

Minna Ruokonen*

To Protect or Not to Protect: Finnish Translators' Perceptions on Translator Status and Authorisation

Abstract

In most countries, there are no restrictions on who is allowed to work as a translator, apart from the context of legally valid or authorised translations. Nevertheless, the significance of authorisation for translator status has hardly been studied, apart from Dam/Zethsen (2009, 2010). This article investigates how authorisation affects Finnish translators' status perceptions, and whether they believe that the profession should be protected further, and if so, how and why. The data come from a survey conducted in 2014 with 450 respondents (business, literary and audio-visual translators), based on Dam/Zethsen's questionnaires and expanded and adapted for the Finnish context. The analysis is partly quantitative and statistical, partly a qualitative thematic analysis of the respondents' open comments. Statistically, authorisation produced no significant differences in the respondents' status perceptions. Similarly, in open questions on factors affecting translator status and measures that should be taken, few respondents mentioned authorisation or other professional boundaries. Nevertheless, when asked whether the profession should be protected, almost 60% of the respondents, particularly business translators who had attended translator training, advocated some form of protection, although they also emphasised that there should be flexibility to allow for translators with different backgrounds. The respondents were also more prone to call for protection if they held authorisation themselves, which may suggest that they feel authorisation does carry some value.

Keywords

Translator status; status perceptions; authorised translation; professional boundaries; professionalisation; translator qualifications

1. Introduction

The boundaries of the translation profession in general are typically porous and unstable. While specific training and a variety of qualifications exist (see surveys by Pym et al. 2012; Hlavac 2013 and Section 2 below), none of them serve to establish a professional monopoly, “an exclusive right to perform certain types of work” (Weiss-Gal/Welbourne 2008: 282). The only exception concerns sworn or authorised translators, who produce legally valid translations, typically of official or legal documents and for administrative and legal use (Pym et al. 2012: 20, 23, 26). In the present article, such translators are referred to as **authorised translators**, as that is the closest equivalent to the Finnish term *auktorisoitu kääntäjä* and my data come from a survey conducted in Finland.

Authorised translators thus have access to a professional monopoly within a profession that otherwise lacks clear boundaries. Nevertheless, the influence of authorisation on **perceptions of translator status** has hardly been studied. Previous studies suggest that this influence is likely to be ambiguous (Dam/Zethsen 2009, 2010; Pym et al. 2012), but empirical evidence remains scarce.

* Minna Ruokonen
University of Eastern Finland
Department of English Language and Translation
minna.ruokonen@uef.fi

In this paper, I consider how the Finnish system of authorisation affects translators' status perceptions and whether they call for more solid professional boundaries. Specifically, I aim to discover, firstly, whether translators with authorisation have different status perceptions than non-authorised translators, and whether the respondents mention authorisation as a factor influencing translator status. Secondly, I will examine whether the respondents think that the profession should be further protected, how and why (or why not), as well as whether the respondents' backgrounds influence their views on protecting the profession. The data come from a survey conducted in late 2014 with 450 translator respondents, of whom 146 were authorised translators. The analysis is partly statistical, partly a data-driven thematic analysis of the respondents' free-form comments.

In what follows, Section 2 considers the various definitions of 'status' and summarises what is currently known about the links between authorisation and status. Section 3 illustrates the Finnish translation context and the Finnish system of authorisation, drawing particular attention to its previous form that was the object of extensive criticism. The data and method of analysis are described in Section 4, and the results are reported in Section 5.

2. Status and the role of formal qualifications

The term 'status' can refer to several different concepts (see, for example, Dam/Zethsen 2008, Katan 2011, Ruokonen 2013). The present study focuses on **translators' perceptions of the prestige and value** of a) the profession in general and b) of their own work. Such perceptions are important because they can affect well-being and motivation at work (American Psychological Association 2012).

Perceptions of prestige and value are associated with other meanings of status, of which the most relevant here are, firstly, the status of a profession and, secondly, status in terms of market value. With regard to the first meaning, prestige is habitually considered one of the traits that distinguish a profession from an occupation: specialised professions with specific training and restricted entry are also typically valued more highly in society (e.g. Volti 2008: 97-102). This 'trait' approach to professionalization has been challenged by the more dynamic 'power' or 'process' approach, which focuses on professionals' struggle for a professional monopoly and their strategies for establishing and maintaining the boundaries of the profession (e.g. Weiss-Gal/Welbourne 2008: 228; Grbić 2010: 114–116). Still, it remains apparent that translation is often considered a semi-profession (e.g. Sela-Sheffy 2006) or an emerging profession (e.g. Dam/Zethsen 2010) and that it enjoys middling prestige (see below).

In terms of market value, Anthony Pym et al. (2012) define status as "the set of social signals that create, first, the *presumption* of some kind of expertise, and second, the *presumed value* of that expertise" (Pym et al. 2012: 11–12; italics in original). In practice, this means that signals such as formal qualifications may help translators to establish an appreciated position (or status) for themselves in the translation market. Pym et al. (2012: 13) further link status signals to professionalization and prestige. Logically, if translators experience qualifications such as authorisation as something that increases their market value, such qualifications could also enhance their prestige perceptions.

