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Making It as a Self-Employed Translator: A Personal Perspective

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Relatório realizado no âmbito do Mestrado em Tradução e Serviços Linguísticos, orientado pela Professora Doutora Maria Joana de Sousa Pinto Guimarães de Castro Mendonça

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Abstract

This paper describes my professional trajectory as a self-employed translator, spanning the period from 2015 to the present, and includes my experience of working with agencies and translating texts in various domains. In relation thereto, it touches upon the administrative aspects of establishing and running a self-employment-based business in a national-specific context. It also covers my engagement in translation of European Parliament documents and their features, as well as the related process of evaluation of outsourced translations. The final part of the paper depicts the characteristics of post-editing of machine translation of clinical trial documents, with emphasis on the evolving role of machine translation and its increasing interconnectedness with the translator's role.

Keywords: translation, self-employment, machine translation, European Parliament, post-editing

Resumo

Este artigo descreve a minha trajetória profissional como tradutora independente, desde 2015 até ao presente, e inclui a minha experiência de trabalho com agências de tradução e de traduzir textos em vários domínios. Acerca disso, aborda os aspetos administrativos do estabelecimento e da gestão de trabalho por conta própria num contexto nacional específico. Abrange também o meu empenhamento na tradução de documentos do Parlamento Europeu e as suas caraterísticas, bem como o processo de avaliação das traduções subcontratadas nessa área. A parte final do artigo descreve as caraterísticas de pós-edição da tradução automática de documentos ligados a ensaios clínicos, com ênfase na evolução do papel da tradução automática e na sua interligação crescente com o papel do tradutor.

Palavras-chave: tradução, trabalho por conta própria, tradução automática, Parlamento Europeu, pós-edição

Declaração de honra

Declaro que o presente relatório é de minha autoria e não foi utilizado previamente noutro curso ou unidade curricular, desta ou de outra instituição. As referências a outros autores (afirmações, ideias, pensamentos) respeitam escrupulosamente as regras da atribuição, e encontram-se devidamente indicadas no texto e nas referências bibliográficas, de acordo com as normas de referenciação. Tenho consciência de que a prática de plágio e auto-plágio constitui um ilícito académico.

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Mihovila Lozančić

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1. Introduction

In order to successfully complete the Master's course in Translation and Linguistic services at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto, graduating students are offered the option of either writing a graduate thesis on a research subject or completing a traineeship (*estágio*), which consists of a certain period spent in the role of a trainee at a translation company or another company with an established translation department, and presenting a report thereof in which the details of the traineeships are described and reflected upon. I felt that my contribution to the course's tremendous collection of insightful final papers would be the most valuable if it concerned my own experience in the translation industry. This paper differs from the standard *estágio* reports insofar as it is not based on a traineeship, but rather on the period from late 2015 to the present day, which is the time that I have been actively pursuing a career in translation. In 2018, during my second year in this Master's course, certain circumstances compelled me to return to Croatia and start to work full-time as a translator. Therefore, four years down the line, when the conditions were right for me to return to completing the course, I had already been professionally active for seven years. Since in most cases the *estágio* reports are about the first contact with the translation workflow, tools, domains, etc., I felt that my perspective could be insightful and illuminate some common practices, obstacles, issues and dilemmas that occur over time, both within the translation activity and within the professional relationships that are created throughout the course of a translation career.

In order to reflect these elements, my paper is structured according to three main areas, the first being the development of my translation business, which includes practical details regarding the form in which I conduct business and why I decided to pursue it as opposed to other available translation career paths. I also describe the way I expanded the network of agencies I collaborate with and the domains I have had the experience of translating, as well as the most important features thereof. This chapter will be concluded by a reflection on the issue of rates, in which I will share my own approach to this major element of any linguistic service. The second conceptual pillar of the paper will revolve around my professional engagement of translating European Parliament documents. I will provide a brief overview of the types of documents that are most commonly outsourced for translation, how the translations are delivered and evaluated, as well as indicate the resources that I found most useful and reliable in the performance of the translation. The last chapter will focus on a specific linguistic activity: post-editing, the basis of which is machine translation, a rapidly expanding practice that is actively altering the manner in which translation is thought of and performed on a global level. I will describe the main features of both machine translation and post-editing, specifically in the area of clinical research, a highly specialized medical domain. After briefly describing the characteristics of that domain, I will indicate some common issues that arise in the post-editing of texts machine translated from English to Croatian that are intended to be used in the context of clinical trials. This chapter will be concluded by a reflection on the increasingly dominant role that machine translation is playing in the translation industry, with consideration regarding the implications that this is having and will continue to have for translators.

I believe that these two areas – translation of EU-related documents and post-editing of clinical trial texts – represent major professional challenges, each in their own unique way. While I do not consider myself an expert in either of them, I hope that this paper will convey my strong opinion that, regardless of initial skill or talent, any aspiring translator who is willing to adapt to different conditions, dedicate themselves to research and be aware of their own weaknesses is able to pursue any sort of career in the translation industry. I also hope that I will be able to expand upon all the invaluable knowledge I gained within the framework of the Master's course in Translation as well as my existing experience, and continue to share it in whatever way possible so that all of us translators find a stronger voice.

2. My Professional Development

The path leading from the years of my higher education to the professional point at which I am now was by no means a straight line. Even though I always knew my career would be heavily based on language(s), a career in translation somewhat took me by surprise and made itself evident only after years of dabbling in it and trying to decide on a profession that would fit my capabilities and for which I could see a development trajectory that seemed to offer a feasible challenge. From my current point of view, about 8 years after I made the decision to seriously pursue translation full-time, I can decidedly say that this area of professional activity has reshaped how I approach language and work and continues to push my limits in ways that I could not have foreseen in the early days. In this chapter, I will present an overview of my experiences in the translation profession and describe the manner in which I conduct business. This will encompass the various types of entities I collaborate or have experience with, as well as the domains in which I perform translations and how their frequency has changed over the years. I have chosen to describe most of these areas somewhat concisely in order to be able to provide enough narrative space for a more detailed analysis of two domains in subsequent chapters. I will also touch upon the hurdles and the difficulties I have encountered and still face in my work, arising from both external and internal factors.

2.1 Self-employment

In 2015, when I was still at university but had not yet considered translating as a profession, a close friend got an HR job at a translation agency that was gaining momentum in the Croatian market. After a while, she let me know that they were on the lookout for new translators. According to her, having no previous experience was not a drawback, since the agency had a need for a freelance workforce and they were willing to help with the first steps and to provide guidelines on the use of CAT tools, which, I might add, I had never encountered before or even heard of. After successfully completing a test translation, I was added to their translator database – a concept frequently used in the communication between translators and agencies/LSPs (language service providers), consisting of a list of translators and their contact information, the languages they translate to and from, and their rates along with any particular areas the translator specializes in.

In those early days, the first projects were performed using memoQ which provided me with enough knowledge of the basic functioning of CAT tools to facilitate my subsequent adoption of other tools, primarily Trados Studio. After a while, it replaced memoQ as the principal CAT tool used in the agency, mostly due to its growing prevalence in the industry and being preferred by some major contracting authorities (such as the institutions of the European Union). The selection of software that translators use for a particular project may or may not be mandated by the project itself. Certain clients require the translators to work on platforms of the clients' choice, regardless of whether or not the chosen platform is more user-friendly or useful as a tool for the translator. Throughout the years, I have had the opportunity to encounter many different software- and browser-based translation tools apart from the most prominent such as Trados and memoQ, such as Memsource (currently Phrase), Wordbee, Across and XTM. First encounters with unfamiliar tools, especially those designed and used in ways that significantly differ from those I used daily, usually happened suddenly and with time constraints. Time management was imperative when receiving a new project which stipulated the use of a platform that I had no prior knowledge of. Not only should the time it takes to translate the work be considered but also the time needed to adequately learn and maneuver in the platform. The alternative to taking on projects in an unknown platform is to decline the project, but as a beginner without an established financial safety net, in the majority of cases, I could not afford to decline a project on the basis of not being familiar with the platform or domain. From the standpoint of a fully fledged translation professional, with many years of experience and specialization(s) behind them, this might seem unethical or irresponsible. It certainly is not prudent practice, from an agency's point of view, to award projects requiring a certain degree of specialization or possessing a certain complexity to less experienced young translators (self-proclaimed at that point, in my case), nor, from the point of view of the translator, to accept them. However, it is a common strategy for a number of reasons, the most obvious ones being that language professionals specializing in a certain domain would most likely not accept to work on projects at rates as low as those that beginners could and would accept. Another element to this is the difficulty of finding specialized translators for certain areas, especially emerging ones such as cutting-edge medical diagnostics instruments or advanced telecommunications. Still, from a beginner translator's point of view, I cannot say that there is no merit in "biting off more than you can chew". By agreeing to work on projects related to areas that I was unfamiliar with I was able to gain an insight into different terminology requirements and text structures and find out how those were directly or indirectly related to or conditioned by the specialized domains themselves. Moreover, I was forced to employ my research skills to find resources in order to verify or identify concepts and terms, thereby improving said skills. However, assigning specialized projects to general-domain or unexperienced linguists should not be common practice and should always be accompanied by an acute awareness of the responsibility to ensure the highest standards and resources available at the time are dedicated to that translation being delivered according to individual and professional standards.

