly, the happy end for this project is bad news for the business of translation. The happy partners in this case frequently stress that this was a very unusual project—a unique experience in the midst of the struggle with the impossibilities of everyday translation work. Thus, even though this empirical case might seem to prove the opposite of the findings by Abdallah (2010), which reveal the detrimental working conditions of freelance translators in production networks, it also confirms them to a great extent: The “usual” and “normal” translation processes experienced by this client and translator differ greatly from the mutually transparent, intensive, and respectful expert cooperation observed in this case study.

### **Conclusions**

Our study revealed that the active participation of the client, who felt he was principally responsible for the quality of the target text, deviated from the translator’s previous experiences of cooperation with her clients. Many of the discrepancies and asymmetries of expectations did not reduce the mutual trust, but instead contributed to the fact that the mutual expectations were exceeded.

As Combe points out, outsourcing something does not mean that you can “abdicate your responsibility for it” (2011, p. 333). This was evident in the case studied: Not only the actions of the translator, but also the active role played by the client were crucial to the success of the project. Combe describes this from a translation project manager (PM) perspective: “The ability of the PM to control the project assets and hand off files to the vendor in a timely and orderly fashion depends on the recognition by stakeholders in other functional units of their obligations and commitment to schedule milestones” (p. 344). The key role of communication emphasized by Sobotka (2000) is confirmed: The mutual satisfaction with the process and the product was not achieved by the translator (and her work) alone; the client’s attitude and activities also contributed strongly here (see also Combe, 2011).

The client's prior experiences referred to by Sobotka (2000) proved in this case to have a key impact: The client's disappointing prior experiences in other translation projects had led him to alter his own approach and role. However, what was lacking in the project studied was the post-project review (lessons learned, retrospective) advocated by Combe (2011). Nonetheless, it can still be assumed that the project did make a difference for future projects: The client had his first experience with new processes and roles that produced (also for the first time) a positive result, while the translator intended to suggest this different mode of working to some of her other regular customers.

It can be assumed that the translator had already earned herself some trust credit through the high quality of her test translation and the fact that she is a native speaker of the target language. As Abdallah and Koskinen (2007) postulate, the continuous and direct flow of information throughout the project generated additional trust, yet did not in this case guarantee either concurrence with regard to the services provided or a lack of information asymmetries.

The specific customer expectations regarding type of service, responsibilities, and time frame revealed in the workplace study by Risku (2009) were also confirmed in this case. Some services were provided that were not expected by the other party (e.g., the provision of terminology, the commenting of the source text, and the layout by the client) and of which the other party was not even aware (e.g., the external proofreading of the translation by a colleague of the translator). The client had voluntarily taken on tasks that Sikes (2011), Straub (2012), and Görs (2012), for instance, consider to be part of the translator's role, such as responsibility for terminology research and target text quality. The client's and translator's different expectations and levels of knowledge with regard to quality assurance can, however, still be seen as a confirmation of Görs' (2012) finding that there are no established standards of action for this in translation processes and projects.

So who, then, assumed responsibility for the tasks that Sikes (2011) describes as the responsibilities of the project manager in a translation agency? The client made sure that the translator received materials and instructions in a suitable form and handled the terminology tasks. Both the client and the translator reviewed the translation or had it reviewed. The translator was not used to having a client perform these tasks: They constituted a deviation from her previous experience, where she had generally been responsible for these tasks. Over her many years working as a self-managing, freelance translator, she had established certain translation and business practices of her own. With regard to freelance translators, we can therefore at least relativize the claim by Sikes (2011) that translators as "linguists" show little interest in business practices. We assume instead that the "excruciating attention to detail" postulated by Sikes—by which he undoubtedly means primarily linguistic detail—is not a claim that is universally applicable to freelance translators.

The asymmetries of expectations that became evident in this case study can be taken as an indication that translation is seen as an experience-based, ad hoc activity by many clients for whom the management of translation projects is not a core activity. The fact that translators are, however, dependent on the decisions and activities of precisely these clients produces a scientifically fertile balancing act even in the smallest translation networks (albeit one that can doubtless often cause difficulties in practice). This turns such small networks into holograms that show different dimensions of

an object depending on the perspective of the viewer—and into fractals as structures in which even the small parts repeat characteristics of the whole. Despite their idiosyncrasies and their local, specific parameters, these networks also provide us with a view of a sociological, cognitive, and cultural narration of translation: They show how people make sense of their ambivalent and inconsistent experiences in their translation roles and at the same time shape and change translation practice through their action and interaction.

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