Perceptions concerning the prestige of the translator's profession have typically been studied by means of surveys, both within sociology and translation research. In SIOPS, a major sociological study that incorporated the results from surveys in 60 different countries, translators scored slightly above the average (Treiman 1977: 172, 241).¹ Similarly, surveys conducted among trans-

¹ The 1977 SIOPS is the only SIOPS survey that treats translators as a category in their own right and therefore worthy of mention. Later SIOPS surveys subsume translators under the same category as philologists and interpreters. This expanded category scores 62 (e.g. Ganzeboom/Treiman 2003: 179), while translators on their own scored 54 (Treiman 1977: 241).

lators indicate that they perceive the status of their profession as middling, regardless of the varied scales (e.g. Dam/Zethsen 2008, 2011; Katan 2009; Setton/Guo Liangliang 2011).

Factors influencing status have been analysed mainly by Helle Vrønning Dam and Karen Korning Zethsen. Their extensive surveys among Danish business translators suggest that status perceptions are mainly affected by the working environment, income and (in)visibility. In-house translators working at non-translational companies perceived translator status as higher than freelancers or in-house translators in translation agencies (Dam/Zethsen 2011: 984). Company translators with low incomes were also prone to consider their status low (Dam/Zethsen 2009: 15), but high incomes did not produce higher status rankings for freelancers or EU translators (Dam/Zethsen 2011: 985–986; 2012: 221–222). The supposedly prestigious EU translators' status perceptions were actually slightly lower than those of national-market translators, although the difference was not statistically significant (Dam/Zethsen 2012: 220). This may be tied to the EU translators' sense of invisibility, discerned as distance from decision-making and a lower degree of professional contact (Dam/Zethsen 2012: 226).

Dam and Zethsen's surveys are of particular interest for the present study because, until recently, the Danish translation market constituted a unique case for studying the connections between a protected title and status perceptions. From 1966 to 2016, all Danish translators who had completed a master's degree in translation had access to a protected title (*translatør*). In Dam and Zethsen's data, however, the role of this title appears ambiguous. In the sub-set of company translators, the title produced no statistically significant differences in status perceptions (Dam/Zethsen 2009: 10). In the open comments, some respondents believed that the title was accorded some respect, but others held that the title was not as well-known or respected as authorisations for accountants or lawyers, nor were clients familiar with its requirements or purpose, either (Dam/Zethsen 2010: 201).

Previous research further indicates that other kinds of formal translator qualifications, such as degrees and certification by a professional association, also seem to play an ambiguous role in the translation market in the sense that their perceived value and desirability varies. In Canada, Lynne Bowker (2004, 2005) analysed job advertisements for translators and found that while the majority of employers showed a preference for candidates with translation degrees, experience was also sought in most advertisements (Bowker 2004: 967–968). A certification by a professional association was only sought by approximately 20% to 30% of employers (Bowker 2005: 26). In Hong Kong, Andy Lung Jan Chan (2011) had 12 fictitious resumes ranked by eight potential employers, with the result that a university degree was considered a basic requirement but a degree in English was actually preferred to the more relevant translator certification (Chan 2011: 40–41). In a recent OPTIMALE survey (2013: 6), European employers of translators (translation companies, government departments, etc.) stressed the importance of qualifications and experience in almost equal proportions, but experience was given more weight. Similarly, when Anthony Pym, David Orrego-Carmona and Esther Torres-Simón (2016) analysed 13 fake CVs in order to discover which qualifications were considered worth stealing, references from previous employers were more desirable than academic qualifications; moreover, degrees from non-translational fields were actually more sought after than academic qualifications in translation (2016: 48).

All this ambiguity may at least partly be due to the fact that certification criteria can vary greatly between different countries, as illustrated by a survey by Jim Hlavac (2013).² In some cases, employers of translators may have insufficient knowledge about the degrees or certificates in their field (e.g. Chan 2011: 41–42). Whatever the reasons, it is logical to conclude, as Pym et al. (2012: 120–121) do about the European translation market, that there seem to exist an abundance of different and partly dysfunctional signals of translators' competence.

² Unfortunately, Hlavac's survey (2013: 53) contains inaccurate information concerning Finland, describing the pre-2008 examination for authorised translators and omitting the University of Eastern Finland from its list of universities offering established translator training.

To recapitulate, previous status research indicates that even a long-established protected title such as the Danish one may not be reflected in translators' status perceptions. Moreover, as formal qualifications seem to have only limited weight in the translation market, it follows that translators do not necessarily consider them status enhancing. Overall, previous studies thus suggest that the qualification of an authorised translator can be expected to have only a limited influence on Finnish translators' status perceptions. Next, I consider what further implications emerge based on the Finnish context and system of authorisation

3. The Finnish context and Finnish system of authorisation

Spoken only by some five million people, Finnish is clearly a minority language in the global context. As such, it is hardly surprising that texts translated into Finnish from other languages play an important role in contemporary Finnish culture and society. Studies suggest that at least a third of the texts Finns read are translations (Mäkisalo 2006; Salmi 2010). Moreover, Finland is officially bilingual, which means that official documents and civil services must be available in both Finnish and Swedish. In practice, Swedish is only spoken by 5% of the population (Statistics Finland 2015) and rather confined geographically along Finland's southern and western coasts. English is the most widely taught foreign language in schools and the most frequently used in business contexts and the media (Leppänen et al. 2011: 17-20).