During that first collaboration with an agency, I spent several years working while being a university student and living abroad. In this period, I would invoice my projects at the end of each month under a recurrent copyright contract[1], which is a contract form used in Croatia for purposes of regulating usually one-off professional engagements, such as artistic performances or publications. This was used only for purposes of conducting monthly payments and was not part of the general professional collaboration agreement that I signed with the agency, which was in force throughout our collaboration. Since I was not based in Croatia, it was impossible for me to establish another legal form of employment, even self-employment, since the process of its initiation and the related administrative procedures required my ongoing presence in Croatia for at least several consecutive months, which was very difficult to accomplish at the time. Copyright contracts, even though they were the only solution available, were also not an ideal form of regulating payments, neither for myself nor for the agency, because they included tax obligations for both sides almost as demanding as those within a regular employment relationship. This means that there would be a difference of around 20% between my gross and my net earnings each month. However, being my primary source of income, there was no way around it until my circumstances changed by moving back to Croatia in 2018. At that point, I started the process of entering into self-employment through an entrepreneurial form known as “obrt”, which roughly corresponds to a sole proprietorship, insofar as it is owned and run by one person who is responsible for any financial liabilities, therefore, the business entity is not a separate legal entity as is the case in a limited liability company. At the time, the agency was actively advocating for all its freelance partners who had previously invoiced their projects through copyright contracts to

[1] https://dziv.hr/en/intellectual-property-protection/copyright/disposal-of-copyright/copyright-contract/

start operating under this sort of entity, since this form of partnership implied no tax obligations for the agency upon payment. However, sole proprietorships create a greater administrative burden for the translator, since they are now obligated to meticulously keep financial records of their operations. Moreover, where under copyright contracts the related tax and insurance liabilities were debited monthly according to the amount of the fee, in sole proprietorships the tax and insurance rates are fixed according to annual income, and become due either on a quarterly or a monthly basis, irrespective of the actual monthly earnings. This means that a sole proprietor will have to pay the same amount of taxes and pension and health insurance (as well as other parafiscal charges) each month, regardless of whether they earned 2,000 or 200 euros. These conditions may create a significant financial burden for professionals who are still in the early stages of developing a steady and stable work influx, a situation in which I have also found myself numerous times. Such precarious conditions make it difficult for a young linguist to be selective about the work they choose to perform or to negotiate better rates; in fact, the latter issue will be further explored in the last subsection of this chapter. Nevertheless, sole proprietorships (or other equivalent forms of self-employment) still have some upsides, the most important ones being the independence to manage one's own manner of conducting business. The flexibility of freely choosing working conditions, e.g. workplace, vacation days, etc., goes a long way in terms of relieving work-related stress. Also, the administrative tasks required to manage a sole proprietorship are, in my experience, not too exhaustive or complex and may be managed autonomously, and therefore do not necessarily require bookkeeping or accounting services, unlike other forms of entrepreneurship.

Naturally, self-employment was not the only form of translation work available to me when I relocated to Croatia full-time. There were positions being opened for in-house translators in language service companies, which are not scarce even in a country as small as Croatia; according to the website "tvrtke.hr", which keeps informal records of registered companies, there are currently 140 companies in the capital city of Zagreb alone that are registered for the provision of translation and proofreading services[2]. However, several reasons made me conclude that this employment role was not suited for me nor in my best interest at the time. First was the time it would take to find a job posting for the role of in-

[2] https://www.tvrtke.hr/zagreb/prevodenje-lektoriranje

house translator and successfully pass the competition process. The additional extenuating factor was the fact that I possessed a Bachelor's degree, whereas many of the postings I would encounter specified a Master's degree as a minimum educational requirement. These time-exhaustive processes seemed insurmountable in a position where I was starting to establish a financially independent life and therefore needed to keep a stable income without delay. Seeing as I already had one established business connection that was steadily providing me with work, maintaining that form of collaboration was the logical choice. Moreover, several colleagues in the linguistic services profession, including my friend the translation agency HR specialist, shared that the workload of in-house translators in agencies was often extreme, with those employees not being able to distribute their workload according to their own judgment but being forced to translate or proofread large projects within very stringent time constraints due to client and/or agency management expectations. Having in mind that an in-house translator's salary in Croatia (Zagreb) at the time would roughly amount to anywhere from 1,000 to 1,200 euros, depending on the company and the person's previous experience, regardless of how many thousands of words they translated in a month. Needless to say, I found this form of work quite exploitative.

Not long after I started the sole entrepreneurship, I realized that I had both the ability and the need to branch out agency-wise and start to expand my network of companies for freelance collaboration. In the previous couple of years, I had gained substantial experience in various areas and had overcome numerous situations in which I worked under stressful deadlines and with large volumes of text. Deciding on which companies I should contact first was somewhat challenging since there was a plethora of them to be found and I had few contacts who could point me to those that had positive and reliable business practices. Finally, I contacted those with reliable information online, either on their websites, social media pages or in reviews. In my first email, to which I would attach my CV, I would briefly state my university degree, domains in which I had experience or for which I had a particular affinity (with examples of more significant projects involving well-known brands or companies), tools I used, and an interesting fact about myself that was related to my competences; this, in my case, was the fact that I had studied in Portugal for several years, which served the purpose of indirectly demonstrating proficiency in Portuguese and experience in an international setting. Some of them did not reply, some replied to let me know they have taken note of my interest and would be in touch if they required my services, and one of them expressed interest in collaboration. I have repeated this process many times over the course of a couple of years in order to establish a sufficient network of agencies/companies which would steadily supply me with projects on a monthly basis. Each new collaboration would involve somewhat different conditions with regard to how work is conducted, recorded and invoiced. The main discrepancies lie in the file formats and delivery requirements involved in a project. Some agencies provide only the original file, which is usually in Word, PDF or Excel, as they only forward the files as they received them from the client, without adapting them for translation in any way. It is up to the translator to decide which tool to use, if any, and to what extent. In certain cases, these files may even be in an image format, for example, a photograph of a document. Using those files in CAT tools is impossible without prior conversion of their content into a manageable format, which may occasionally take a considerable amount of time. Others regularly use CAT-tool-based files such as XLIFF or project packages and may provide existing translation memories containing previous translations for a particular client. In recent years, I have started to shift the bulk of my effort towards collaborating with companies that facilitate my workflow at least to some degree, either by using contemporary project management or translation tools available or by agreeing to accommodate for my extra effort dedicated to file formatting, either through a rate modification or a deadline extension. In general, with greater experience come higher standards in terms of general rates. Rapport with agency project managers and liaisons can also be beneficial when negotiating compensation rates. I have made a personal decision to distance myself from agencies that have not updated their work stipulations over the last five years. However, it is not a straightforward process, since project opportunities from the agencies I prefer to work with have not yet become as regular as I would require in order to be able to dedicate myself exclusively to that kind of work. Still, looking back on the many different stages that my professional activity has been through, I cannot deny that the trajectory has been upward.

