A Translational Approach to Inclusive Development

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Abstract

The semiotic conceptualization of translation in the area of development, and especially in inclusive development that takes into consideration marginalized and vulnerable populations, allows for an understanding of translation beyond mere linguistic translation. On the one hand, this article advances the theoretical discussion of translation in development studies. On the other hand, it also provides a diversity of contexts, both geographic and historical, in which translation plays an important role in development processes and practices. Two major themes have surfaced in the issue: (1) the distinction in the approaches to the development agenda from a North–South aid and a South–South cooperation perspective, with a special focus on China; and (2) the multidirectional and multilingual flow of knowledge and the need to preserve indigenous knowledge by preserving and translating indigenous languages.

Keywords: semiotics; diversity; development cooperation; knowledge transfer; indigenous languages

1. Introduction

One aspect of development, especially in relation to people-centred development (Korten & Klauss, 1984), that has received general consensus in development studies is that the language used by development practitioners holds sway over the way development is conceptualized, which in turn directs actions (Crush, 1995; Escobar, 1995). Cornwall (2007) notes that "the language of development defines worlds-in-the-making, animating and justifying intervention in currently existing worlds with fulsome promises of the possible" (p. 471). However, despite the interest in the role that language plays in development (Cornwall, 2007; Cornwall & Eade, 2010;

Anderson et al., 2012), connections between translation studies and development studies started to emerge only in the past decade.

According to Marais, who draws on the work of both Latour (2005) and Tymoczko (2007), "societies . . . still under construction . . . may provide valuable insight into the agency of translators in the construction of social realities" (Marais, 2013, p. 412). In addition, as Marais (2018) points out, translation scholars engaging with the field of development would best be served to start with a non-reductionist view of development, that is, one that does not limit development only to issues of aid or economic growth. Instead, Marais proposes adopting a much wider view of development, one that encompasses the humanities and includes insights from theories based on work in anthropological and cultural studies such as alternative development and human development. For this to happen in translation studies would require no less than a paradigmatic and methodological shift – from focusing on written texts to analysing non-linguistic or only partially linguistic multimodal phenomena in their specific contexts. This shift has been emerging over quite a long time (Marais 2019, pp. 11–82). Apart from the conceptual work that underpins this emergent trend (see, for example, Boria in Boria et al. (2020)), much empirical multimodal work has been done in the areas of audio-visual translation and accessibility studies, and new theoretical work is emerging (see, for example, Bogucki & Deckert, 2020). There is a clear overlap between accessibility studies and development studies, but development studies covers a much broader range of phenomena than accessibility studies and issues of social justice.

The need to discuss translation in the context of development is further evident in the research conducted on the translation and adaptation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) in different national contexts, in terms of both rendering the meaning from one language into another by linguistic and non-linguistic strategies (Lwara & Ndalama, 2020) and "conversion from one form or act to another" (Pope et al., 2021). According to the UN, "reducing inequalities and ensuring that no one is left behind are integral to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)".[1] However, no matter which translational approach is adopted, the lack of inclusion of the target user in the process of translation often results in development practices being inaccessible. This outcome consequently broadens the inequalities that already exist among vulnerable populations in developing countries that have been identified as an area of global concern Greco (2018).

2. State of the art: Conceptualization of Translation in Development

Development, in the sense that it is used in this special themed edition, was coined after World War II. In the new world order foreseen after the war there would no longer be colonizers and colonized but only developed and developing nations (Coetzee et al., 2001). Given this history and the subsequent history of development as a socio-political-economic concept and a field of

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[1] For more on SDG10 please read https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/inequality/

study, development has remained a problematic notion since its inception. One reason for the problems in development studies is the unequal distribution of power in global politics, as indicated in the call for contributions to this guest-edited volume. Many development projects have failed miserably, which resulted in questions being asked about development per se. On the one hand, scholars and practitioners question the assumption of linear progress that underlies much of development thinking. On the other hand, the question is what the yardstick for development should be. Too often, currently successful economies, democracies and societies are taken as the yardstick, ignoring the fact that what is successful now might disappear or fall apart in future. This is why the human capabilities approach to development (Nussbaum, 2011; Nussbaum & Sen, 1993) tries to do away with a general yardstick and instead suggests contextualized possibilities for human growth. It is also why scholars of Latin-American development have delved into local world views to find contextualized solutions to development questions (Escobar, 1995; Nederveen Pieterse, 2010).