Translator training and Finland's professional translators' associations have a long history, dating back to the 1950s and 1960s. The major translators' associations are 'The Finnish Association of Translators and Interpreters' (established 1955) and 'Translation Industry Professionals KAJ' (established 1979). The former brings together business, audio-visual and literary translators, particularly freelancers, as well as interpreters, translation teachers and researchers. The latter mainly caters for salaried translator/interpreter (T/I) professionals. These associations have a total membership of some 3,000 translators.³ While some translators may be members of both associations, considering that 18.0% of my survey respondents belonged to neither association although the survey was mainly distributed via their mailing lists, the actual number of professional translators in Finland may be closer to 4,000.

Translator training in Finland was institutionalised in the 1960s and became university-based in 1981. The training focuses on business translation, but optional courses are offered in audio-visual and literary translation. Apart from Finnish and Swedish, the working languages covered include English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish.

Recent developments in the Finnish translation market have been less than positive. Translators' working conditions have been seriously affected by outsourcing and competitive tendering, partly leading to unbearably low translation fees in the fields of business translation (Antinjuuti et al. 2014) and subtitling (Abdallah 2007; Tuominen 2015, Tuominen, this volume). Literary translators' rates have also fallen, to the point where a full-time literary translator's income can amount to less than 1,000 euros per month (Ruokonen 2016: 195–196), which is below the poverty line (in Finland defined as 50% of the national median income).

As previously mentioned, the translator's profession is not protected in Finland, with the exception of authorised translators. The Finnish system of authorisation was created in 1967, and was subsequently revised in 1988 and 2008; it is the period since 1988 that is of relevance for this study.⁴ From 1988 to 2008, authorisation could only be obtained by taking an examination that

3 Assessment based on information retrieved from the associations' websites on 17 October 2017. KAJ has some 1,000 translator members (<http://www.kaj.fi/en/kaj>: roughly 2,300 members overall; http://www.kaj.fi/en/kaj/our_members: 44% of its members are translators). The members of The Finnish Association of Translators and Interpreters include over 400 literary translators (https://www.sktl.fi/liitto/jaostot/i-kirjallisuuden_kaantajat/), some 1,300 business translators (<https://www.sktl.fi/liitto/jaostot/ii-asiatekstinkaantajat/>) and almost 300 audio-visual translators (<https://www.sktl.fi/liitto/jaostot/iii-audiovisuaaliset-kaantajat/>).

4 The title has also undergone changes. From 1967 to 1988, a translator holding the qualification was referred to as *valantehnyt kääntäjä* ('sworn translator'), from 1988 to 2005 as *virallinen kääntäjä* ('licensed translator', lit. 'official

consisted of two translation tasks: translating a text for the general public and translating a special-field text (Hietanen 2005: 195). The translations had to be written by hand, and the only aids allowed were printed or hand-written, such as dictionaries or the participant's own notes (Hietanen 2005: 195–196). The setting of the examination thus had little to do with the reality of professional translation, particularly after the advent of personal computers and the Internet with its wide range of information resources. Moreover, the texts to be translated were typically excerpts from newspaper or special-field articles and as such not very relevant for authorised translation (Hietanen 2005: 195–200, 203).

Unsurprisingly, the 1988–2008 system of authorisation attracted a great deal of criticism, reported particularly in Kaarina Hietanen's (2005) dissertation and in the professional translators' journal *Kääntäjä – Översättaren* (see also Salmi 2017a: 30–31). This criticism was occasionally quite vehement: for example, Rosemary Mackenzie, a translator trainer and a professional translator, dismissed the examination as “an expensive, outdated, largely irrelevant system” (Mackenzie 1995: 9). Another professional translator, Sheryl Hinkkanen (2002), who had passed the examination, kept track of her work for some five years and concluded that the examination had nothing to do with her typical assignments as an authorised translator. On the whole, Andrew Chesterman (2001) is likely to be accurate in his assessment that both professional translators and translator trainers were generally dissatisfied with the examination. Ultimately, even an official Ministry of Education committee acknowledged that those who had passed the exam possibly had insufficient knowledge about authorised translation (Ministry of Education 2005: 25).

Consequently, in 2008, the examination underwent extensive changes. The current examination, organized by the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI)⁵, consists of

- a multiple-choice test on the applicants' knowledge concerning authorised translators' working methods, duties and ethics and the relevant legislation;
- a translation of a legal/administrative text; and
- a translation of a text in the special field of the applicant's choice, from amongst options which include business and economy; education; medicine; and technology (Authorised Translators' Examinations 2012: 2, 5–7).

All three tests are to be completed on a single day. The participants are given 45 minutes to complete the multiple-choice test and 2 hours 45 minutes per translation task (EDUFI 2017a). They are allowed to use computers and, apart from the multiple-choice test, they can search the Internet and consult their own materials in print or electronic format (Authorised Translators' Examinations 2012: 7). However, no communication with any other person is allowed, nor is the use of machine translation tools (such as Google Translate); to prevent this, the participants are monitored throughout the day and the browser histories on their computers are checked (EDUFI 2017a). The examination can be described as rigorous: between 2008 and 2016, the pass rate varied from 8.0 to 29.9% (EDUFI 2017b), producing an average of 18.3% and a median of 17.4%.⁶

As of 2008, graduates with a master's degree in translation have been able to apply for authorisation if they have successfully completed set courses in authorised translation (Salmi/Kinnunen 2015: 230–231). The authorisation can only be granted in one language pair and in the direction from the graduate's secondary working language (language B) into their primary working language, or language A (mother tongue or its equivalent; Salmi/Kinnunen 2015: 230–231).

translator') and since then as *auktorisoitu kääntäjä* ('authorised translator').

