

Translation of Personal Official Documents as a Community Service

Written by Mustapha Taibi (Western Sydney University)

Personal official documents, as the name suggests, refer to documents that are official and personal (e.g. passport, driver's licence, identity card, birth certificate, academic qualifications, etc.). Some refer to them as "official", which may lead to confusion with other official documents such as government reports, decisions and announcements. Others refer to them as "personal", which again may overlap with other types of personal documents such as personal letters. The use of both "official" and "personal" probably defines more clearly the type of documents we are talking about.

Four years ago, when Uldis Ozolins and I published [Community Translation](#), we included a chapter on "translating official documents" and pointed out that this area of translation was (and still is) under-researched. Some colleagues might not agree that the translation of personal official documents is part of community translation. For instance, in her [review of the book](#), Inma Pedregosa (University of Roehampton) notes that the chapter on translating personal official documents "sits at odds with what community translation entails". In the same chapter we too note: "this area of translation, in a way, turns on its head the paradigm of community translation advanced in this book – that is, the translation of official or semi-official information or other public documents so that immigrants, visitors or others not familiar with the majority language can obtain access to vital information. In the translation of official documents, it will often be translations of documents that the immigrants or visitors *themselves* have brought, often from another country of origin, that need translation for recognition by institutions in their host country". However, while personal official documents are issued by institutions and submitted by holders to other institutions and, therefore, may well fall under the category of 'administrative' or 'legal', their translations are part of the language services encompassed in community translation. Migrants and refugees need to have their personal official documents translated for the public services of their new country just like they need information translated into their own languages. Personal official documents are international (i.e. they cross borders with or even before their holders), but in many cases the translation needs relating to them are local (e.g. settlement and integration purposes).

As part of our interest in community translation, Uldis Ozolins and I are conducting a research project entitled "Translation of official documents: Ensuring quality and enhancing security", kindly funded by [NAATI](#) and [Multicultural NSW](#). The project aims to identify current professional practices in Australia in relation to the translation of these documents, and the requirements of quality and integrity from the perspectives of certified translators, language service managers and public service staff. We have completed the part consisting of translator questionnaires and interviews, and continue to collect data from service managers and public service staff who process translated personal official documents.

Our translator participants report that, among the challenges they face in translating this type of documents, diversity in terms of country of origin and variation in the amount of information available in documents come first. It also appears from their responses that extract (template) translations are the norm in Australia, while full translations are provided only

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when required. Extract translations are easy to read and more efficient, as they focus on the essential information in each document type, which is usually presented in table format. However, some Australian translators prefer to do full translations because they believe that this option is more faithful and complete (they do not want to leave out information that might be useful for institutions processing the translation).

When asked about quality criteria in this area of translation, most translators identified...

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PAGE 1 Continued ... most translators identified accuracy (factual information, attention to detail, accurate terminology, names and spellings, etc.) and completeness (in the sense of translating all the essential information, and inserting translator notes where necessary) as key criteria. Some acknowledged the nature and variability (and sometimes physical quality) of official documents created challenges in terms of accurate and

complete rendition. In relation to this, most of the participants indicated they had never completed courses or professional development activities on translating official documents. Most also expressed interest in such training. More coming soon...

Translation and Technology —

What might the future of Community Translations look like?

*Presented by Michael Camit (University of Technology Sydney)
2nd International Conference on Community Translations
RMIT, Melbourne, 13-15 December 2019*

By 2030, it is predicted that up to 32% of jobs will be replaced by automation and artificial intelligence (OECD, 2018). Technology and social innovation have brought businesses and initiatives that “disrupted” traditional business models. Uber, the ride sharing platform has become a major transportation business but does not actually own cars. Airbnb is another example of a business that has disrupted the rental accommodation market but does not actually own any houses or apartments. Facebook and YouTube have been asking volunteers to translate their pag-

es.

What is the future of community translations? What can we learn from major disruptors? What are start-ups and what can we learn from the way they evolve?

A workshop held at the 2nd International Conference on Community Translation posed these questions to conference participants.