What few scholars of development studies see is that development also entails semiosis. While Nederveen Pieterse (2010) hints at it, the writings of Olivier de Sardan (2005) and Lewis and Mosse (2006) were the only works we could find that explicitly consider the semiotic aspect of development. Olivier de Sardan argues that all societies have a development task to perform, namely, to adapt to the continuous changes in the environment (including other societies) around them. Olivier de Sardan's position immediately makes it clear that any development work emerges in the context of power, interest, and value. The adaptation is semiotic in nature because societies, and the individuals in a society, need to make sense of what is happening around them and construct meaningful responses to these environments. What is happening around any living organism, including human beings, is always a sign that needs to be interpreted. Societies are therefore constructed as meaningful responses to or interpretations of what is happening in the environment, whether this environment is natural, social, or cultural. To put it simply, the meaning of anything that happens in society is its translation into another set of signs. This other set of signs could be social structures, written texts or human actions, among many other signs.

The implications of this semiotic explanation of development would be that the United States, for instance, has as much of a development task at hand as does Zimbabwe, although it is clear that their tasks would be massively dissimilar. Olivier de Sardan's line of thought solves both problems with the concept of development listed above. Because the adaptation is semiotic, it is also non-linear and not based on teleological progress. And because the adaptation is determined by context, there is no universal yardstick with which to measure development. According to this view, the problems of development are not to "get everybody to the same level" but involve thinking through the ways in which different contexts constrain the development process. From a development perspective, the point is that the world is not a level playing field but rather something like a constantly moving tectonic plate. A society's development is therefore never constrained only by its internal issues but also by the external forces that are brought to bear on it. As Marais and Delgado Luchner (2018) argue, context itself is relative in

that, in the global situation, countries that are physically very far removed might act in ways that require meaningful adaptations in other countries. A current example of this is the war in the Ukraine, which causes changes to provisioning chains, leading to a rise in prices thousands of kilometres away in South Africa. All of these physical events are signs that need to be interpreted by human beings in South Africa, such as 'I have to stockpile diesel fuel' or 'I cannot travel to Eastern Europe to promote my business'.

Once that semiotic aspect of development has been confirmed, it is easy to see why translation is relevant to development studies and practice. In Peirce's definition, the meaning of a sign is its translation into another sign or signs (Peirce, 1994). This means that development practice as defined above – that is, adapting to a changing environment (see also Salthe, 1993) – entails a translational dimension or aspect. Let us consider one example.

Imagine a community of crop farmers who have, over the centuries, adapted to the rainfall pattern in their environment. Their practices are guided by the weather, and the weather system therefore has a particular meaning to them. Then, one day, they are introduced to a water reservoir and irrigation practices. Now they have to adapt their practices to this new environment. They need to learn to stop watching the weather patterns for rain and rather plan their activities around the times when they are allowed to draw irrigation water from the reservoir. They have to plan their farming not on when it would rain but on how much water they are allowed to draw from the reservoir. The changes in their environment and their interpretation – that is, their semiotization – of them mean that new practices, values, and interests emerge. For instance, because they are not dependent on the rainfall pattern anymore, for them the meaning of rain changes. They might even stop asking supernatural help for rain because the reservoir has taken over that role in their lives. This means that they translate the new environment into meaningful new responses. Peirce calls the actions that result from the interpretation of signs "dynamic interpretants": for these farmers, the meaning of rain has been translated into new values, practices and interests. Irrigation specialists now become part of their lives and interests; the timing of irrigation becomes part of their practices; and new technology is translated into meaningful aspects of their world (Latour, 2007).

It should be clear that, in this conceptualization, translation is not limited to interlingual translation. Practices are themselves translations of previous signs. Put differently, practices are semiotic responses to signs that appeared to interpreters and the ways in which the interpreters interpreted the signs. Marais (2017) has previously suggested that development is built on semiotic responses (see also Petrilli & Zanoletti, in press). A semiotic response theory does not mean that semiotic agents are passive. Instead, it emphasizes that meaning-making takes place in response to an environment and that this semiotic response is constructed relationally. Moreover, that a semiotic response is constructed means that it is neither automatic nor natural. It also means that the other – be it the materiality of the environment or the social–cultural reality that is an environment or other people who are an environment – is taken seriously and

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is allowed to co-construct the self. This relational semiotic response theory aims at amending the solipsism inherent in the popular idealist–constructivist epistemology in translation studies.