5 An authority operating under the Ministry of Education and Culture, EDUFI is responsible for developing education, training and lifelong learning, and for promoting internationalisation. Before 2017, the official English translation of the name was the National Board of Education.

6 For more information about the current assessment criteria and critical analyses of them, see articles by Marja Kivilehto and Leena Salmi (e.g. Kivilehto 2016, Kivilehto/Salmi 2017, Salmi/Kivilehto 2018).

Regardless of the manner in which the translator obtains authorisation, the qualification needs to be renewed every five years (EDUFI 2017c). To requalify, the translator needs to document his or her translation work as well as any relevant further training (EDUFI 2017c). In other words, authorised translators not actually working as translators may lose their qualification. As a likely consequence of this change, the number of authorisations has fallen from ca. 4,300 (Pym et al. 2012: 30)⁷ to ca. 2,700 (EDUFI 2017d), as inactive translators have been removed from the register. In May 2017, the number of **individual translators** with at least one authorisation was ca. 1,900. Of these, over 1,300 held only one authorisation (i.e. were authorised to translate in one language pair and in one direction only, e.g. Swedish to Finnish but not vice versa); 470 translators had two authorisations. In other words, over 90% of the authorised translators held one or two authorisations.⁸

On the basis of the history of authorisation in Finland, it is difficult to hypothesise as to whether holding the qualification could be expected to have a positive or a negative impact on translators' status perceptions. What speaks for a positive impact is the simple existence of a government-sanctioned, protected title, accompanied by the right to use an official stamp for validating one's translations. As Hietanen (2005: 249) points out, the general public can mistake the title for a general signal of high quality in all kinds of translations, not just official documents. Some translators have apparently also exploited this, authorising e.g. business letters, user manuals or annual reports (Hietanen 2005: 168–169).

Such misconceptions and misuses may have left their mark, not to mention the flaws of the 1988–2008 system of authorisation that were common knowledge within the field. Considering that the data for this article were gathered in late 2014 when the latest reform had been in force for only six years, the negative associations from the earlier system may have lingered on. Before investigating whether this seems to be the case, however, the data and the analysis method are first presented.

4. Data and method

The data were gathered by means of an electronic survey that was based on Dam and Zethsen's questionnaires for company, agency and freelance translators, and provided for my use. The questionnaires were first translated into Finnish by a professional translator and merged into a single questionnaire, which was then adapted for the Finnish context and expanded to gather data on translators' working conditions and professional well-being (analysed in Ruokonen/Mäkisalo 2018), as well as on their attitudes towards translation technology (Salmi 2017b). Comments from Finnish professional translators and researchers were taken into account.

Whilst adapting the survey, it became apparent that the central status items could not follow the Danish formulations literally. The Danish items made use of the word *status*, but the corresponding Finnish word, *asema*, is ambiguous and not conventionally used in Finnish surveys on occupational status. Therefore, the respondents were asked instead "To what degree is the translator's occupation valued in Finland" (the status of the profession in general) and "To what degree is your own work valued in your workplace/by your commissioners" (the status of the translators' own work). These formulations were deemed to correspond to a sufficient degree to the Danish items while sounding natural to Finnish respondents.

As in the Danish questionnaires (see e.g. Dam/Zethsen 2008: 78), the status items were presented following a five-point Likert scale with verbal alternatives, which were converted into figures for the statistical analysis as follows:

⁷ Pym et al. erroneously reported the figure to refer to individual translators rather than authorisations.

⁸ The number of individual translators was calculated on 31 May 2017 by copying the full list of authorised translators from the EDUFI search (EDUFI 2017d) to Excel and removing duplicate names. The author also calculated the number of authorisations per translator.

- 1 = To a very low degree or not at all
 2 = To a low degree
 3 = To a certain degree
 4 = To a high degree
 5 = To a very high degree.

Again, as in the Danish questionnaires (Dam/Zethsen 2008: 78), the alternatives were presented to the respondents from the highest to the lowest.

The resulting final questionnaire included 50 to 60 items depending on the respondents' situation (e.g. freelancer vs salaried translator). The survey was administered electronically in October/November 2014, with invitations sent via the two major translator associations' mailing lists, as well as via the social media. These channels were deemed sufficient to reach the majority of professional translators. By the time of its closing, the questionnaire had yielded 450 analysable responses.

Table 1 below shows that most of the respondents were professional business translators, although audio-visual and literary translators were also reasonably well represented. Overall, the respondents probably represent approximately 10% of Finnish professional translators.

	n	%
Specialisation		
Audio-visual translator	57	12.7
Business translator	269	59.8
Literary translator	71	15.8
Other	53	11.8
Total	450	100.0
Form of employment		
Employed/salaried	137	30.4
Freelancer/entrepreneur	260	57.8
Unemployed, studying, working in a field other than translation	53	11.8
Total	450	100.0
Work experience in T/I industry		
5 years or less	102	22.7
6 to 10 years	83	18.4
11 to 15 years	82	18.2
16 to 20 years	65	14.4
21 years or more	118	26.2
Total	450	100.0

Table 1. Selected background information

The proportions of freelancers vs salaried translators are probably reasonably representative of the current situation, as is the fact that the clear majority of the respondents (ca. 80%) were women. The data also include both early-stage translators and respondents with decades of experience in the field.