The workshop started with tracing some key differences between traditional services and the “[disruptive innovation](#)” or [start-ups](#).

It then led participants in understanding

some key steps in [design thinking](#). This included understanding the various stakeholders or [ecosystem](#) of each issue.

Conference participants identified these questions for the future:

1. How might we develop a translation product/format that is effective for everyone in the target community?
2. How might we discourage the use of non-qualified translation and interpreter practitioners?
3. How might we encourage creativity in translations? How can we establish creativity assessment criteria for

translators?

The following were key points raised at group presentations:

1. How might we develop a translation product/format that is effective for everyone in the target community?

- Create ongoing up-to-date terminology
- Ensure language is more accessible. Use appropriate register to suit audience
- Investigate and evaluate use of technology such as Google Translate
- Investigate [computer assisted tools](#)

(CAT) and their role in making translation jobs more efficient and effective

- Explore new ways of presenting and disseminating language resources
 - Investigate future of parallel texts (content/subjects)
 - Explore the role of community involvement and engagement in collaboration with translators
 - Explore the potential of community feedback on translations
- #### 2. How might we discourage the use of non-qualified translation and interpreter practitioners?
- Develop marketing and communi-

cation campaigns to show a world without qualified translators and interpreters

- Explore creative ways of telling this story e.g. Netflix and movie streaming platforms
 - Tell real life “horror stories” of what can go wrong and the repercussions of using non-professionally accredited interpreters and translators.
 - Stricter regulations implemented by agencies
- #### 3. How might we encourage creativity in translations? How can we establish creativity assessment criteria for translators?

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- Explore technology such as CT brain scans, MRIs, eye-tracking etc. to establish relationship with creativity and brain activity
- Create apps or online assessments to assess candidate's creativity
- Explore assessments that reveal candidate's creativity e.g. translate creative pieces, participate in creative challenges

- Explore use of interactive research approaches e.g. focus groups, interviews to assess creativity

While the workshop provided a limited time to explore these questions, the activity provided an opportunity to identify the burning questions that participants have about the future of translations.

About the presenter:

Michael Camit is Manager of Marketing and Communication of the NSW Multi-

cultural Health Communication Service (MHCS). He has over 20 years of researching, developing and implementing award winning campaigns including the Pink Sari Project and Life Giving Stories.

He is also a PhD candidate at University of Technology Sydney, Public Communication, researching the potential of emergent technology, social media and social innovation to improve the health and wellbeing of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Community Translation in South Africa—

Community translation. Plain language for the retranslation of a banking text

Authored by Adriaan Cupido and Harold Lesch (Stellenbosch University)

Abstract

In South Africa, English is readily used as a bridging language in various public domains, including the banking sector. Various laws, including the Consumer Protection Act and the National Credit Act, clearly stipulate that any written communication, particularly in the banking sphere, must be made available in plain language, and that banking documentation should be accessible to every client. This legislation was instituted to ensure that the public make informed decisions and have access to information. If clients do not understand the documents they receive, they are not in a position to make informed decisions, or to participate actively in society. It also determines that documentation should be available in the language the client understands. However, it is not enough to translate these documents into the various languages without making additional adjustments to accommodate the various literacy levels of the diverse clientele.

Since 2004 banks have had to ensure that all relevant documents are readily available in all official languages. Due to

high levels of low literacy and complete illiteracy in South Africa, the bottom segment of banking clients still struggle to fully grasp the content of the available documents. This supports the view that in every linguistic community there are often linguistically marginalised individuals who do not have the ability to interpret information correctly. A large part of this bottom segment of banking clients informally make use of the bank security personnel to act as interpreters to bridge the communication gap because most of the individuals who fall within this segment have limited comprehension in English and bank documentation is not always accessible to them, according to Pienaar (2006a:135–6).

Mindful of the abovementioned background, this study attempts to investigate the effectiveness or lack thereof of texts translated into Afrikaans in the banking sector to determine whether a functionalist translation approach within this context would be able to make a contribution towards improved accessibility, efficiency and the realisation of effective communication within this

sector. A retranslation of an appropriate Afrikaans banking text is investigated with the aim of improving reader comprehension and accessibility by applying aspects of plain language and community translation (Cornelius 2012 and Lesch 2012).