3. Emerging Topics in Translation for Inclusive Development

The role of translation in development – a pervasive theme that runs through this issue – offers a number of important opportunities for analysing translation practices that enable inclusive development. Furthermore, the articles in this issue offer a variety of case studies based on diverse geographical locations, historical periods, and social actors through which the research questions are responded to. Here we must recognize that the taxonomy provided below is certainly not the only possible organization of the development topics covered in the articles in this special issue: there are overlaps between topics and an almost circular connection between them. We would also like to acknowledge that to stay true to our title of inclusive development we have tried to offer diverse viewpoints both geographically and methodologically.

3.1. International organizations and inclusive development

International organizations have been at the forefront of development since its beginnings. However, the importance of language and translation to reaching the most marginalized communities has started to gain interest only in the past couple of decades. In recent years, scholars in translation studies started shifting their attention to large international organizations, such as Amnesty International (Schäffner et al., 2014; Tesseur, 2014, 2017) and Oxfam (Footitt, 2017; Sanz Martins, 2018), attempting to examine both theoretically and prescriptively the way communication needs are dealt with in these global bodies (Madon, 1999). In a study of two Swiss-based aid organizations, Caritas Switzerland and the Fédération genevoise de coopération, Delgado Luchner (2018) examines the aid chain from a language perspective, noting that language competencies largely influence the distribution of aid in certain areas. Furthermore, in studying the role of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, Crack (2019) has noted the "absence of extended commentary, guidance or reflection about language" (p. 166). She has also pointed out that because of their English-language competencies, "Northern-based NGOs [non-governmental organizations] are more likely to receive funding, regardless of their local language capacity" (p. 166) and they are therefore in a position to set priorities for local development. Finally, Tesseur (2023) raises the issue of language use and translation in international NGOs as an integral part of the discussion on social justice and sustainable development.

Research on international organizations continues to show that the effect of translation on the inclusion or otherwise of local communities does not tend to be given prominent attention in the aid sector. In fact, organizations active in the international humanitarian sector and in crisis situations tend to neglect the language needs of the local communities, relying on aid workers who are often not trained in translation work (Federici et al., 2019; Todorova & Ahrens, 2020). However, the language skills of the staff in international organizations can be a useful tool for

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inclusion provided they are trained in basic translation skills. In their article in this volume "Language diversity and inclusion in humanitarian organisations: Mapping an NGO's language capacity and identifying linguistic challenges and solutions", **Wine Tesseur**, **Sharon O'Brien** and **Enida Friel** present the findings of a survey conducted among staff of the international organization, GOAL. With a staff of 2,500, GOAL is active in 14 countries across various geographical regions, including Africa, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East, its headquarters (HQ) being in Ireland. Despite its geographic spread, the organisation does not have an overt institutional language policy that defines which languages it works in, whereas English functions as the organisation's default lingua franca, particularly for communication between HQ and its country programmes. Among the identified informal translation practices occurring in this international organization they identify the pervasive use of machine translation. However, their research shows that the staff would benefit from training in machine translation literacy. In addition, the article shows that greater understanding of language barriers in the work of the organization can be facilitated by putting in place policies that actively reflect on the organization's language choices and consider the way they affect inclusiveness, both internally in the organization and in the way the international NGO works with its local beneficiaries.

Another international humanitarian organization that has been the subject of past studies on its language use is Oxfam. Footitt (2017), for example, studied the internal documents of Oxfam International over a period of about 60 years and noticed that the use of the "anglo-dominated lexicon of aid and development" led to "programs which were considerably less effective" (p. 524). Also focusing on Oxfam International, Sanz Martins (2018) has described the specific linguistic needs that resulted in the development of its professional translation service. However, the project that **Katrien Lievois** examines in the article " Oxfam Novib et la diffusion de la littérature du Sud en néerlandais : Le tour du « tiers-monde » en 250 romans " does not belong in the category of average humanitarian projects. This article studies the Oxfam Novib-sponsored publication of literary translations that introduced about 250 novels by about 200 authors from more than 80 countries into Dutch between 1975 and 2020. The translation of their works creates opportunities for cultural exchange between peripheral literatures. In particular, Lievois tracks the publication trends in the translation of Francophone African literature into Dutch between 1956 and 2021, which were greatly influenced by the support from Oxfam Novib. For instance, of the 64 novels translated into Dutch between 1956 and 2020, 39% were produced with Novib support. Oxfam Novib is a foundation in the Netherlands that collaborates closely with Oxfam. As outlined in their constitution, the objects of the foundation are to promote a world society in which the social and economic differences between rich and poor are reduced, in which the world's affluence is divided and in which people and communities are enabled to learn about and respect each other's culture, and to work together on the basis of common responsibility and solidarity with one another to further their development. Although it does not constitute direct humanitarian aid for reducing inequalities, the translation of literature, as discussed in this contribution, contributes to the exchange of knowledge (see also Özge Özer in this issue) and the recognition of the literary value of works by African authors, who have traditionally been excluded from the world literary canon.

