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Boundaries Around, Boundaries Within: Introduction to the Thematic Section on the Translation Profession, Translator Status and Identity[1]

1.   Introduction

The articles in this thematic section all address questions concerning the translation profession, translator status and identity in ways that are associated with the concept of boundaries. The articles are based on presentations held at a panel on translator status and identity during the 8th Congress of the European Society for Translation Studies (EST), organised at Aarhus University, in September 2016. The panel and the present thematic section comprise a continuation of the discussion of these themes in the previous EST Congress and in the thematic issue of *The Journal of Specialised Translation* titled "The translation profession: centres and peripheries" (2016), edited by Helle Vrønning Dam and Kaisa Koskinen.

In this introduction, we first discuss the concept of boundaries *around* and *within* the translation profession as introduced by Dam/Koskinen in the above-mentioned thematic issue. Next, as all the articles in this thematic section represent sociological research into translation and translators, we draw attention to boundary work within the discipline of Translation Studies; building on Andrew Chesterman's (2006, 2009) map of Translator Studies, we propose a continuum of **Sociological vs. Cultural Translator Studies**. Finally, we introduce the articles, considering the kinds of boundaries they explore and where they are placed on the continuum.

2.   Boundaries around and within the profession

As pointed out above, the idea of boundaries *around* and *within* the profession was introduced in the thematic issue edited by Dam/Koskinen (2016). Research into the boundaries *around* the profession involves questions of how the boundaries of professional translation are constructed and negotiated and how they are experienced. Although translation has seen various professionalisation projects in even recent years, from accreditation systems to university-level training programmes (Dam/Koskinen 2016: 2), translation remains a semi-profession or an emerging profession (Dam/Zethsen 2010; Sela-Sheffy 2016a), with no restricted entry or required training – in other words, with fuzzy, porous professional boundaries. This, in turn, creates the need for *boundary work*: constructing, negotiating and maintaining – or critiquing and undermining – the boundaries around the profession (Grbić 2010, 2014).[2]

The boundaries *within* the profession, in contrast, are related to internal hierarchies, centres and peripheries: lines of demarcation among translators/interpreters of different backgrounds, roles or qualifications. They involve issues such as which agents are more central or peripheral in the

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1   All three editors contributed equally to editing the thematic section. With regard to the Introduction, however, Elin Svahn contributed the most to the content and organisation and this is reflected in the order of the editors' names.
2   The concept of boundary work was introduced by Thomas F. Gieryn (1983). Within Translation Studies, it has mainly been applied by Nadia Grbić (2010, 2014), in her research on Austrian sign interpreters.

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field, how various developments, such as technology and volunteer translation, contribute to movements between the centre and peripheries (Koskinen/Dam 2016: 261–262), and how such internal differences emerge and are experienced.

3. Boundaries within Translation and Translator Studies

As with any discipline, Translation Studies has been, and continues to be, subject to boundary work both around and within: determination of the 'proper' methods and subjects of a discipline, delimitation of it from other disciplines, and the struggles between various paradigms for centrality within the discipline. Examples of boundary work include James S. Holmes' (1988) famous 'map' of the discipline, which set out to delimit the field of Translation Studies by dividing it into several branches, and the 'turns' and paradigmatic shifts that have occurred within the discipline since its establishment (Snell-Hornby 2006).

The 'turn' that is the most relevant to the present thematic section is the Sociological Turn, also known as the sociology of translation, which explores translations (products), translators (agents) and translating (process) in their social contexts or from sociological perspectives (Chesterman 2006; Wolf 2006 [ed.]). This thematic section continues to "focus on the translator" (Dam/Zethsen 2009), either as a professional group, a specific subgroup of translators, or on the individual "agents of translation" (Buzelin 2011), thus contributing to what Andrew Chesterman (2006, 2009) calls the sociology of translators, or Translator Studies. Although the translator is always, at least implicitly, present in studies on translation, research that falls under Translator Studies "focuses primarily and explicitly on the agents involved in translation" (Chesterman 2009: 20). Relevant research topics include the interactions and power relations among agents involved in the translation/interpreting process, the status and state of translation/interpreting as a profession, translator/interpreter associations and networks, and translators'/interpreters' role and identity as well as biographies (see, for example, Wolf 2006 [ed.], 2007, 2010; Ferreire Duarte et al. [eds.] 2006; Wolf/Fukari 2007 [eds.]; Chesterman 2009; Kinnunen/Koskinen 2010 [eds.]; Angelelli 2014; Vorderobermeier 2014; Sela-Sheffy 2016b, to mention but a few).