This study uses the functionalist model of translation as theoretical framework as starting point. This framework supports the notion that the context in which a text functions and meaning-making are inseparable from each other. Within this model the focus is primarily on the function of the target text, and the translator is mindful of the appropriateness of the translation. The emphasis is therefore no longer on the lexical and grammatical constructions, but rather on the function of the text within the communicative situation. According to Nord, the commissioner is the initiator of the translation process, as he provides the translation brief that contains the aim and *skopos* of the translation.

[Click here](#) for the full abstract and article.

Our members' latest publications

- ◇ Adriaan Cupido & **Lesch, H. M.** (2019). Community translation. Plain language for the retranslation of a banking text. *Litnet Akademies:'n Joernaal vir die Geesteswetenskappe, Natuurwetenskappe, Regte en Godsdienswetenskappe*, 17(1), 138-170.
- ◇ Burn, J. A., & **Crezee, I. H.** (2020). Tell us about that: Using audiovisual clips to allow students to practise interpreting authentic court questions. In *Interpreting in Legal and Healthcare Settings* (pp. 45-62). John Benjamins.
- ◇ **Crezee, I. H.**, Burn, J. A., & **Teng, W.** (2020). Community translation in New Zealand. In S. Laviosa & M. González-Davies (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Education* (pp. 245–263). New York: Routledge.
- ◇ **Crezee, I. H.** & Major, G. (2020). Our work as interpreters in these unprecedented times. *International Journal of Interpreter Education*, 12(1), 1-5.
- ◇ **Crezee, I. H.**, & Jülich, S. (2020). Exploring role expectations of healthcare interpreters in New Zealand. In *Interpreting in Legal and Healthcare Settings* (pp. 211-247) . Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- ◇ Enríquez Raído, V., **Crezee, I. H.**, & Ridgeway, Q. (2020). Professional, ethical, and policy dimensions of public service interpreting and translation in New Zealand. In *Translation and Interpreting Studies*, 15(1), 15-35.
- ◇ Ng, E., & **Crezee, I. H.** (2020). Introduction. Interpreting in legal and healthcare settings: Perspectives on research and training. In *Interpreting in Legal and Healthcare Settings* (pp. 1-18). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- ◇ Ng, E., & **Crezee, I. H.** (2020). (Eds.) *Interpreting in Legal and Healthcare Settings: Perspectives on research and training*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- ◇ Shrestha-Ranjit, J., Payne, D., Koziol-McLain, J., **Crezee, I. H.**, & Manias, E. (2020). Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability, and Quality of Interpreting Services to Refugee Women in New Zealand. *Qualitative Health Research*, 30(11), 1697-1709.
- ◇ Teng, W. (2020). *It makes sense, but I just don't get it. Translators' and end-users' perspectives on the English to Chinese community translation of health texts*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand. <https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/13270>

Upcoming Conferences

- ◇ AUSIT 2020 National Conference
 - Business as Unusual
 - AUSIT, Perth, Australia
 - 20th-21st November 2020
 - For details, please [click here](#)
- ◇ 9th Asian-Pacific Forum on Translation and Intercultural Studies
 - Translation, Interpreting and Language Industry in a New Era of Globalization: Opportunities and Challenges
 - Wake Forest University, North Carolina, USA
 - 18th-20th March 2021
 - For details, please [click here](#)
- ◇ 13th meeting of the international Symposium on (Im)Politeness & 7th meeting of the biannual iMean
 - Pragmatics of Translation
 - University of Basel, Switzerland
 - 24th-26th June 2021
 - For details, please [click here](#)

ICTRG

We make community translation accessible and understandable to communities!

ICTRG MISSION STATEMENT

- ◇ To create an international research community capable of leading and conducting quality research into Community Translation;
 - ◇ To facilitate cross-fertilization of ideas and international research partnerships;
 - ◇ To raise awareness of Community Translation needs in different countries;
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