Todorova, M., & Marais, K. (2022). A translational approach to inclusive development. *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series: Themes in Translation Studies*, *20*, 1–16. DOI available online.

3.2 China's role in South–South development

Most of the international organizations that have been examined in previous research fall within traditional North–South cooperation and aid (Crack, 2018; Delgado Luchner, 2018; Footitt, 2017; Tesseur, 2023). South–South cooperation refers to the exchange of resources and knowledge between the countries of the Global South; it can be traced back to 1955 and the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia – also known as the Bandung Conference (Acharya, 2016). This emerging cooperation "conveys the hope that development may be achieved by the poor themselves through their mutual assistance to one another" (Gray & Gills, 2016, p. 557). South–South cooperation has also been identified by the United Nations as one of the crucial tools in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (Amorim et al., 2016). In 2004, the establishment of the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Dialog Forum was meant to increase the collaboration between these three developing countries and enhance South–South cooperation (Stuenkel, 2015). However, the "absence of a common language in a literal sense and in terms of cultural differences and misconceptions" (Gray & Gills, 2016, p. 569) continues to create barriers to transnational solidarity and shared priorities among IBSA countries. Moreover, language seems again to determine cooperation partnerships, which is underscored by the notions of "common language" and "cultural proximity": witness Brazil's technical cooperation with Mozambique (Seifert, 2021). However, there is a lack of official acknowledgement of this practice and of research to determine the strategic advantage of a shared language in a South–South cooperation modality.

Since the beginning of South–South development cooperation, China has emerged as an "alternative modernity" that has redefined the relationships between the South and the North and fostered anticolonial solidarity (Liu, 2022, p. 14). China has placed less importance on cultural and linguistic similarities when choosing development cooperation partners.

Placing interpreting and interpreters at the centre of his research, **Chonglong Gu** seeks to uncover the Chinese development discourse in English translation from 1998 to 2017. The article "Concordancing develop* at the interpreter-mediated press conferences: A corpus-based CDA on Reform and Opening-up (RoU) as an overarching metadiscourse justifying China's recent development" uses corpus-based analysis to examine the spoken utterances data from 20 annual press conferences of the Chinese Premiers of three administrations. These include the administrations of Jiang-Zhu (1998–2002), Hu-Wen (2003–2012) and Xi-Li (2013–2017). The research investigated 10 concepts related to the development discourse, focusing more particularly on the term "development". Overall, from the perspective of discursive effect, the interpreters have served to facilitate and reinforce the conveyance of the government's ROU metadiscourse and, by extension, the Chinese development story to global audiences. More specifically, collocation patterns illustrate that Beijing is committed to a range of developmental avenues, yet development on the economic front remains a predominant focus, while emphasizing that peace ranks high on its development agenda.

Todorova, M., & Marais, K. (2022). A translational approach to inclusive development. *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series: Themes in Translation Studies*, *20*, 1–16. DOI available online.

A part of China that deserves special attention when discussing the state's development agenda is the Greater Bay Area (GBA), a megalopolis that includes several cities in China's Guandong area and the two Special Administrative Regions, Hong Kong and Macao. In her article "Exploring the translation–development interactions from an emergent semiotic perspective: A case study of the Greater Bay Area, China", **Janet Xi Chen** analyses the way in which translation plays a mediating role in the development of the GBA in many respects. She does this by taking into consideration the translation industry in the region and its unique cultural characteristics. Chen brings to our attention the role of Portuguese, an official language in Macao with a colonial heritage, in establishing and maintaining Chinese cooperation with other Lusophone countries in the world, more especially Belt and Road Lusophone countries. This status of Portuguese contributes to the development of Chinese–Portuguese machine translation tools. In this study of the GBA, Chen also employs Marais's (2017) semiotic model of translation in the development sphere.