Table 2 below further illustrates the respondents' educational backgrounds. As can be seen, almost three quarters of the respondents had completed a master's degree at a university, but only a third were authorised translators.⁹

⁹ Before 2008, the basic university degree in Finland was the master's degree that took 5+ years to complete. In the two-tier system created as a result of the Bologna process, students are required to complete a separate bachelor's degree before their master's degree. In most fields, however, students still go on to complete the master's degree.

	n	%
Education (highest degree)		
University courses	29	6.4
Bachelor's degree	52	11.6
Master's degree	336	74.7
Others	33	7.3
	450	100.0
Authorisation		
Yes	146	32.4
No	304	67.6
Total	450	100.0

Table 2. Respondents' educational backgrounds and qualifications

The analysis involved calculating statistical significances by means of a Chi-square test, where p values under .05 are considered statistically significant. A **thematic analysis** of some open items was also undertaken to identify central themes (Saldanha/O'Brien 2013 [2014]: 189–190). Table 3 below presents the methods used to address each research question.

Research question	Analysis method
1a) Do the respondents with authorisation have different status perceptions than the respondents without one?	Statistical
1b) Do the respondents mention authorisation as a factor influencing translator status?	Thematic analysis, three open-ended items ¹⁰ : 1) Which factors or phenomena have a positive impact on translator status in Finland? 2) Which factors or phenomena have a negative impact on translator status in Finland? 3) What measures should be taken to improve translator status?
2a) Do the respondents think that the profession should be protected? How? Why / why not?	Quantitative distribution of responses; thematic analysis of open comments
2b) Do the respondents' backgrounds influence their views on protecting the profession?	Statistical; factors analysed include - specialisation: business, audio-visual or literary translator - educational background - authorisation

Table 3. Research questions and the analysis

Because of the extent of the data, the full thematic analysis of the three open-ended items relevant to 1b) is still in progress. Here, I focus on those responses that were related to authorisation and protecting the profession.

5. Results

In this section, I first examine the respondents' overall status perceptions (5.1) and whether authorisation plays any role in them (5.2). I then consider what the respondents thought about protecting the profession (5.3) and how their backgrounds correlated with their views (5.4).

10 These open items were shown to the respondents before the item on whether the profession should be protected.

In the examples, the respondents will be identified only by a number and a reference to their specialisation (for example: #217, business translator) so as to ensure their anonymity. All quotes from the data have been translated from the original Finnish by the author.

5.1. Status rankings

When asked about the status of the translator's profession in Finland, the respondents ranked it at a mean value of 2.55, or below the middle point on a scale of 1 to 5. This is similar to previous research, and virtually identical with the average status rankings of Danish freelancers (2.53) and agency translators (2.55) (Dam/Zethsen 2011: 984). In contrast, when asked about the status of their own work, the responses tell quite a different story, as illustrated in Figure 1 below:

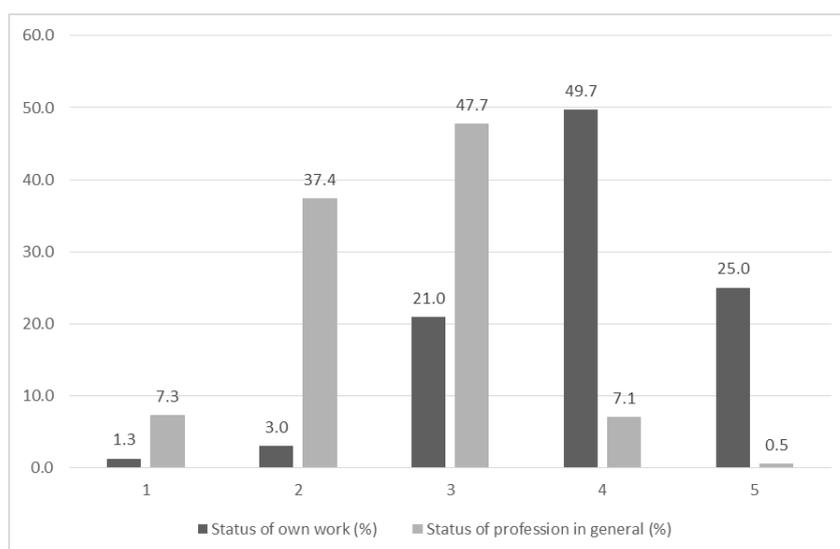


Figure 1. Status rankings (%) of one's own work vs of the profession in general

The respondents' mean score for the status ranking of their own work is 3.94, i.e. they believe that their own work is valued 'to a high degree'.¹¹ The difference between the two status rankings is very highly significant ($p < .001$). In other words, although the respondents feel that translators' work in general is not very highly valued, they do feel respected and valued in their immediate professional context.

The influence of various factors such as the respondents' specialisation (audio-visual, business or literary translation), work experience, age, income level, educational level etc. is analysed in another article (Ruokonen/Mäkisalo 2018)). Suffice it to say here that, contrary to what could have been expected, there were no statistically significant differences in status perceptions vis-à-vis, for example, specialisation, education or gender. It is noteworthy, however, that the respondents' perceptions of the status of their own work proved to be sensitive to factors involving professional well-being and job satisfaction.