2.2 Areas

In the previous subsection I indicated that, during the first couple of years, I was not selective in the domains that I would translate, both because I felt I could not afford to miss out on projects and because it seemed that certain opportunities of working within an unfamiliar domain would present a useful lesson. Nevertheless, most of the projects I was offered within those first years did not require highly specialized knowledge or experience. A significant share of translation projects involved marketing- and tourism-oriented texts to be translated from Croatian to English, especially for newly opened or existing large shopping venues in the greater Zagreb area. Such venues would mostly require the translation of their blog posts focusing on newly introduced features or promoting newly opened stores they contained. These texts would have marketing characteristics, but also contain fashion and occasionally technical terminology; for example, a lingerie brand might have a new spring collection based on recycled materials, and the venue would promote it with a blog post which would contain abstract descriptions typical for fashion marketing, e.g. "unique freshness" or "cool and casual style", but also concrete information regarding the brand's efforts of reducing CO_2 emissions. This required a balance between the "light" style emphasizing the vivaciousness of a particular brand of product and its earnest dedication to global issues, without the target text reading like a scientific leaflet. Within the tourism domain, I participated in quite a few projects that involved translating guest-oriented material regarding new hotels and resorts opening in Croatia. This would include descriptions of their facilities and related activities, as well as any special limited-time offers. Even though the chains, brands, locations and types of facilities differed, the hospitality writing style had many common features, among which the use of the imperative immediately catches the eye: "experience", "get to know", "try", "taste", etc. Translating the English imperative into Croatian is often context-dependent, since Croatian has two imperative forms, the formal (2^{nd} person plural) and the informal (2^{nd} person singular), and either may be used. The choice depends on the category of target readers, which needs to be decided by the client. In cases where the text is aimed at all audiences, the 2^{nd} person plural is used. However, if certain content is aimed at a younger population, which is sometimes (but not always) identifiable by the features of the source text, the aforementioned imperative would not have the required appealing effect. Another mark of the writing style in tourism/hospitality-oriented texts is the heavy use of key nouns, i.e., those that emphasize certain features of facilities or destinations. The following example in Croatian, taken from a project I performed in 2019 for a Croatian hotel chain, illustrates this well: "Pronađite idealnu poziciju na prekrasnoj novouređenoj plaži resorta, udobno se smjestite na ležaljci i dopustite da sunce i more odrade svoju magiju". In my translation, I attempted to maintain the central syntactical role of the main three elements of a sunbathing snapshot – the beach, the chair and the sun/sea: "Find your ideal spot on the resort's gorgeous, newly furbished beach, settle into your sun chair and let the sun and the sea work their magic." Translating tourism-related texts therefore requires the translator to identify the key imagery, impression or appeal within the source message and create a target text that will vividly invoke this idea for the target audience.

Apart from marketing and tourism, another area for which there is a relatively high demand in the market of translation services, according to my experience, is legal translation. This includes any document with legal effect, such as agreements/contracts, or a document issued by or for an official authority, such as court registry applications. Their structure is often fixed and predefined, and their purpose is either to provide proof of a legal status, officially registered information or a legally binding arrangement. These documents are often required to be certified by a sworn translator[3], i.e., a translator authorized by the Ministry of Justice and Administration (this is Croatia-specific, since the competent ministry varies depending on the country) for attesting that the translation of a document, whether done by them or another translator, is in conformity with its original. However, I do not participate in this process, since I am not sworn, but I can translate legal documents that may be subsequently certified by a sworn translator. The characteristics of legal translation are very diverse considering legal documents significantly vary in terms of structure, complexity and the range of terminology used. I have found one of the main challenges to be the discrepancy between legal writing styles in different languages, i.e., the standard syntactical structures and the manner that legal elements are defined and expressed within the so-called legalese register. Croatian legalese is marked by long sentences consisting of a disproportionately large number of subordinate clauses, as well as redundant expressions not used in other registers which add to the conceptual abstraction of the underlying meaning. The following example from a lease agreement I translated from Croatian to English in May 2021 illustrates this:

[3] https://www.daytranslations.com/blog/what-are-sworn-translations/

Stranke ovog Ugovora također utvrđuju da će Zakupodavac izvršiti investicije radi privođenja Predmeta zakupa svrsi radi koje se sklapa ovaj ugovor, odnosno da istu nekretninu dovede u takvo stanje u kojem će se ona moći bez bilo kakvih daljnjih ulaganja, osim ulaganja koja vrši Zakupnik koja su navedena u Prilogu 5 ovog Ugovora, koristiti za obavljanje djelatnosti koje obavlja Zakupnik i za koje je registriran. Investicije koje će izvršiti Zakupodavac obuhvaćaju u cijelosti sve troškove i sva druga ulaganja do dana ishođenja uporabne dozvole, u koje troškove ulaze i troškovi unutarnjeg uređenja objekta zakupa. Ugovorne strane sastaviti će poseban zapisnik u kojem će točno navesti popis i vrijednost ulaganja koje je Zakupodavac investirao u benzinsku postaju koja je predmet ovog Ugovora (PRILOG 6 Ugovora).---	Moreover, the Parties to this Agreement hereby establish that the Lessor shall make investments aiming at adapting the Lease Subject to the purpose for which this contract is concluded, i.e. at having the property attain the condition which will guarantee that it may be used for activities performed by the Lessee and for which it is registered without any further investments, except those made by the Lessor and indicated in Annex 5 to this Agreement. Investments to be made by the Lessor shall include all costs and all other investments made until the date of obtaining the Certificate of Occupancy, which include the costs of interior design of the Lease Subject. The Parties shall prepare a special record in which they shall indicate the list and values of the investments made by the Lessor regarding the gas station which is the subject of this Agreement (APPENDIX 6 to the Agreement).---

Figure 1: Lease agreement clause in Croatian and English

The order of information provided in the first sentence of the clause had to be modified for purposes of clarity, namely, the division of the modal verb “may” (“moći”) and the main verb “be used” (“koristiti”) was eliminated, and the adverbial phrase (“without any further investments”) and subordinate clause (“except those (...)”) were placed at the end of the sentence so that it is immediately clear to the reader what the condition will guarantee.

Another challenging aspect of legal translation that cannot be underestimated is legal terminology, especially between two languages pertaining to two legal systems based on different law traditions and often lacking overlapping concepts. Legal translation requires years of experience and expertise, ergo translation activities within the domain of law require specialization. Documents are often translated by law professionals, i.e., attorneys at law, legal scholars, etc. who started to pursue legal translation after completing a law education. My own experience in legal translation has so far been limited to those documents that, although specialized, became increasingly more manageable after gaining experience, especially in the cases of formulaic documents which were sometimes nearly identical to previous projects, and only particular information regarding entities or the subject matter needed changing. These were mostly lease agreements, purchase agreements (both concerning real estate), employment contracts, company registration forms and extracts from court records.

Through my interactions with these diverse domains and tools, my skills and experience gradually evolved and my partner network expanded; this led to a gradual and slow shift towards other translation areas – several of my new partners offered some steady engagements that later shaped the landscape of my workflow. These were principally projects involving EU institutions, namely, the European Commission and the European Parliament. The latter will be the subject of my next chapter, in which some features described are common to translation for both institutions. In 2021, I started collaborating with a global health information technology and clinical research company, which will be described in the fourth chapter. Therefore, in the last two to three years, the areas of texts that I would receive for translation during an earlier period in my sole proprietorship started to appear less and less frequently and be replaced by medical and EU-related translation. The share of different domains in my workload during two work periods (2018 to 2020 and 2020 to 2022) is shown in the graph below, with the reference being a sample of 50 projects taken from each period:

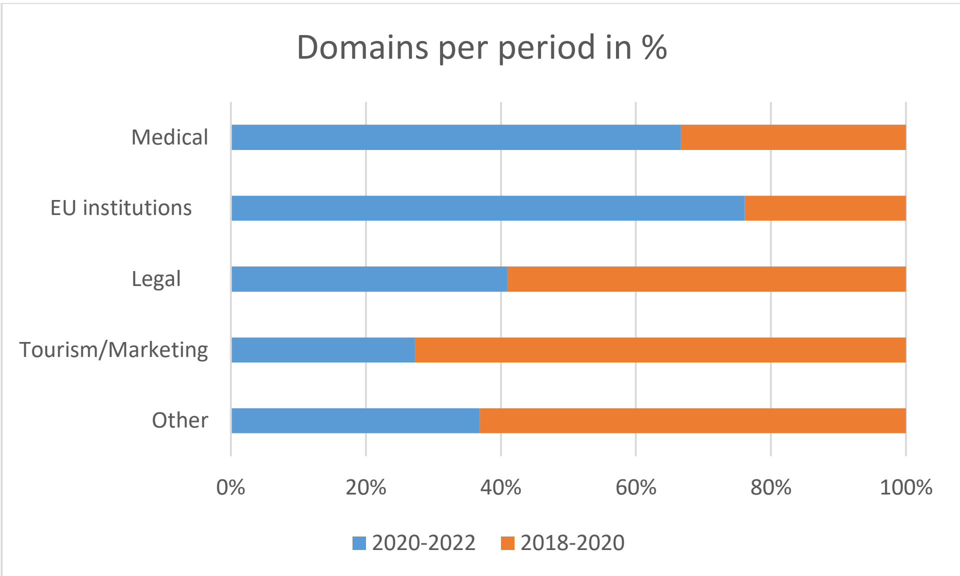

Figure 2: Shares of domains translated per period

The category "Other" collectively encompasses other areas that I have translated, but not frequently enough to be statistically significant, such as IT, finance, mechanical engineering and literature.