Despite its rapid development, though, China's international development aid has drawn criticism of the state's political intentions in developing countries. In their article "Translation, politics, and development: A corpus-based approach to evaluating China's development aid discourse", **Kizito Tekwa** and **Li Mei** use corpora of the discourse used by Chinese government officials to determine the role of institutional translation as a tool with which to introduce Chinese internal political discourse into its international development discourse. The article offers a novel perspective on the relationship between China's development and political discourses by using large corpora of, on the one hand, Chinese monolingual political speeches and, on the other hand, bilingual corpora of Chinese material translated into English for meetings about development with developing countries. The authors conclude by providing suggestions for a specialized translation department in the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) that comprises specialized translators, native speakers of target languages and terminologists in order to provide consistency and better understanding among target text readers.

While the articles in this section focus primarily on the translation of Chinese into English, yet more research is needed into aspects of translation into the local languages of developing countries, especially the languages of disadvantaged communities in these countries (see section 3.4).

3.3 Translation of knowledge as a development strategy

Knowledge is probably one of the most important aspects of the development process. Development has been defined in terms of the flow of knowledge and ideas that affect growth over a long period of time to support democracy, the environment, health, or education (Clemens et al., 2004). South–South development cooperation also foregrounds the notion of "knowledge exchange" (Quadir, 2013). In most of the developing countries and those countries in transition, foreign development aid brings with it a specialized development discourse that was not present

Todorova, M., & Marais, K. (2022). A translational approach to inclusive development. *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series: Themes in Translation Studies*, *20*, 1–16. DOI available online.

before (Todorova, 2018). Thus, the role of translation does not simply imply the linguistic transfer of meaning from one language to another. In addition, translation can be used as a tool with which to create innovative language solutions as a way of introducing these new concepts and knowledge. Translators and the sites of translation are therefore potentially in a position to become active mediators and creators of meaning as part of the political discourse of the developing country. Translation can be used to facilitate the adoption and incorporation of development-related ideas into the local language(s) and also as a conduit for local ideas to find their way back into the development discourse, creating the mutual interchange and multidirectional communication of ideas (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005). The Genealogies of Knowledge[2] project examines the way translation affected the travelling and transformation of concepts across time and space (see, for example, Daldeniz, 2014; Saito & Tsuboi, 2015).

From a historical perspective, **Özge Özer** surveys the modernization processes of China and Turkey from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century through the lenses of translation movements. Acknowledging that the development of these two countries has never been limited solely to modernization and translation, the study presented in the article "Translation movements in the modernization processes of Turkey and China" observes the processes of transition of the Qing Empire and the late Ottoman Empire into republics as influenced by the translation of European progressive thought at that time. It compares the translation activities in these countries holistically, in parallel with their historiographies, while also rendering visible some of the most influential translators of the period. The study identifies three stages of government-supported translation activities present in both countries, including translation for the military, followed by translation in the natural and social sciences, including law, and finally the translation of literature. In this process, translation not only served as a vehicle for transferring knowledge for the purposes of development but, at the same time, it played a significant role in forming national identity. The study asserts – taking into account the preferred source languages for translation in both empires – that the Ottoman Empire had access to the European culture and values, mostly by translating directly from French, whereas China was accessing European thought predominantly indirectly through Japanese. In addition, Russian was a source language for the Chinese translation of socialist thought and popular entertainment. This research examines development in a comprehensive way, by engaging with various aspects of society.

Nowadays, scientific knowledge is mainly constructed and disseminated in English, published as it is in Anglophone academic journals. In order to reach a wider readership, contribute to knowledge, and increase their visibility, academics who are non-native speakers of English might translate texts themselves or engage a translator. When translating from a local language for an English-language academic journal, translators usually not only render the original text into English but also adapt it to the way knowledge is constructed and presented in the Anglophone world. But what happens to knowledge constructed in languages other than English? In

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[2] For a full list of publications related to this project please refer to their website http://genealogiesofknowledge.net/category/publications/

Todorova, M., & Marais, K. (2022). A translational approach to inclusive development. *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series: Themes in Translation Studies*, *20*, 1–16. DOI available online.