¹¹ This item was not an option for respondents who were not working as translators at the time of the survey.

5.2. Status and authorisation

The role of authorisation was first approached by examining whether there were statistically significant differences between the status perceptions of authorised translators and translators without authorisation. This proved not to be the case. Figure 2 below illustrates the respondents' perceptions of translator status in general, illustrating that the distributions are virtually identical:

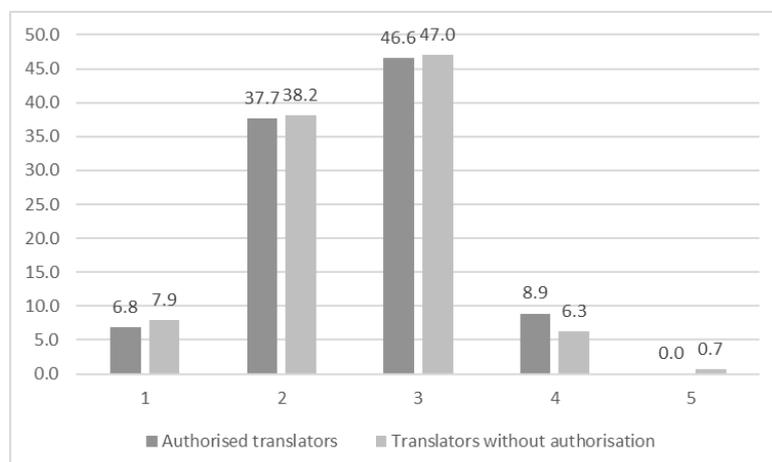


Figure 2. Perceptions of translator status in general (%): authorised vs non-authorised translators

The mean value was slightly higher for authorised translators (2.58) than for those without authorisation (2.54), but the difference was not statistically significant ($p=.719$). There was also no statistically significant difference concerning the status of the respondents' own work, where the mean values were 3.95 for authorised translators and 3.94 for others ($p=.569$).

The open items concerning factors and measures affecting translator status also suggest that the respondents do not perceive authorisation as relevant to status. Table 4 below illustrates how frequently the respondents made comments on authorisation or protecting the profession in these items.

Item	Authorisation or (lack of) protected title mentioned (n)	Responses to item (n)
Which factors or phenomena have a positive impact on translator status in Finland?	11	408
Which factors or phenomena have a negative impact on translator status in Finland?	18	430
What measures should be taken to improve translator status?	25	424
Total	54	

Table 4. Authorisation or professional boundaries mentioned in open responses

In the item on positive impact, only 4 respondents believed the current system of authorisation has a positive influence on status; the other 7 respondents called for further protecting the profession. Under negative impact, all 18 respondents made comments to the effect that translator status is negatively influenced by the lack of a protected title, the lack of accreditation or the fact that anyone can work as a translator. With regard to measures that should be taken, 11 respondents cal-

led for a protected title, 9 for regulating the profession in some other manner, and 5 thought that professional translators should be required to complete translator training.

It should also be pointed out that these 54 comments were made by 41 individual respondents, or ca. one tenth of the 450 respondents. Of these 41 respondents, over half were business translators (n=26).

Later on, in the open responses following the item on whether the profession should be protected (covered in Section 5.3 below), there were some additional comments on authorisation. These were almost exclusively negative ones: the examination was dismissed as a “money-making machine” (#265, business translator) that is “not reflective of real, extensive competence” (#380, languages and communications specialist). Customers might also not know when authorisation is required (#165, business translator; see similar comments in Dam/Zethsen 2010: 201), which allows “a translator with an authorisation in one special field to take on assignments as a reliable expert in all fields” (#328, business translator). Of the respondents who made these comments, only two were authorised translators themselves, which, considering the high failure rate of the examination (see Section 3 above) suggests the possibility that they might have attempted to pass the authorised translator’s examination and failed. It is also possible that the negative impressions date back to the pre-2008 system. At any rate, the negative comments may partly explain why authorisation does not seem to make a difference to the respondents’ status perceptions.

5.3. Should the profession be protected, how and why (not)?

The previous section demonstrated that in the open item on the measures that should be taken to improve translator status, only 25 respondents called for restricting entry to the profession in some manner. In contrast, when explicitly asked whether the profession should be protected, well over half or 59.8% of the respondents responded in the affirmative.

The respondents were then further asked **how** the profession should be protected. Figure 3 below illustrates the breakdown of the affirmative responses:

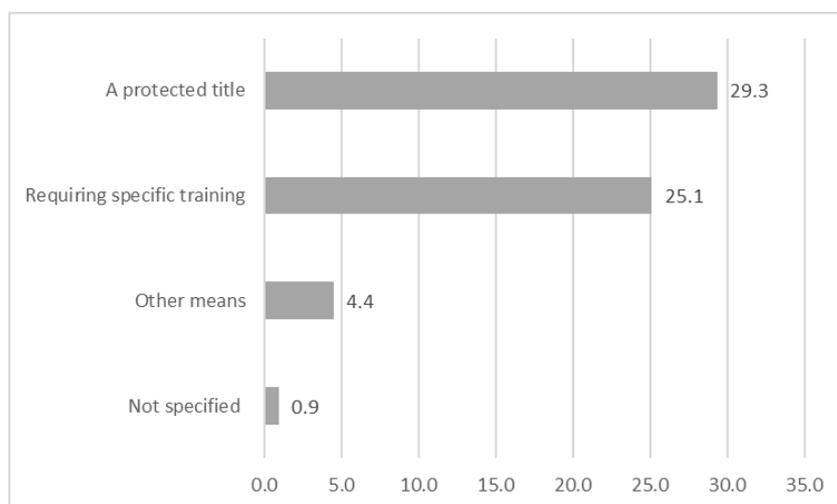


Figure 3. The profession should be protected by means of... (% of all responses)