For the near future, I hope to dedicate more effort to exploring the added value that I personally bring to my linguistic services and the ways in which I can communicate that to existing and future partners and clients. I also wish to continue deepening my expertise in the two domains which are currently prevalent in my everyday work, namely, clinical research and EU institutions, with the aim of potentially specializing in either or both. With careful consideration of current developments in the translation industry, it seems rational to assume that the general-domain, all-purpose translator profile (which I also fit during my first professional years) will not exist in its current form. It is impossible to say what finding work, collaboration and networking will look like for translators in the near or distant future, but I am of the opinion that professionals going the "extra mile" and dedicating higher-than-average effort to their continuous education, gaining specialized knowledge and perfecting their work output will find their way out of the precariousness that we currently associate with the translation industry.

2.3 Rates

One of the first elements that need to be defined when embarking on a self-employed career is defining the appropriate rate or price for services. Unfortunately, however, a beginner translator may often find very little guidance on the topic. There is certainly much discrepancy and uncertainty regarding remuneration in the translation industry. The general theme of what constitutes adequate rates is a controversial and universal one, with debates about the appropriateness of rates going on frequently among translators, and one of the few things that there seems to be a consensus on is that there is no clear way to define how much one could or should charge for a particular linguistic service. Many elements come into play: years of experience, education, language rarity, domain, country of residence and the related living standard, but there is no one factor that may be deemed as the most crucial. In order to provide a perspective on rates in the context of Croatia, I will briefly describe the conditions that have shaped and still influence the way I approach this issue in my professional life.

The Croatian translation market, though small, is quite diverse in terms of the types of companies that provide translation/linguistic services and the way in which they calculate units of text. Traditionally, the amount of text submitted for translation was calculated per 1800 characters. This unit is referred to as a "kartica" (literally "card") of text. The concept dates back from the time when documents were written using typewriters. A text written on a typewriter that fit a standard A4-sized page would consist of 1800 characters. This was used as the normative unit until some years ago, when the alternative of 1500 characters as one *kartica* unit was proposed by the Croatian Society of Scientific and Technical Translators[4].

[4] http://www.hdztp.hr/croatian-association-of-scientific-and-technical-translators/

Several companies I collaborate with still use *kartica* as a unit; most of them with the 1500-character unit as the standard. However, the companies that advertise globally and work with many international clients usually use the number of words as the standard calculation unit. Other related linguistic services such as proofreading or post-editing are calculated either per word or per hour. Of course, it is up to the freelancer to decide which unit provides a more suitable calculation for a particular source text. Proofreading a text containing 500 words may last an hour in the case of a specialized domain, whereas proofreading the same text at a per-word rate might turn out to exceed one's usual hourly rate, even though the same amount of effort was used. The proofreading per-word rate is sometimes calculated at anywhere between 30% and 60-70% of the translation rate. In my case, the lowest level for proofreading is half of the translation rate. As for post-editing, being roughly a combination of translating and proofreading, depending on the quality of the machine translation, I calculate the fee at a rate of 75%, based on my experience with the MT system whose results I post-edit, as well as practices shared by colleagues. Even though there is no binding standard in place for any type of rate for a linguistic service, there are always some guidelines or examples of good practices to be found online within the translator communities such as ProZ.com[5], or local professional associations, such as those found in Croatia, for instance, the Association of Court Interpreters and Translators or the aforementioned Croatian Society of Scientific and Technical Translators.

In the beginning of my professional activity, with no experience nor other grounds for negotiation, I accepted the rate that the first agency offered, which, at the time (late 2015 – early 2018), corresponded to about EUR 0.023 per word. This was a somewhat common rate that the agencies offered to less experienced translators, but in itself is neither a "good" nor a "bad" rate, just as any other. The second agency I started collaborating with after the first couple of years offered the same rate; however, the first agency accepted invoices on a monthly basis and established a 60-day invoice payment period (from the day it was issued) in the contract. The second one stated that the projects were to be invoiced upon delivery of the project, and would usually be paid within a couple of days. This created quite a different experience of working and a different level of satisfaction with the collaboration on my part.

[5] https://www2.proz.com/forum/proofreading_editing_reviewing/221497-what_are_the_standard_proofreading_rates.html

In a situation where payment is usually delayed for two months, while the costs of conducting business become due each month without fault, immediate payment has a very strong appeal. Nevertheless, for each of my contractors there was a point at which I decided to upgrade my rates, regardless of other favorable conditions such as speedy payment. In certain cases, I was met with some resistance, after which there was either acquiescence or separation. I have found that, for self-employed translators, it is important to take this step at a point when both outcomes become acceptable. An important but often overlooked step in establishing one's own standard of rates that truly correspond with their needs, and how they should vary according to conditions such as project urgency, degree of specialization, etc., is having an overview of one's finances and their flow, both in the professional and the personal domain. It is prudent to establish the cost of the business and the cost of living in order to be able to calculate, at least roughly, the level of earnings required to sustain or raise one's living standard. A prerequisite of this, of course, is a certain period spent working and earning in order to determine the flow of income and expenditure. This financial literacy, combined with the awareness of one's skills and the time and effort that they took to develop, should create a fairly accurate sense of whether the work we are performing is all that we need it to be, and not just labor for the sake of labor.

3. Translations for the European Parliament

3.1 Applying for the tender

As previously elaborated, the areas of translation I was most often contacted for in the first year or so were texts in the areas of tourism and marketing, as well as legal documents. In 2018, however, I was contacted by a small translation agency based in Zagreb, named BoLingo, with which I had been collaborating for about 8 months, whereby they indicated that they were applying for a new European Parliament tender (official designation: EP TRAD PPP4 2018 MONOLINGUAL), the subject of which would be the "supply of translation services of monolingual source language documents from English or French into Croatian, German, Irish, Polish, Romanian and Spanish"[6]. As per the tender Specifications, freely accessible on the official page of the tender, the procedure was a means of offloading some of the translation work on behalf of institutions that were hence "looking for highly qualified and experienced translation service providers who can deliver the best quality translations ready to use and delivered on time according to the requirements stipulated in these procurement documents" (p. 4). The translation service providers could be individuals or legal entities and their eligibility would be determined in accordance with their pricing and translation quality score and a ranking list would be established. After its signing, the contract with the Directorate-General for Translations would be valid for 4 years.

Having had limited previous experience in translating some European Commission documents, but enough to understand that official EU documents required a particular approach and were subject to much more stringent scrutiny and deadlines than other specialized texts I translated or reviewed, I was somewhat apprehensive as to whether my experience was adequate enough to handle this level of exigence. At this stage of my professional development, each time I would delve into a new area of translation, I had an underlying awareness of the chance that delivering a poor translation in an area that was unfamiliar could weaken or even sever the professional connection I had with the entity that provided me with the opportunity. Seeing as how I had only a handful of agencies and providers I collaborated with at the time, and booking this type of client within the first years of one's career is a time-consuming and uncertain endeavor, I did not feel that I could afford

[6] https://etendering.ted.europa.eu/cft/cft-display.html?cftId=4137

to lose even just one of them as my client. With time, however, I learned that the situation is not as precarious as it seems from the translator's perspective, and that translators willing to improve will, in most cases, get a second chance in the case of having delivered a poor translation. Nonetheless, this uncertainty regarding one's own readiness to step into a new translation area is one of the reasons why some translators choose to accept work under unfavorable conditions – this issue of professional prospects for newly educated translators will be discussed more thoroughly in the last chapter of this paper. I ended up accepting the offer for collaboration for several reasons, one of the main ones being that the duration of the contract would provide stability in terms of a steady source of projects. Another crucial reason was the potential experience that could be gained – this would be a unique starting point for other similar engagements in the future, so quite a feather in my professional cap. Lastly, I would be able to test my existing competences against a challenging area and acquire a perspective on any shortcomings or, contrarily, strengths that might be revealed in these projects.