"Translation-mediated bilingual publishing as a development strategy: A content analysis of the language policies of peripheral scholarly journals", **Xiangdong Li** explores translation and bilingual publishing as a dissemination strategy of peripheral non-Anglophone academic journals serving the social sciences and the humanities. Translations, usually in English, of these articles are most often produced after initial publication in the source language without specific guidance being given to the translators. Accordingly, translators may choose to preserve the rhetorical construction of knowledge in the non-Anglophone world. This type of translation-mediated bilingual publishing creates a space for linguistic and epistemological pluralism. It also renders knowledge constructed in languages other than English internationally visible without sacrificing local rhetorical and linguistic norms of knowledge construction. Interestingly, education was identified as the leading discipline to experience an emerging trend of publishing research outputs bilingually.

3.4. Inclusion of indigenous peoples through translation

The debate about the need to translate traditional and indigenous knowledge has recently entered the global discourse on finding solutions to environmental hazards (Wehi et al., 2009). Researchers working on the intersection of language, translation practices, and the environment draw attention to conflicts between indigenous knowledge and national environmental policies. For example, the "colonial encounter in north Norway between Sámi practices for fishing and knowing the natural world, and the conservation policies of state policy makers" (Østmo & Law, 2018, p. 349) brings to light the importance of indigenous vocabulary in offering an alternative policy of conservation. In an attempt to mitigate environmental risk, Norway's state policy makes it illegal for anyone to disturb the lakes and their immediate surroundings. However, according to Sámi understanding, nature is "a web of unfolding, productive, morally charged, and reciprocal relations between lively actors worthy of respect and care" (Østmo & Law, 2018, p. 357) and they find adhering to the state rules for environmental protection complicated. Contrary to this, in New Zealand, knowledge of the Māori language enables positive solutions that create a link between oral traditional and scientific knowledge (Wehi et al., 2009). Cronin (2017) maintains that "without translation, without a way of making their voices heard, [indigenous people] are silenced, potentially forever if the destruction of surrounding ecosystems proceeds apace" (p. 146). On the one hand, translation enables "traditional knowledge" about nature to be included in the discussion on solutions, whereas, on the other hand, disseminating translated information on sustainable lifestyles in the languages of the vulnerable communities allows them to become active participants in sustainable development.

Including indigenous and minority community members can provide linguistic and cultural mediation for teams working on solutions to environmental protection. In this issue, three articles deal with a variety of approaches, on three different continents, to including indigenous communities in the development agenda by allowing them to preserve their language and cultural heritage.

Todorova, M., & Marais, K. (2022). A translational approach to inclusive development. *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series: Themes in Translation Studies*, *20*, 1–16. DOI available online.

Taiwan has 16 officially recognized indigenous groups who speak the same number of Austronesian languages, forming more than 2% of the total population of the island. However, their culture and language are under constant threat of extinction as the younger generation is shifting away from their ancestral tongues to Mandarin and from "traditional" to "modern" modes of life. The extinction of the language also threatens to make the indigenous knowledge inaccessible; therefore, attempts to preserve and revitalize the indigenous languages can be seen as a tool with which to preserve and record indigenous knowledge. In this process, translation and translators can play a significant role. **Darryl Cameron Sterk** centres his research on a Taiwanese hip-hop recording artist named Yoku Walis, who, by translating her hip-hop lyrics from Mandarin Chinese into Seejiq (also known as Seediq), her ancestral language and one of Taiwan's indigenous languages, contributes to the revitalization and development of the language. In the article "Inclusive development, translation and Indigenous-language pop: Yoku Walis's Seejiq hip hop", Sterk presents the translator's creative and accessible translation solution that can also be put to use for language learning. By singing in Seejiq, Yoku Walis not only revitalizes this indigenous language for the new generations, but also preserves the indigenous culture and traditional way of life.

In a completely different part of the world, indigenous Maya communities in Guatemala are experiencing similar processes of historical assimilation and renewed state attempts to maintain their culture and language. The research presented in his article, "Translation and technocracy in development: defining the potentials and limitations of translation technology for Maya inclusion in Guatemalan development", **Matt Riemland** examines the role of translation technology – and more especially neural machine translation – in the inclusion of the Maya indigenous communities in the Guatemalan development sector. His article also examines these communities' access to the health and legal systems in Guatemala.

