



## **Fan Translation: Potential Pedagogical Implications for Translation Trainees in the Digital Space**

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### **Abstract**

*At a time when the digital space is taking primacy over the non-digital one in many scientific disciplines, Translation Studies is expressing both a strong tendency and a general need for interdisciplinary research within the digital space as well. The digital space presupposes that translation can take new directions – moving not only from the translator to the recipient, but the other way around as well, or as will be presented here, even from recipient to recipient. In this paper we shall present the trend of fan translation with the aim to draw attention to the necessity to investigate this form of translation further as it may be beneficial to all stakeholders in translation, i.e. researchers, practitioners and representatives in the translation industry at large, in particular to translation trainees. We shall present the results of the analysis of the applicability of fan translation in the domain of translation training based on which we shall provide a list of potential pedagogical implications of this trend for translation trainees in the digital space. The analysis and the subsequent conclusions will draw attention to the necessity of including fan translation in the curricula and/or syllabi of translation training programmes/courses which will enable the application of fan translation in a context beyond the entertainment industry where it currently occurs.*

**Keywords:** *Fan translation, digital space, pedagogical implications, translation training.*

### **1. Introduction**

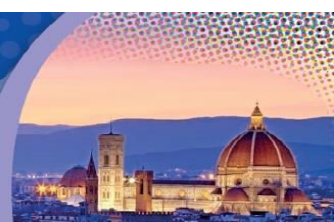
Substantial evidence can be found in the literature referring to the reasons why Translation Studies (TS) is an interdisciplinary field of research [1], [2]. Moreover, attention is drawn to the necessity that translation theorists and practicing translators, scholars and schools cooperate and engage in interdisciplinary approaches. New trends are appearing and novel directions are being discovered [3] so that is more and more common that translation is not moving only from the translator to the recipient, but the other way around as well [4]. The digital space is taking primacy over the non-digital one in almost every aspect of life and translation is no exception.

Nevertheless, it seems that the industry of translation and the study of translation do not always move in the same direction [5]. This research is aimed at drawing attention to fan translation [6], [7] and the necessity to investigate this form of translation further as it may be beneficial to all stakeholders in translation, i.e. researchers, practitioners and representatives in the translation industry at large, in particular to translation trainees. That is why we shall present the results of the analysis of the applicability of fan translation in the domain of translation training so as to provide a list of potential pedagogical implications of this trend for translation trainees in the digital space [8].

### **2. Fan translation**

The World Wide Web enables a new level of connectivity which could not have been imagined in the not so remote past. People of similar ideas and inclinations can surpass the limitations of space by forming virtual communities in which they can connect, congregate and work together, create volunteer networks, initiate actions, perform tasks, raise awareness, mediate between and among users or, if necessary, build translation networks [9], [10]. In a situation where a network of individuals who are not professional translators, but are driven by their enthusiasm to help the dissemination of specific content (e.g. instructions for a video game, dialogues in an animated video, etc.), such network may be defined as a fan translation network [11]. An obvious characteristic of such network is that “potential consumers of translations double as translation producers” [6].

In most instances fan translation is related to the translation of video games, webtoons and similar multimedia content where players, viewers and users supply suggestions for the translation of the content [6]. It is obvious that members of the fan translation communities have to rely on open-source software because they are not affiliated to a translation agency so they do not get paid for their work. In addition, they have to coordinate their work without a project manager who would be dispatching



the translation jobs to them. Therefore it may be concluded that fan translators are extremely motivated individuals driven by an inherent wish to advocate the general spirit of free sharing and using online content.

A drawback of fan translation is that it is not reliable. Quite often justified concerns are being raised related to the quality of the final product, i.e. the translation because many people work on smaller segments of a larger text [7], [12]. Important text features, such as coherence and cohesion may be corrupted which means that additional work has to be put into the reviewing and editing of such translation [12]. Most often, there is no post-production, no post-editing nor is there a quality check. In addition, these types of translations are unofficial and they are almost all the time handled by amateurs who may lack important knowledge of translation techniques and strategies. Nevertheless, such translations are authentic and they are provided by members of the audience who the translation is directed at [6]. Thus many elements specifically related to certain cultures and subcultures are translated accurately, a quality which may not be guaranteed by professional translators who are not part of the culture or subculture.