As the subcontractor for the legal entity applying for this tender procedure, I was required to undergo a translation test which would determine my professional competence and be used as the basis for establishing the quality score of the applicant (i.e. BoLingo). The test was taken online on the institution's testing platform at a scheduled time and date (in my case, 8 April 2019) and consisted of a text of approximately 200 words in English which was to be translated to the target language of the language pair for which the entity applied, therefore, Croatian. The text itself was not highly specialized; however, it pertained to the activities of EU institutions in the area of social innovation, so a certain degree of skill was required, since the text was not aimed at the general public, but rather at persons with higher education interested or involved in EU-related developments. This was determined in view of the syntactic and lexical complexity of the text, namely the prominence of lengthy subordinate clauses, especially gerund clauses, and the use of vocabulary reflecting a certain degree of specialisation, e.g. "proliferation", "trans-sectorially", or "benchmarking". The translation was required to be completed and submitted within 60 minutes, which was, in my particular case, roughly the necessary period to read the text, pen down terms that required additional dictionary and online research, outline a draft translation and produce a final version, which I reread two times within the last 5 minutes.

The confirmation regarding successful fulfillment of the application criteria on the part of the applicant in the tender procedure arrived about 5 months following the test, containing the information that the entity of which I was the subcontractor ranked 6th overall for the designated language pair. This ranking would determine the order by which future individual translation projects would be awarded, meaning that the contracting institution would send translation requests by descending order, so the first-ranked entity would be the first to receive said requests, and only in case they rejected the job would the requests be forwarded to the secondly ranked entity, and so on. However, this ranking is not fixed for the duration of the contract, but is re-established on a regular basis, every 3 months, in accordance with the evaluation scores of the translations performed. Thus, BoLingo has changed ranking positions many times within the first three years of the contract duration and is currently holding 3rd place in the overall ranking.

3.2 Projects and workflow

The process of taking on, performing and submitting European Parliament translations within the framework of the contract is uniform and straightforward. The main contractors receive and submit all projects through the Iris portal. As a subcontractor, I receive the basic details regarding the project from the agency which receives the original translation request. The project offer contains the number of words a translation contains, the area and the deadline for submission, which is very rarely negotiable, since the contracting institution (Directorate-General for Translation) provides a tight deadline which takes into consideration the time necessary for the translation to be internally revised and the final document to be produced, which involves many different parties on a broad scale and is therefore quite difficult to synchronize. The Directorate itself also provides a great deal of information regarding technical and linguistic requirements that a project might entail at their dedicated website for external translators under framework contracts[7].

The projects are received in the form of a folder which is shown in the figure below, representing the typical layout of a project folder for an English-to-Croatian translation, which was extracted from an actual project in which I participated in April 2023.

[7] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/trad/etu/index.html

Figure 3: EP project folder layout

The folder contains files intended for use in Trados Studio, which is the required CAT tool for EP translation projects (2015 or 2017 version as per Annex II of the Specifications), i.e. the Studio project file and accompanying xliff format files (for the source and the target file), as well as ancillary files, namely, a file containing instructions for external translators, describing how these project packages are to be treated and delivered, a page count report, the original Word file of the document to be translated, as well as several translation memories – a working one, one containing previous translations of older versions of the document (if any) or of documents pertaining to the same area (a so-called "Basic Reference" translation memory, or BR), and an "Upload" and "fullcat" translation memories that are for internal EP reference only and not to be used by translators in their workflow.

After the translation is completed in Trados Studio, only the xliff file of the target document is required to be submitted, which the agency then submits to the contracting authority. Whether the completed file is to undergo an additional internal review or QA process within the agency is left to the discretion of the agency itself. In the case of my engagement with BoLingo, the full responsibility of performing a proofreading and QA verification of the translation is assumed by me, therefore I am required to use the features provided by Trados Studio, namely its Spellcheck and Verify features, to check my translation for any technical errors (e.g. tags, formatting, double spaces), inconsistent segments (in case of repetitions) or incorrect or missing numerals. Apart from said features, I also use Xbench, a standalone QA tool that performs an assessment of the final file and provides a breakdown of all errors found, categorized by type. Such a tool is invaluable for detection of errors that are closely related to this area of translation and difficult to detect by a read-through, which will be explained in more detail in the following section.

3.3 Evaluation

One of the aspects of translations performed for the European Parliament that sets it apart from usual translation projects is that each translation delivered under the framework of external translator contracts is evaluated and scored. Even though translations may be subject to external review and/or evaluation even when they are commissioned by private natural or legal persons on a commercial level, this is still a rarity, whereas, in case of translations for the DGT, it is a fixed and imminent part of any translation project. Within 15 days after a project is completed and submitted, as per the Specifications, the contractor (the agency) receives an Excel file containing the corresponding evaluation, consisting of a general score of 0-100, whereby scores below 60 points are subject to a reduction in payment for the relevant assignment, namely a 50% reduction for scores between 30 and 60 points, and a 100% reduction for scores below 30 points, i.e. no payment is made in such cases. Errors are categorized according to their severity as minor, major and critical, defined in the Specifications as:

"– Minor error - error that does not impact usability or understandability of the content;

– Major error - error that impacts usability or understandability of the content;

– Critical error - error that renders the content unfit for use." (p. 12)

The errors are further broken down according to types, namely: terminology, mistranslation, omission, addition, grammar, punctuation, spelling, general style (clarity), job-specific style (references) and presentation. The weight of each error type against each severity level is presented in the example below, taken from an evaluation of another of my actual English-Croatian translation projects, with the document number redacted for confidentiality reasons.

Translation quality evaluation report					
Document number	[redacted]_V2_en/hr_V1				
Source Language:	en-GB				
Target Language:	hr-HR				
Sample size (characters)	6109				
Quality Mark	98		Quality Level	Acceptable	
Comments					
Error Type	Weight	Penalty	Minor (x50)	Major (x150)	Critical (x1500)
TERM - Terminology	2	0	0	0	0
MIS - Mistranslation	4	0	0	0	0
OM - Omission	2	0	0	0	0
ADD - Addition	2	0	0	0	0
GR - Grammar	2	1,6	1	0	0
PT - Punctuation	1	0,8	1	0	0
SP - Spelling	1	0	0	0	0
CL - General Style (Clarity)	2	0	0	0	0
REF - Job-specific Style (References)	3	0	0	0	0
PRES – Presentation	2	0	0	0	0

Figure 4: Evaluation report – first sheet

As the line "Sample size (character)" indicates, the evaluation the translator receives is not performed on the entire translated file, most likely due to time constraints. This first page of the evaluation represents the fundamental information regarding the quality of the translation so that the recipient has an immediate overview of the final score and the number of errors detected. The column "Weight" makes it known that not all error types are valued equally – the error type bearing the most significance in the evaluation is mistranslation, followed by job-specific style (references).

Apart from the first sheet presenting the score and number of errors in the translation, the evaluation usually also presents more detailed information regarding the evaluated sample on two more sheets within the Excel document. The second sheet, entitled "Issues", contains examples of segments in which errors were detected, with the severity and type of error indicated in columns on the right.

Segment ID	Source Text	Existing Translation	Translation with Changes	Issue Category	Issue Severity
284	*Those procedures shall also involve the provision of adequate and effective redress, including injunctive relief where appropriate.*	*Ti postupci uključuju i pružanje prikladne i učinkovite pravne zaštite. uključujući privremene sudske mjere prema potrebi.*		PT - Punctuation	Minor
364	*Member States shall take measures to ensure that producers that place on the market products containing any of the substances or compounds listed in Annex I to Directive 2006/118/EC, as well as substances of emerging concern included in the watch list under that Directive have extended producer responsibility.*	*Države članice poduzimaju mjere kako bi osigurale da proizvođači koji na tržište stavljaju proizvode koji sadržavaju bilo koje tvari ili spojeve iz Priloga I. Direktivi 2006/118/EZ i tvari koje izazivaju zabrinutost iz popisa praćenja u skladu s tom direktivom snose proširenu odgovornost proizvođača.*		GR - Grammar	Minor

Figure 5: Evaluation report – issues sheet

The fourth column "Translation with Changes" usually contains the corrected/final version of the segment, however, in this case the evaluator chose not to include it. The first row of the second column contains a translated segment in which a full stop was erroneously used instead of a comma, which was characterized as a minor punctuation error (marked in gray in the “Existing Translation” column). The second segment contains a minor grammatical error involving the use of a preposition. In this sentence, I chose to slightly simplify the phrase “substances of emerging concern included in the watch list”, whereby my translated phrase was, back-translated, “substances of emerging concern from the watch list”. This change of preposition was deemed an error, but no further clarification was provided to indicate an alternative solution or provide a reasoning for marking this an error, since the expression is not grammatically incorrect in itself. In cases where a translator is in doubt as to why a certain part of the translation was considered an error, they may, as per the Specifications, request a clarification thereof within 5 calendar days. Whether this includes the possibility to contest the evaluation is not defined in the Specifications. The final sheet of the evaluation report contains all the segments included the evaluation scope, which in the above example amounts to around 6,000 characters, with the segments containing errors highlighted in bold.