Chesterman (2009: 19, our emphasis), building on James S. Holmes' (1988) map of Translation Studies, further conceptualises Translator Studies as having the following three branches:

> The **cultural** branch deals with values, ethics, ideologies, traditions, history, examining the roles and influences of translators and interpreters through history, as agents of cultural evolution. The **cognitive** branch deals with mental processes, decision-making, the impact of emotions, attitudes to norms, personality, etc. The **sociological** branch deals with translators'/interpreters' observable behaviour as individuals or groups or institutions, their social networks, status and working processes, their relations with other groups and with relevant technology, and so on.

Similarly to Holmes' original map, this conceptualisation can help to envision research topics and identify research gaps; it could also be used as a tool for an overview of research. While such an overview is beyond the scope of this introduction, we hope to highlight major trends within Translator Studies.

Almost ten years after Chesterman's outline, research that can be characterised as Translator Studies has gained ground and draws on a variety of research traditions and methodologies. While researchers rarely explicitly tie their research to the three branches, it would appear that the two branches that are the most closely related to the topic of this thematic section (translator status, profession and identity) are the sociological and cultural branches; cognitive aspects such as mental processes, decision making or the impact of emotions are not addressed.

As Sociological and Cultural Translator Studies are also the branches the boundary of which is the most easily blurred, we suggest that they can be re-conceptualised as a **continuum** illustrated in Figure 1 below, which also takes into account tendencies towards macro- vs. micro-level research.
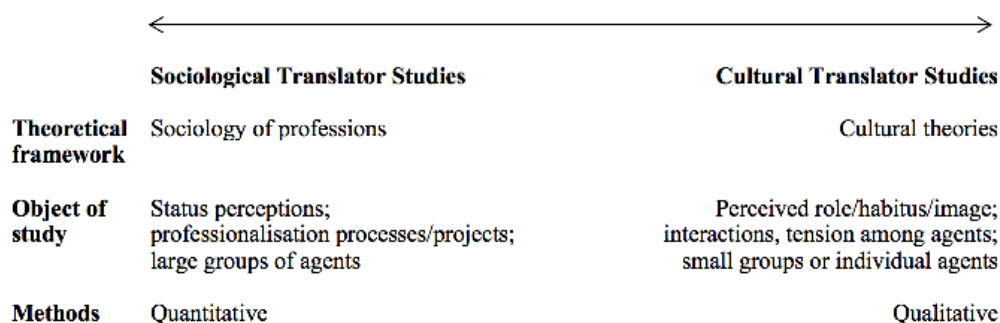
	Sociological Translator Studies	**Cultural Translator Studies**
Theoretical framework	Sociology of professions	Cultural theories
Object of study	Status perceptions; professionalisation processes/projects; large groups of agents	Perceived role/habitus/image; interactions, tension among agents; small groups or individual agents
Methods	Quantitative	Qualitative

Figure 1: Continuum of Translator Studies

A continuum, as opposed to branches, suggests that the boundary between the two approaches can be fuzzy and porous and that some studies involve aspects of both approaches. In order to present as nuanced and multifaceted a picture of sociologically and culturally oriented Translator Studies as possible, Figure 1 also considers three aspects of the two approaches: theoretical framework (sociology of professions vs. cultural theories), the object of study (status perceptions vs. perceived role/habitus/image; professionalisation processes/projects vs. interaction and tension among agents; large groups of agents vs. small groups or individual agents), and research methods (quantitative methods vs. qualitative methods). Broadly speaking, Sociological Translator Studies tends to involve macro-level studies, and Cultural Translator Studies micro-level studies.

At one end of this continuum, Sociological Translator Studies typically involve approaches studying the state of the profession (Choi/Lim 2002; Katan 2009; Pym et al. 2012; Djovčoš 2014), professionalisation processes or projects of the translational professions (Sela-Sheffy 2006, 2016a; Grbić 2010, 2014; Monzó 2011[2009]; Tyulenev 2014), role of certification and qualifications (Chan 2011[2009], 2013; Pym et al. 2012, 2016) or translators'/interpreters' perceived status (Dam/Zethsen 2008, 2011, 2013; Gentile 2013). These studies either explicitly draw on, or can be linked to, the sociology of professions and professionalisation and two main approaches within it: the trait approach and the process/power approach. The former, more traditional approach has strived for determining the criteria of a profession, which often include prestige or perceived status (Volti 2008: 97–102; Weiss-Gal/Welbourne 2008: 282; Lewis 2012: 839; Gentile, Yılmaz-Gümüş and Ruokonen in this volume). In contrast, the more recent process/power approach sees professionalisation as a dynamic process where the agents are continuously negotiating and maintaining the boundaries of their profession, endeavouring to achieve the desired degree of professionalisation (Grbić 2010: 114–116; Tuominen in this volume). It follows that the boundaries of a profession are porous and shifting and the professionalisation process can be stalled (Sela-Sheffy 2016a) or reversed (Lewis 2012).