As is apparent, a protected title and requiring specific training occur with almost equal frequency. In the open comments, some respondents also proposed that some kind of an examination could be established, or that commissioners should make more frequent use of test translations. The ‘Other means’ responses mainly emphasised the importance of appropriate training and work experience, or that there should be different alternatives for obtaining the protected qualification.

A closer look at the open comments further makes it evident that the ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ responses are not necessarily that far removed from each other. A handful of respondents who voted ‘Yes’ specified that a protected title, or requiring specific training, is mainly feasible in some areas of translation, such as business translation (#341, literary translator) or that protected titles could be created for specific areas of translation such as literary translation, audio-visual translation and business translation (#89, audio-visual translator). Some respondents in both groups commented that, although they wanted restrictions, they did not believe them to be possible because “translation is not bound by state borders” (#398, other) or “big translation companies don’t care if you have a degree or not” (#235, other).

Many of those who thought that the profession should be protected also qualified their responses by adding that the system should be flexible and allow for different possibilities for qualification, as translation covers many different fields requiring different skills (example 1 below). Similarly, those who held that the profession should not be protected often justified their views by referring to the varying demands of the field (examples 2 and 3).

(1) Training could be a requirement in some languages, but it’s not even offered in all. People from different backgrounds should still be allowed to become translators, especially in the private sector, because commissioners also need different kinds of translation services. For public service translators, there could be a formal requirement of either a BA or an MA degree that includes translation studies. (#118, interpreter)

(2) Because the field is so varied, we need very different kinds of people with different orientations, who may have acquired their competence in ways other than by completing a BA or an MA degree within the humanities. [...] On the other hand, it should be possible to train a sufficient number of translators who have developed a professional identity in order to establish a strong collective professional identity that would then be automatically internalised by people with other kinds of educational backgrounds. (#285, audio-visual translator)

(3) There are many facets to this issue; protecting the profession would work in the established languages, and would certainly have its uses, but translation and interpreting services are urgently needed in Finland for ‘new’ languages, particularly for refugees and immigrants, and it takes time to develop the measures needed for protection (training, testing, authorisation). (#364, business translator)

Another major issue brought up by both those in favour of protection and those opposed to it was that a degree in translation or languages is not an automatic guarantee of competence (for similar views, see Pym et al. 2012: 127 and Tuominen in this volume). This does not mean that the respondents were dismissive of university degrees; while there were a handful of negative comments about the graduates’ Finnish skills (#253, audio-visual translator; #261, business translator) or training being too theoretical (#340, #445, business translators), in general the respondents felt that their studies had been useful but should not be the only option for becoming a translator (for similar views, see Tuominen in this volume). Several respondents pointed out that they knew highly competent translators with other kinds of backgrounds:

(4) A translator’s competence consists of many components: training, general knowledge, familiarity with the topic to be translated and overall talent (writing skills). Although I’ve completed translator training myself, I still largely see translation as a skill based on talent and general knowledge. Over the years I’ve had to acknowledge that many translators with translator training can’t do nearly as good a job as someone with writing skills and sound general knowledge (for example solid knowledge of economics). (#57, business translator)

(5) Many translators have not trained to be translators but have found their way into the field anyway and do a good job. I’m an engineer myself, and my clients are very happy with my work. I’m well-versed in technology in two languages and have very strong skills in my mother tongue [...]. (#90, business translator)

Some of those opposed to restricting entry to the profession also justified their views by arguing that as long as high-quality work is valued, incompetent translators will be ‘weeded out’ by the market.

(6) The wheat will eventually be separated from the chaff [...] I think it's largely a matter of the translation agency/commissioner taking the time and effort to find out who they are dealing with because you can always find out about someone's competence if you want to: the translator's professional and educational background are evident in the CV. (#122, other)

(7) If you don't do excellent work, your career will end before it's started. Only high quality can guarantee more work. That's why everyone's free to try and spread their wings. (#404, literary translator)

This approach may work for some translators, but Anthony Pym et al.'s (2012) report suggests it does not currently work in the European translation market at large. On the contrary, the market seems to be experiencing disorder where high-quality work is not recognised, which leads to lower fees and causes good translators to leave the market (Pym et al. 2012: 115–118, 120–121; see also Tuominen in this volume). Some of the Finnish respondents also seemed to be of this opinion, as they commented that proper remuneration and decent working conditions would remedy the situation without any need for protection.