In the following section, each of the error types will be briefly presented and described in order to provide an overview of the DGT translation standards and the most common pitfalls that these assignments contain, whereas only the categories that bear more weight in the evaluation will be elaborated more thoroughly for the sake of conciseness.

3.3.1 Types of errors and related issues

The first error category, Terminology, is used to label situations in which a specific term “is translated with a term other than the one expected for the domain or otherwise specified” (Specifications, p. 12). This category overlaps to a certain extent with the Job-Specific Style (References) category, since they both indicate errors in which the translator failed to comply with a certain standardized terminology or specified framework in terms of domain or reference document. Even though they are similar, the two categories are not equally valued – terminology errors are attributed 2 points, whereas reference-related errors are the second most severe type, with a weight of 3 points. The difference in significance attributed to the two error categories is especially interesting due to the fact that style, although certainly always relevant, is generally not perceived as being one of the elements that, if misused, would be very detrimental to the quality of a translation, unlike terminology, since its rectification usually requires only minor interventions. In the Specifications, the Job-Specific Style error is described as “inconsistency with reference material” (p. 12). This refers to the reference documents that the translator receives or is referred to (by indication in the ancillary project files) within a project and which are either previous versions of the document being translated, e.g. a directive or regulation that is now being revised, or represent the basis for a new document, such as, for example, a new act based on an EU White Paper[8]. Reference documents contain specific terminology and, in cases where they are previous versions of the project documents, structure that must be reflected in the new document. This is the point in which this category overlaps with the Terminology error domain. Given that many specialized terms have been recurrently translated for years in the framework of legislative and non-legislative EU documents that would diverge greatly in style, structure and/or purpose, in many cases they were translated differently in the same target language, depending on, inter alia, the year of their translation or the context in which they appear. Should such a term emerge in a new translation project, a translator should solely use the documents that the contracting authority provided as reference, instead of making use of previous EU legislation or publications that are not related to the document in question. More specifically, translators should not resort to translating the terms by using target-language translations from other documents that were not provided as reference, even though they may be EU publications and otherwise a legitimate source. While those alternative term translations might not be completely erroneous, they are often not likely to apply to the specific framework of the document being translated. An example of this could be the term "impact assessment", a concept that is frequently used to designate the process of evaluating the consequences of applying a new mechanism, scheme, procedure, etc. This has been translated into Croatian within EU publications in several variations, depending on the context: in waste policy, it appears, for example, in the Proposal for a Directive (COM/2014/0397 final) of 2 July 2014, as "procjena utjecaja"[9], whereas the same term in European Parliament resolution of 7 July 2022 on Better regulation (2021/2166(INI)), which pertains to the area of legislative procedure, is "procjena učinka"[10]. Even though the difference between the terms is not extreme, in fact, "utjecaj" i "učinak" are words that often semantically overlap in Croatian ("impact" vs. "effect"), using one or the other in translations

[8] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/white-paper.html
[9] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:e669092f-01e1-11e4-831f-01aa75ed71a1.0019.02/DOC_1&format=PDF
[10] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022IP0301

where reference documents contain a differing solution is, as shown by the evaluation scoring, a weighty error. If we consider the context in which these documents are published and the role they play in inter-institutional communication and that they are the building blocks of EU legislation that is implemented in 27 Member States, it is understandable that any terminological discrepancy opens doors for a multitude of interpretations or misunderstandings, which is why it is penalized in translations.

Mistranslation, the most severely penalized error, is defined by the DGT as a situation in which "[t]he target content does not accurately represent the source content" (Specifications, p. 12). This may arise for several reasons, ranging from a lack of understanding of the source text, to an oversight, i.e. lack of attentiveness to the logic of the source concept. In a domain where complex terms and concepts are frequently used and also newly created, the chance of a mistranslation is always present. However, sometimes even fundamental words of speech can present an issue, as in the below example from an actual project, where I interpreted two prepositions, "from" and "to", actually designating a reduction in the value of indexation, as prepositions indicating a numerical range, which, in English, would be expressed using the same prepositions:

Source Text	Existing Translation	Translation with Changes
After the adjustment by the European Commission of the estimated 2020 salary indexation from 3.1% to 0.7%	Nakon prilagodbe procijenjene indeksacije plaća za 2020. od 3,1 % do 0,7 % koju je provela Europska komisija	Nakon prilagodbe procijenjene indeksacije plaća za 2020. ~~od~~s 3,1 % ~~do~~na 0,7 % koju je provela Europska komisija

Figure 6: Example of mistranslation

Due to a lack of attention to the concept behind the numerical range (decrease in value) in the source text and employing a word-for-word type of approach (usually on account of fatigue), I used the Croatian prepositions "od" and "do" which indicate range, and not a decrease in value. This was categorized as a minor error, therefore, my total score for this category was reduced from 100 to 92.8, resulting in a 93% score in total for the translation. Keeping in mind that this was the only error indicated in the evaluation, and a minor one, it is clear how much mistranslation affects the overall translator performance from the point of view of DGT.

Five error types share the same number of points (2): Omission, Addition, Grammar, General Style (Clarity) and Presentation. The first two are diametrically opposed, referring, respectively, to errors where certain source text content is not present in the target text and, conversely, where content is introduced in the target text that is not present in the source. Both are, in principle, undesirable, even though other translation domains might be more accommodating of extra or fewer lexical elements (such as marketing or tourism). This is because documents created and disseminated by the EU institutions contain a large share of specialized terms, especially in certain types of documents, for example, documents that will be legally binding, or those produced by the EP's Legal Service, and require translations that follow the source text more closely. The category of Grammar encompasses errors of grammatical, but also syntactical origin (ibid). Finally, in this error type group, General Style (Clarity), described as "[a]wkward, inconsistent style, non-idiomatic use of target language and inappropriate register" (ibid), emphasizes the importance of clear writing, something that the EU institutions are dedicated to, and there is even a special publication created by the Directorate-General for Translation of the European Commission, entitled "How to write clearly"[11], available in 24 languages, containing instructions on writing clearly, mindful of the target audience, and providing practical tips for economizing redundant phrases. Moreover, the sub-directorate of the Parliament's Directorate-General for Translation, the Directorate for Citizens' Language, contains a department dedicated to this matter, the Clear Language and Editing Unit.

The Presentation category includes issues unrelated to translation itself, but rather to the technical side of projects – layout, formatting and markup. The majority of these are, in fact, beyond the translator's scope, since in many cases, such as mine, the contractors are responsible for the practical aspects of the documents – they make sure that the translated document is delivered in the correct format and that all the required elements beyond the translation itself are present. In fact, as per the Specifications, contractors must ensure that "the delivered translation assignment is produced in the agreed-upon format; any technical requirements regarding, in particular, settings, formatting, tags, style sheets, parsing and segmentation have been complied with" (p. 11). Perhaps the only element within this category that the translator would have an influence over, and therefore responsibility for, are the tags, which are related to formatting and which always need to be transposed from

[11] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/725b7eb0-d92e-11e5-8fea-01aa75ed71a1

the source to the target text, except where they relate to formatting applicable in the source language, but not the target, for example, superscript in ordinal numbers (e.g. 2^{nd}, 4^{th} etc.).

As this subchapter illustrates, the feedback received from DGT for translations submitted under the translation framework contract is structured and thorough, with a detailed error classification system, albeit not always completely transparent (as shown in the above example by the lack of justification of error classifications and of alternative solutions provided). Nevertheless, this level of evaluation of a translator's work is rarely found in other areas of translation activity and is therefore very valuable, both as a means of understanding the quality parameters and standards of a certain institution, which are often not clearly communicated prior to performing any actual work, and as guidance and indicator of areas of one's own competences which require improvement and/or refinement. With time, these evaluations especially reveal several categories of errors or potentials for error that most frequently arise in the translation of EP documents, and the ones that are most particular to this area of translation, i.e. those that are more likely to appear in EP document translation than in translation projects concerning other fields of human activity. These specificities will be explored more thoroughly at the end of this chapter.