Sociological Translator Studies also often tackle large-scale objects of study, such as professionalisation projects in different countries (Sela-Sheffy 2006, 2016a; Monzó 2011[2009]) or status perceptions in different countries (Dam/Zethsen 2008, 2011; Ruokonen 2016 and in this volume) or even at an international level (Katan 2009; Gentile 2013 and in this volume). As a result, the studies often make use of quantitative analysis methods. However, professionalisation and boundary work have also been explored in case studies where the focus is individual agents' actions (Monzó 2011[2009]; Grbić 2014; Tuominen in this volume).

At the other end of the continuum, we find Cultural Translator Studies. Similarly to Sociological Translator Studies, this approach can study groups of translators (Sela-Sheffy 2010; Voinova/Shlesinger 2013; Georgiou in this volume; Marin-Lacarta/Vargas-Urpi in this volume), but the

focus can also be individual translators (Munday 2016, Meylaerts 2013; Ziemann in this volume). In contrast to Sociological Translator Studies, however, culturally oriented research tends to investigate "codes of behavior, attitudes, and values shared by members of an occupation" (Sela-Sheffy 2016b: 132).[3] Sela-Sheffy (2016b: 133, our emphasis) further describes the dynamics of this perspective as follows:

> Understanding translation as a site of social action in this sense emphasizes the **personal dispositions of its practitioners and their group relations**. How these individuals position themselves, what kind of capital they pursue, how they struggle to achieve it, and what their cultural resources are, all these questions are at the core of current research into status and the profession in TIS [Translation and Interpreting Studies].

Furthermore, Sela-Sheffy argues that culturally oriented research has been interested in professions with fuzzy institutionalised boundaries, such as literary translation. Research within this tradition often borrows its framework from Pierre Bourdieu, whose key concepts *habitus, field, capital (symbolic, cultural* and *economic)* and *doxa* have proved to be particularly fruitful for describing the practice of literary translation, beginning with Simeoni's 1998 seminal article.

Whereas Bourdieu relied on statistical data (e.g. Bourdieu 1979), research on the translator's habitus tends to employ qualitative methods; most often, it would appear, relying on in-depth interviews (Sela-Sheffy 2016a; Sapiro 2013), paratextual material (Sela-Sheffy 2008; Voinova/Schlesinger 2013) or historical and archival material (Meylaerts 2008, 2013; Wolf 2013). There are exceptions, however, such as the questionnaire studies by Heino (2017) and Georgiou (in this volume).

Apart from *habitus*, two other, sometimes interrelated, key concepts of the cultural approach are *role* and *identity*. One of the translator's roles that has been particularly scrutinised is that of the translator as a cultural agent or intercultural mediator (Katan 2004[1994], 2013; Liddicoat 2016)[4], especially in the capacity of a crucial agent in the transfer and reception of literary translation (Milton/Bandia [eds.] 2009; Herrero López et al. [eds.] 2017). As has been pointed out by various scholars, successful literary translators tend to assume several roles – such as critic, editor, publisher, writer or academic – besides that of a translator (Gouanvic 2005; Sela-Sheffy 2010; Meylaerts 2013; Meylaerts et al. 2017; Georgiou in this volume). Several Cultural Translator Studies also highlight the historical aspect of research into the agent of translation (see Buzelin 2011) as opposed to translators' contemporary practices. The call for constructing microhistories (Munday 2014) or socio-biographies of individual translators (Simeoni 1998; Meylaerts et al. 2017; Ziemann in this volume) has been answered by Munday (2016) and Paloposki (2017), to name a few.

In the following section, we first place the articles in this thematic section on the Sociological–Cultural Translator Studies continuum and then describe them in more detail.

4.   The articles in this thematic section

The articles in this thematic section can be placed on the Translator Studies continuum as follows (Figure 2). We next introduce each article and relate them to boundaries around and within the profession.

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3   Although perceptions of status/prestige could be described as an attitude shared by a group, the concept stems from sociology and is therefore more closely identified with Sociological rather than Cultural Translator Studies.