### **3. Fan translation in translation training**

The starting point of the analysis of the applicability of fan translation in translation training is the question whether it will fit a translation training course devoted to non-literary texts. The specific content presented in non-literary texts as well as the fact that they are meant for very specific target groups, necessitates an adequate syllabus preparing translation trainees for such texts [4], [8]. Fan translation being specific in that sense fits the training of translators for non-literary texts as the course can be structured and designed in a way that will cater for all the varieties of texts a translator will face in the course of their professional life, including fan translation. Trainees would acquire practical skills primarily focusing on working with other translators in a community aiming at providing coherence and cohesion of an otherwise segmented target text.

The second step would be to determine whether fan translation may be incorporated into three main aspects of such a course syllabus: (a) objectives, (b) outcomes and (c) content.

The main objective of including fan translation in a non-literary translation course would be to provide the students with the skills and competences to apply theoretical knowledge in practice. This would mean train the students on recognizing the type of text they need to translate, teach them which techniques, strategies and methods can be applied in the fan translation process, help them familiarize with problem-solving strategies; in one word, equip them with practical skills to handle texts usually included in fan translation.

The outcomes of such approach would be that students are able to apply theories and approaches during the translation of fan translation texts from language A to language B, make appropriate decisions while analyzing a source text, explain the problems encountered during a translational act by using specialized terminology of translation theory, offer solutions for the problems encountered during a translational act and be open to criticism passed by reviewers and language professionals who will be assessing their translation products.

Finally, the content that would have to be included in a course including fan translation would have to be based on various texts from different fields and industries including the entertainment, film and animation industry, video games, webtoons as well as a wide range of multimedia content shared in the digital space.

### **4. The pedagogical implications of fan translation in the digital space**

There is no doubt that the methodology of teaching translation in the age of digital primacy, fan translation being only a small segment, should include specific training regarding the translation of discourse in collaborative user-generated settings, i.e. the digital space in general. Already in 2005, Tennent suggested that TS needs “to keep abreast of technological changes, changes which affect the social fabric of the present generation and which will determine to a large measure the conditions under which the translator and interpreter work. New technologies, especially the Internet, offer unparalleled access to information, data banks and terminology that will facilitate the translator’s work, provided he or she acquires the know-how to rapidly retrieve and assimilate them” [8]. This means that two directions should be pursued in the domain of translation training in the digital space:

- (a) Translation Studies should be involved in the development of curricula and/or syllabi focusing on modern approaches to the translation of content other than literary and non-literary texts in the traditional sense (e.g. web content in its broadest sense, video games, webtoons, cartoons, online commercials, banners, pop-ups, etc.).



- (b) Translation courses should be designed to focus on providing students with skills and competences related to working with other translators in a crowd or community. More importantly, translation students should be trained to analyse, understand and translate online and offline content from a wide range of products of modern culture.

## 5. Conclusion

At this moment, translation as a profession exists within a language market that is burdened by various economic indicators both at a macro and a micro level [13]. The list is long because numerous issues encumber the modern translation industry. To name a few, translation agencies have to accommodate to new market demands primarily existing in the digital space, amateur translators (bi/multilinguals without formal training) are slowly taking over given they provide services at lower prices, professional translators battle high productivity pressure, market demands are challenging due to the competitiveness of the market itself, freelancers have to deal with their (quite often unsettled) status and technologization is extremely fast [13]. That is why it seems necessary to establish new directions in both research and practice which would enable a better synergy between scholars, trainees and the industry [5]. The digital space seems to be the perfect venue for such a synergy; therefore, it could be used to enhance the possibilities of specialized training provided to translation trainees. Fan translation should most certainly be included in such training.

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