3.4 Document types

Documents that are produced and disseminated on the level of EU institutions vary greatly according to nature (legislative or non-legislative), purpose (procedural, informative, etc.) and target audience (internal, inter-institutional, for the general public), but not all of them are translated. Within the framework of the contract concluded with DGT, there is no specific indication as to which documents are expected to be forwarded for external translation. European Parliament documents are categorized according to whether or not they are legally binding. Legislative acts are legally binding and adopted on the basis of ordinary or special legislative procedure. Non-legislative acts are not binding and may be adopted by EU institutions in accordance with different procedures that are not legislative[12]. The prescriptive purpose of these documents condition their translated versions to have the same function, and, in the case of legislative documents, the same legal effect, as the source version, since the underlying intention is to implement universal rules and regulations across

[12] https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/types-eu-law_en

the Member States through transposition[13]. This type of translation, according to Nord (2005), could be described as "equifunctional" (p. 82), since the target text would be fulfilling the same function and the source text. This principle, however, does vary somewhat between the different types because, as seen earlier, only a part of the documents produced by the EU institutions is legislative or legally binding. Annex IX of the tender Specifications entitled "Documents most frequently used by the Institutions" lists around 60 types of documents that are most common in the workflow of the Parliament (pp. 45, 46), but the exhaustiveness of the list is not in itself particularly helpful in determining which of the types are most likely to be part of an outsourced translation project. During my engagement as subcontractor within this tender, I have come into contact with only a small portion of different types of documents from this list, with just a couple of them appearing more frequently. By analysing the projects assigned by the DGT I completed from 2020 to present day (a total of 54 projects), I have established that the document types in my workload have been represented in the following percentages:

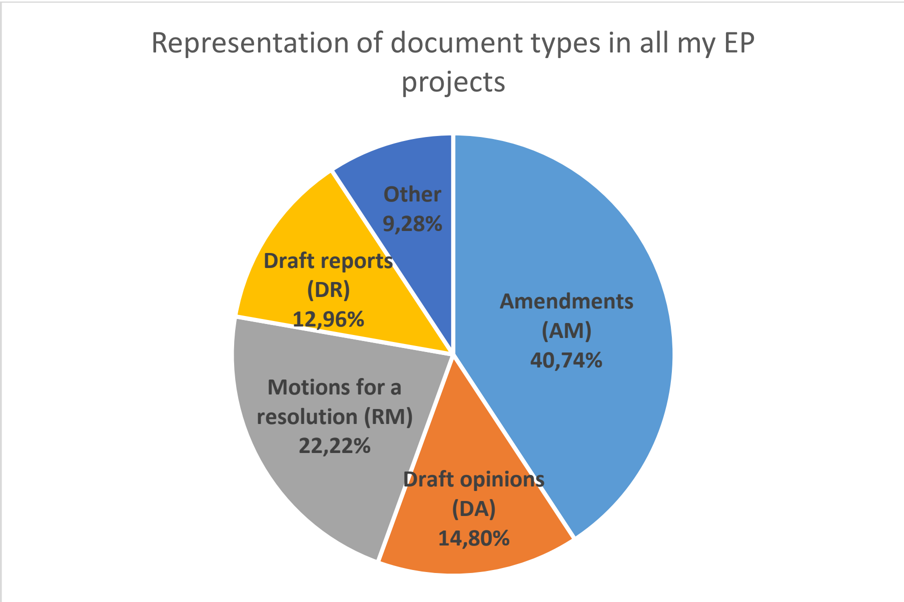

Figure 7: Most represented EP document types in my translation history

The two-letter descriptor in parentheses represent the official designation of the document type used in all EU institutions, also used within the documents themselves as part of a larger designation of the document category and type (e.g. "AM_Com_LegReport" for amendments

[13] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/transposition.html

to reports on legislative documents proposed by the Commission). As the chart indicates, the dominant document type that has been prevalent in the assignments that I performed are amendments, followed by motions for a resolution, which are a type of proposal made by any Parliament Member "on a matter falling within the spheres of activity of the European Union"[14] and draft opinions, prepared by any one of the Parliament's 20 committees or 2 sub-committees. Other types of documents I have had the chance to translate, but in smaller volumes, include petitions, adopted texts and draft resolutions. Each of the types of documents indicated in the chart merits an analysis of its own, since they all serve different purposes and have structures that, to varying degrees, differ from one another. However, the format and purpose of this paper are unfit for a broader insight into various document types, therefore, I have chosen to single out the type that I translate most often (amendments) and provide a more detailed overview thereof. Some aspects of translating this document type are unique and require an approach that is not required in any other translation activity that I had the chance to encounter, therefore, I believe that amendments merit a special insight which would, hopefully, also be of use to anyone encountering this document type for the first time within a context similar to mine.

3.4.1 Amendments – features and common issues

Amendments are documents that contain proposed changes to documents presented to the European Parliament for approval in various stages of the legislative process. The Commission, usually as requested by either the European Parliament, the European Council, the Member States or the Council of the EU, approaches a certain issue and initiates the process of adoption of related legislation (Wagner et al., 2014, p. 48). In an ordinary legislative procedure, the European Commission submits its legislative proposal to the European Parliament and the Council of the EU who both propose their own amendments and revise those of the other institution[15]. If both of these bodies accept the other side's set of amendments, the legislative document is published in the Official Journal and enters into force. If not, the process is repeated in what is called a second reading, and, if it fails to reach a successful completion for a second time, there may even be a third reading. All these steps imply that a legislative document, when processed within the European Parliament, may

[14] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-9-2023-05-08-RULE-143_EN.html
[15] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/olp/en/ordinary-legislative-procedure/overview

undergo various amendment stages over the course of its adoption in which Parliament Members propose changes to the text presented by the Commission. Documents in which amendments are presented consist of paragraphs of the original document, with no immediate indication for the reader as to know which text preceded or followed it in its first, original form. Within the framework of translation, this requires translators to navigate through a fragmented context and find any information that is not immediately present, but is underlying (Wagner et al., 2014, p.113).

When published, the body of an amendment document appears in the following layout:

Amendment 41

Proposal for a decision
Article 2 – paragraph 1 – point 1

Text proposed by the Commission	*Amendment*
1. Promoting increased, more effective and inclusive investment ***into*** training and upskilling to harness the full potential of the European current and future workforce ***and*** to support people in managing job-to-job transitions, active ageing***, and benefiting*** from the new opportunities brought by the ongoing economic ***transformation***.	1. Promoting increased, more effective and inclusive investment ***by public authorities and employers, in particular small and medium sized enterprises, into lifelong learning,*** training***, reskilling*** and upskilling***, in order*** to harness the full potential of the European current and future workforce***, to facilitate young workers' integration into the labour market, to encourage personal development,*** to support people in managing job-to-job transitions, active ageing ***and remaining in employment until retirement, to enhance work-life balance and the wellbeing of workers, and to benefit*** from the new opportunities brought by the ongoing economic ***and societal transformations***. ***The reduction of inequalities shall be a cross-cutting objective, including a focus on gender equality, the needs of persons with disabilities and low-skilled people.***

Figure 8: Amendment 41 in the Report on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a European Year of Skills 2023[16]

The text proposed by the Commission is laid out in the left column, whereas the amended text is on the right. The words marked in bold and italic in the left column are those that are replaced with new words in the amended version, which are also marked in bold and italic. In the above example, the structure of the paragraph is altered significantly, with the unchanged text being dispersed and reinforced with a considerable amount of new text, and a completely new standalone sentence was added. Changes range from minor syntactical alterations (e.g.

[16] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0028-AM-001-071_EN.pdf

the switch from the preposition “to” to the conjunction “in order to”) to the addition of entire subordinate clauses.

When amendments are submitted for translation, they are delivered in a Word file within the translation project folder, as previously described in the section on project structure. The layout of this version, which is used as the base document for translation in Trados Studio, differs from the final appearance (when published) in several elements which also indicate a very particular method that the document is supposed to be translated in the CAT tool. This method will be explained using an example of a document containing amendments to a draft report, an actual project to which I was assigned in May 2023. The working monolingual document in Word is presented as shown below:

<Amend>**Amendment** <NumAm>**190**</NumAm>
<RepeatBlock-By><Members>**Marina Mesure, Marc Botenga**</Members>
</RepeatBlock-By>
<DocAmend>**Proposal for a regulation**</DocAmend>
<Article>**Recital 1**</Article>

Text proposed by the Commission	*Amendment*
(1) Very high prices and volatility in electricity markets have been observed since ***September*** 2021. ***As set out by the European Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators ('ACER') in its April 2022 assessment of EU wholesale electricity market design***[17]***,***this is mainly a consequence of the high price of gas***, which*** ***is***used as an input to generate electricity.	(1) Very high prices and volatility in electricity markets have been observed since ***July*** 2021. This is mainly a consequence of the ***design of the liberalised energy market. Additional factors such as the*** high price of gas used as an input to generate electricity***, and maintenance, corrosion problems and outages experienced in several nuclear reactors further amplified the increase in electricity prices***.