4   As reported in Katan (2016), a wealth of different monikers has been applied to translators: "experts in intercultural communication" (Holz-Mänttäri 1984), "mediators" (Hatim/Mason 1990), "cross-cultural specialists" (Snell-Hornby 1992), "cultural mediators" (Katan 2004[1994]), or "cultural interpreters" (González/Tolron [eds.] 2006; Harris 2000; Mesa 2000).

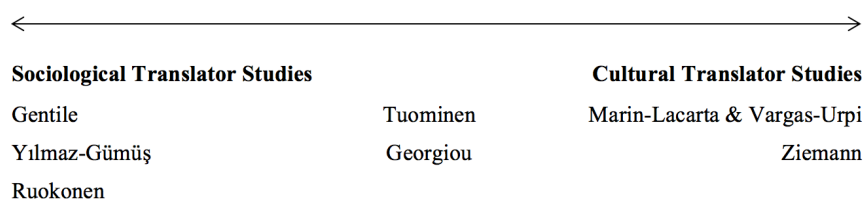| Sociological Translator Studies		Cultural Translator Studies
Gentile	Tuominen	Marin-Lacarta & Vargas-Urpi
Yılmaz-Gümüş	Georgiou	Ziemann
Ruokonen		

Figure 2: Articles of this thematic section on the continuum of Translator Studies

The first three articles, which represent Sociological Translator Studies, can all be described as macro-level studies, presenting findings from either global (Gentile) or national (Yılmaz-Gümüş and Ruokonen) contexts.

Paola Gentile explores how interpreter status is perceived by male and female conference interpreters. Analysing the data from a worldwide survey with 805 respondents, Gentile discovered that while men and women respondents had similar self-perceptions of the status of their profession, the female respondents tended to assign lower rankings than men when asked about how interpreters' status and the societal importance of interpreters' work are perceived by people outside the profession. This suggests that further attention needs to be paid to the possible causes of this phenomenon and to gender issues in translation and interpreting in general. On the whole, Gentile's macro-level study of status perceptions highlights a *boundary within* the profession, between the perceptions of men and women conference interpreters.

Volga Yılmaz-Gümüş investigates the state of the translation profession in Turkey from the perspective of two complex concepts: solidity and professionalisation. The concepts are operationalised by means of a selection of relevant indicators. Solidity is approached through the proportion of men vs. women and freelance vs. in-house translators in the profession, as well as commitment to the profession. Professionalisation is explored in terms of the state of training, professional associations and legal instruments created to regulate the market. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods from analyses of legal documents and standards to graduate surveys and interviews, the author illustrates the various measures and the work towards professionalisation and also the extent to which they currently fail to establish solid *boundaries around* the profession and a solid core *within* it.

Minna Ruokonen explores a potential *boundary within*, in the context of Finnish professional translators' status perceptions. Reporting on a 2014 survey, Ruokonen compares the views of authorised translators, who have access to a protected title, to those of the other respondents. In this case, there is no evidence of a boundary within: the status perceptions of the authorised translators do not differ in a statistically significant way from those of non-authorised translators. This may stem from the fact that the authorisation system in Finland only concerns legally valid translations, a very specific area of translation. The findings also illustrate mixed views on boundaries *around* the profession: while most of the respondents believe that the profession should be protected to a greater extent, quite a few also qualify their responses by pointing out that any system of protection should be flexible and allow for different paths towards becoming a professional translator.

The next two articles can be said to represent "the middle ground", or the meso level, of the continuum, with smaller groups of agents in focus.

Boundary work undertaken by translators themselves is the topic of **Tiina Tuominen's** article. She investigates a group of Finnish subtitlers who, after substantial outsourcing, started to define the *boundaries around* their own profession. One important resource in this boundary work was the subtitlers' own website and blog texts published there. The article analyses a selection of texts from the website and the blog, in terms of Sergey Tyulenev's (2014) concept of "profes-

sional project", a process of institutionalising a profession and seeking social recognition of it, as well as by means of the professional criteria discussed by Koskinen/Dam (2016). One of the main findings is that a boundary is typically drawn between subtitlers and agencies or clients imposing poor work conditions or working practices. In this way, the boundary around the profession becomes a means of inclusion and a sign of shared community. Similarly to Ruokonen's respondents, the subtitlers also argued for allowing for different ways of entering the community of professional subtitlers, or even for the inclusion of all those who actively seek improvements in their working conditions.