Translation technology is increasingly being used to enable crucial language assistance in emergencies (Cadwell et al., 2019). The use of such translation technology may enable Maya communities in Guatemala to participate actively in development projects, dispute unilateral and harmful proposals, and offer alternative development models. However, extremely low-resource languages, among which are the languages spoken by Maya communities, lack the necessary datasets of parallel text that would enable such translation tools to be effective. Furthermore, the development of these datasets would require specific terminology to be developed and linguists to be trained. The use of Spanish as a pivot language in these processes creates a risk of further colonization of the Mayan languages, while the use of technology only might not be sufficient to reach illiterate communities.

Focusing on non-governmental organizations involved in the health sector in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in English-speaking Cameroon, **Kizito Tekwa** examines the use of Pidgin English as the unofficial lingua franca that enables local communities to be included in development aid projects. The article "*No worry, dat sick go finish small time:* Encouraging local community participation in global healthcare using de-terminologization as a low-resource language

Todorova, M., & Marais, K. (2022). A translational approach to inclusive development. *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series: Themes in Translation Studies*, *20*, 1–16. DOI available online.

translation strategy" describes the practice professional interpreters and translators adopt to use Pidgin English as a low-resource and oral-based language. Tekwa's study, conducted with professional translators and interpreters from 12 organizations working with local communities in Anglophone Cameroon, showed that the use of Pidgin English as a strategy to disseminate medical information is much more preferred among the local population and the translators or interpreters than communication in standard or global English. The reason for this preference is that Pidgin provides more nuanced and understandable explanations of medical terms and procedures. This promotes the need for translation and interpreting training in the languages used by the local population rather than only the official English and French (Tedjouong & Todorova, 2023). This study also supports the need for a more systematic approach to translation by incorporating translation and interpreting policies in the operating procedures of development aid organizations (see Tesseur et al. in this issue).

4. Conclusion: The way forward

One of the main aims of this special issue is to explore the role of translation in development. This has involved a close examination of the diverse ways of thinking about what translation is and what it does, who is engaged in translation, and the relationships between those who translate, those who are translated, and the products of these relationships. The main question at the heart of this issue is: How can translation be used to support development? One response is that the role of translation in development cannot be separated from the historical and political context in which it emerges. We need constantly to be mindful of the ways in which translation both contributes to and works against the efforts and practices that characterise the development sector.

The study of development is complex and for this reason meaning-making is at its very centre. It offers several different ways of looking at translation, each allowing for the two-way circulation of knowledge and including indigenous peoples and local communities as active participants in the production of knowledge and the distribution of development aid from both North-based and South-based organizations. This special issue, we believe, in its comprehensiveness, highlights the need to suggest a translational aspect to development studies, constructing theoretical and methodological bases for investigating development practices from a translational and a semiotic perspective. The issue brings together concrete instances of translation-informed development research, which enables us to see how translation theories can be applied in development case studies in various parts of the world.

There is no doubt that the scope of translation and the role that it plays in development are extensive. Although this special issue focuses on the ways in which translation can be used to support development and the various actors that participate in this process, we need to be mindful of the limits of this framework. There are still many more ways to look at translation as part of the development process and as a facilitator of it. Empirical studies about the way the interlingual translation of technical documentation, related to new technology, influences the

development of a particular society or group of societies is one such point of interest. For instance, the role that information and communication technology plays in development in the Fourth Industrial Revolution could be a relevant topic for future research. And translation studies could offer new insights into the role that knowledge translation plays in the development of the knowledge economy. Following studies about the complex and multi-voiced nature of the process of producing climate knowledge (Pérez-González, 2020), questions about ecology and the global climate crisis could also benefit from translation studies' offering new perspectives – both interlingual and intersemiotic – in research. Translation studies could also add to interdisciplinary research by studying the translation processes between knowledge-generating specialists, which could contribute to solving environmental and social challenges in societies. Finally, more research is needed on the translation of the 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals: both their texts and the extent to which sustainable development is reinterpreted in national contexts (Ji & Pope, 2019) in order to allow for development goals and actions to be participatory in nature.

As translation studies scholars continue to engage with the literature on and the practice of development, new vistas for interaction will emerge. We hope that this thematic issue will provide a platform for further academic exchange in this newly developing discipline. The articles contributed issue not only expose the shortcomings of the current development practices but should also be read as an attempt to offer new opportunities for action that are based on principles of unity, equality, and ethical engagement. We hope that the wide-ranging contributions will ignite further debate and discussion on the ways in which translation can be used to support development practices and research.

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