5.4. Who opted for protecting the profession?

This section considers whether the respondents' attitudes towards protecting the profession correlated with their professional identities and qualifications. Firstly, as illustrated in Figure 4 below, business translators were the most prone to advocate protection:

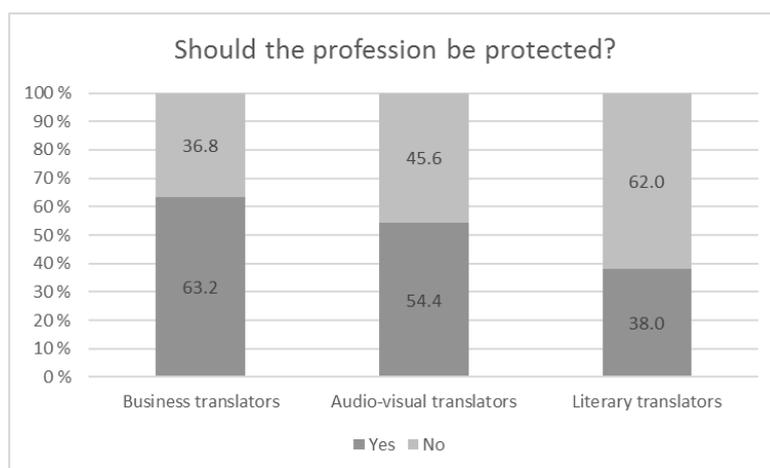


Figure 4. Views on protecting the profession (%) vs the respondents' professional identity

Yet, while the difference between business translators and literary translators is statistically significant ($p < .001$), the difference between business and audio-visual translators is not ($p = .214$), nor is the difference between audio-visual and literary translators ($p = .065$). Even business translators can hardly be characterised as being overwhelmingly in favour of protecting the profession.

Secondly, and perhaps not surprisingly, respondents with translator training were more prone to respond that the profession should be protected than respondents who had studied languages (foreign languages, Finnish or Swedish) or other subjects:



Figure 5. Views on protecting the profession (%) with regard to the respondents' educational background

Here, the views of those respondents with translator training are statistically different from the views of the other respondents ($p=.002$ between translator training and language studies; $p<.001$ between translator training and other). However, the difference between translators with degrees in languages vs in other subjects is not statistically significant ($p=.093$).

Finally, those respondents who were authorised translators themselves were more likely to advocate protecting the profession in some manner, as illustrated in Figure 6 below:

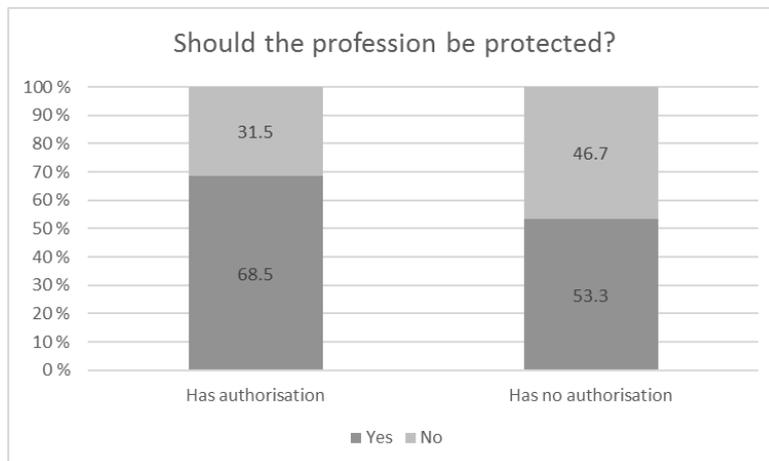


Figure 6. Views on protecting the profession (%) vs the respondents' authorisation

The difference is statistically very highly significant ($p=.002$).

These different factors also co-occur: over half of the business translator respondents also had translator training, and over 40% of the business translators held the authorised translator's qualification. In contrast, of the literary translators, less than 30% had translator training and only 16.9% were authorised translators.

6. Discussion and conclusion

This paper set out to explore how the Finnish system of authorisation affects translators' status perceptions, and whether they call for protecting the profession further, and if so, how and why (or why not).

The results largely indicate that authorisation is not linked to the respondents' views on status. Authorisation produced no statistically significant differences in the respondents' status rankings, and few respondents mentioned authorisation or protecting the profession in open-ended items on factors or measures affecting status. This may partly reflect negative attitudes that became apparent in some open comments, which in turn may stem from difficulties in passing the current authorised translator's examination or even from the largely criticised pre-2008 examination. The translator respondents can also be expected to be well aware of the fact that authorisation only concerns a very specific area of translation rather than signalling across-the-board competence, even if the latter may apparently be what people outside the field think.

Conversely, almost 60% of the respondents thought that the profession should be protected to a greater extent than it currently is. Business translators with translator education and/or authorisation were particularly in favour of further protection. This suggests that those respondents with authorisation may feel that they have benefited from their qualification in some way, in contrast to the results reported in the previous paragraph, although it should be emphasised that the data reflect the respondents' perceptions, not objective reality.

Quite a few respondents advocating further protection also qualified their responses by pointing out that any system of protection should be flexible and allow for different paths towards becoming a qualified professional translator. The varying demands of the different translational professions also make it doubtful whether a single sufficiently flexible yet effective system could actually be devised. Some alternatives are discussed by Pym et al. (2012: 121–127).

On the whole, the present study supports the results of previous research (notably Dam/Zethsen 2009, 2010). The next step will be to compare the Finnish and Danish translators' status rankings and other responses to investigate whether any influence of the Danish protected title with its broader scope is evident there.

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