Nadia Georgiou explores the symbolic capital of Modern Greek to English poetry translators. Her article offers a fruitful perspective on studying boundary work. The study consists of a small-scale survey (n=20) as well as an analysis of paratextual material and interviews with Modern Greek to English poetry translators. Symbolic capital is examined through three overlapping categories: the translators' connections to poetry and the source culture, the translators' educational backgrounds, and the translators' self-descriptions, with a particular emphasis on extratextual visibility. Mixing quantitative and qualitative data, Georgiou's findings regarding this specific group of poetry translators reveal the intricate net of the practitioners' love of literature, a strong sense of heredity, formal and informal educational capital, dedication to the Greek culture and language, as well as engagement in a variety of literary activities – all of which together constitute their symbolic capital. The findings shed light on the *boundaries within* the translation profession by positioning these poetry translators as a highly exclusive group of literary professionals while at the same time questioning the viability of poetry translation as an autonomous field of cultural production and thus the *boundaries around* it.

Finally, the last two articles position themselves firmly at the cultural end of the continuum. **Maialen Marin-Lacarta and Mireia Vargas-Urpi's** contribution investigates the digital, non-profit publishing initiative ¡Hjckrrh! (pronounced 'hacker') as a site of boundary work. ¡Hjckrrh! consists of eleven literary translators who assume different roles in an initiative created to publish literary translations in e-book format. With an ethnographic-inspired qualitative method paired with Lave/Wenger's (1991) concept of communities of practice, the authors investigate how the translators' roles, production teams and relationships are influenced by the technological advancement as well as the shifting professional boundaries of the initiative. One of the main findings is that the possibilities of the e-book format and its empowering effect have increased the translators' agency and their potential to function as cultural mediators. Furthermore, the authors propose that "boundaries can also be studied from the perspective of 'what': "what belongs to the profession, what roles and tasks 'insiders' take on, what they regard as outsiders' tasks and what kinds of tasks they engage in when they consciously cross boundaries", hence highlighting the boundaries both *within* and *around* the profession.

Lastly, **Zofia Ziemann** draws attention to translation criticism as an area prone to boundary work. The author makes use of paratextual and extratextual material in order to examine three Bruno Schulz translators: Celina Wieniewska ('the ambassador'), John Curran Davis ('the fan retranslator'), and Madeline Levine ('the academic retranslator'). Through a qualitative analysis of the discourse surrounding these three translators' work, Ziemann explores the ways in which each translator's profile – educational background, affiliation, professional experience – is used to promote the translation and develop or support opinions about it. In the process, "… judgments are passed, boundaries drawn and distinctions made based on [the translators'] profiles rather than their performance", leading to an establishment of internal hierarchies or boundaries *within;* there are, however, also signs of efforts to keep one of the translators "out", which reminds us that the boundaries *within* are always affected by the boundaries *around*.

5.   Concluding remarks

The collection of papers in this thematic section illustrates how the concept of *boundary* can be applied in studying the translation profession, translator status and identity. The seven articles all describe the translator or interpreter profession from the perspective of experienced or existing boundaries: we see boundaries both around and within the profession, around or within groups of translators, around or within individual translators.

The articles illustrate, on the one hand, on-going boundary work: efforts to define boundaries *around* the profession in order to gain recognition for translation as a profession, as the boundaries of the profession are still "porous and unstable" (Dam/Koskinen 2016: 2). Even in this single thematic section, the articles illustrate the variety of actions that boundary work may involve, from the creation of institutions and legal instruments to organising grassroots action on the Internet. At the same time, it also becomes apparent that the profession itself is undergoing changes that are blurring its boundaries. In the articles, this is evident particularly in the context of literary translation and translators' doing additional tasks other than "just" translating, such as undertaking new roles facilitated by digital publishing. Further investigation into the role of technology and its impact on professionalisation would be of interest, as technology is one of the main factors changing the profession, with the development of Machine Translation and the creation of new kinds of workflows.

On the other hand, the articles highlight boundaries *within* the profession. The differences in the agents' views of translator and interpreter status may be indicative of deeper issues, such as gender inequality, that clearly call for further investigation. Similarly, the findings on various aspects that contribute to internal hierarchies in literary translation raise the question of whether we fully understand how such hierarchies are produced and maintained in literary translation, let alone other fields of translation and interpreting.

In this introduction, we have also undertaken some boundary work within the discipline, suggesting that Translator Studies can be re-conceptualised as a continuum from Sociological to Cultural Translator Studies. While the re-conceptualisation has been created for the purposes of this thematic section, it could be beneficial to further consider its implications vis-à-vis the notion of distinct branches.

In conclusion, we trust that the present thematic section demonstrates that the concept of boundaries remains fruitful in translation research. As this thematic section is a continuation of an earlier collection, we hope that it will, in turn, inspire future explorations of boundaries, translation profession, translator status and identity.

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