[17] ***European Union Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators, ACER's Final Assessment of the EU Wholesale Electricity Market Design, April 2022.***

Figure 9: Working amendment document in Word

The first element that is immediately noticeable is the text color – in the working Word document, the original version proposed by the Commission is marked blue, unlike the amended version in the right column. The text at the top designating the number of the amendment, the Parliament Members that proposed it, the type of document that is being amended and the corresponding section in which this amendment is introduced are embedded within tags that are intended for internal use, as a marking for the type of information they contain, and have no particular role in the translation step. Once again, text marked in italics and bold designates words that are altered from one version to another. In this example, there's a part of the original text, contained in footnote 17, that does not have a corresponding new version in the right column. This is because it has been completely removed in the amendment and it is thus entirely marked in italics and bold. When this Word document is prepared for translation, i.e. uploaded to Trados Studio, it is segmented, as any other document within a CAT tool is, but due to its two-column structure and multi-color presentation, it can be somewhat confusing to determine the manner in which the segments are supposed to be treated. The same example amendment, when uploaded in Trados Studio and translated, appears in the following layout:

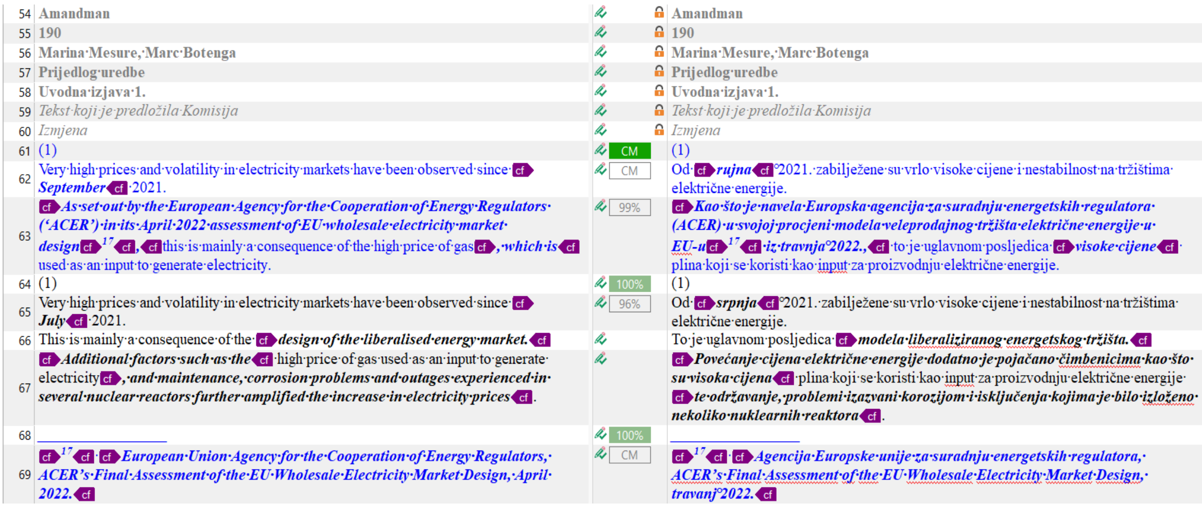

Figure 10: Amendment document during translation in Trados Studio

When opening the project editor for the first time, it may be observed that high-match entries have been automatically inserted from the translation memory. We can see that the identifying information and the name of the part of the Regulation that is being amended, which are at the top, have already been translated by DGT during the preparation of the text for translation, which is sometimes the practice, which is why they appear in Croatian in the source segments; those segments were subsequently locked by the contractor (agency) in order to save the translator the time of reviewing and confirming them, since they do not require additional treatment.

The published official translation in Croatian is downloaded from the TM as the translation of the existing official document (blue text not marked in bold or italics) and the text thereof will not contain any wording changes, but these segments should not be confirmed in this step yet, as the text needs to be properly marked after the changes have been introduced in the new version (i.e. black text). At this point, the translator needs to carefully cross-analyse the source text in blue and the one in black (both on the left) to ascertain what kind of changes were introduced between the two versions and to decide how best to transpose them in Croatian so that the Croatian text in black represents the adequate translation of the English text in black, with the added challenge of maintaining the existing Croatian translation of the rest of the segment as unchanged as possible. Changes marked in bold and italics are now entered in the transposed official text in Croatian. Segments are not to be confirmed yet. The translated text of the amendment should be compared with the existing official text (the blue text that remains unconfirmed) and mark all the differences between them by bolding and italics. The differences are marked both in the text in blue and the text in black. Only content that is the same in both segments will remain unmarked. After marking the changes, all segments are confirmed.

One of the aspects that makes translation of this document type especially challenging and unlike most other types of written translation – the inherent difference between the two languages, including the underlying syntax rules of sentence formation, requires attention during translation that goes beyond the usual effort to create an equivalent expression fulfilling the same purpose as the source text. There is an additional element that needs to be taken into consideration in the translation of amendments – the fragments that have remained unchanged between the previous and the new English version should try to be maintained also between the previous and the new Croatian version, in whatever form they were originally translated to. This is because these textual elements often consist of concepts relevant to the content of the general document. In the above example, segments 62 and 63 containing the original official text and segments 65, 66, 67 containing the new version differ mostly in terms of content:

62	Very high prices and volatility in electricity markets have been observed since <cf bold=True italic=True>***September***</cf> 2021.	CM	Od <cf bold=True italic=True>***rujna***</cf> 2021. zabilježene su vrlo visoke cijene i nestabilnost na tržištima električne energije.
63	<cf bold=True italic=True>***As set out by the European Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators ('ACER') in its April 2022 assessment of EU wholesale electricity market design***<cf superscript=True>17</cf>***,***</cf>this is mainly a consequence of the high price of gas<cf bold=True italic=True>***, which is***</cf>used as an input to generate electricity.	99%	<cf bold=True italic=True>***Kao što je navela Europska agencija za suradnju energetskih regulatora (ACER) u svojoj procjeni modela veleprodajnog tržišta električne energije u EU-u***<cf superscript=True>17</cf>***iz travnja 2022.,***</cf> to je uglavnom posljedica <cf bold=True italic=True>***visoke cijene***</cf> plina koji se koristi kao input za proizvodnju električne energije.
64	(1)	100%	(1)
65	Very high prices and volatility in electricity markets have been observed since <cf bold=True italic=True>***July***</cf> 2021.	96%	Od <cf bold=True italic=True>***srpnja***</cf> 2021. zabilježene su vrlo visoke cijene i nestabilnost na tržištima električne energije.
66	This is mainly a consequence of the <cf bold=True italic=True>***design of the liberalised energy market.***</cf>		To je uglavnom posljedica <cf bold=True italic=True>***modela liberaliziranog energetskog tržišta.***</cf>
67	<cf bold=True italic=True>***Additional factors such as the***</cf> high price of gas used as an input to generate electricity<cf bold=True italic=True>***, and maintenance, corrosion problems and outages experienced in several nuclear reactors further amplified the increase in electricity prices***</cf>.		<cf bold=True italic=True>***Povećanje cijena električne energije dodatno je pojačano čimbenicima kao što su visoka cijena***</cf> plina koji se koristi kao input za proizvodnju električne energije <cf bold=True italic=True>***te održavanje, problemi izazvani korozijom i isključenja kojima je bilo izloženo nekoliko nuklearnih reaktora***</cf>.

Figure 11: Previous and amended version

In the English text, segments 62 and 65, i.e. the previous and the new version, respectively, have remained mostly identical, whereas the phrase from segment 63 was broken down into two separate ones, and thus two segments (66 and 67). Its first half was eliminated, and the rest was redistributed and additional content was added that changed certain key points of the phrase. More specifically, the "very high prices and volatility in electricity markets" passed from being a consequence of "the high price of gas" (seg. 63) to a consequence of "the design of the liberalised energy market" (seg. 66). In the new version, the high price of gas became one of the "additional factors", to which other new factors were added. In translating this into Croatian, this rearrangement of causality and the introduction of new text require a certain degree of forethought in order to be reflected in the same manner in the new Croatian version. For the most part, this can be done in a straightforward manner, following the rearrangement cues of the English version. However, there is one element that requires a change which is not present in English, and that is the expression "high price of gas". In the original Croatian version (seg. 63), the expression appears in the genitive case ("visoke cijene plina"), since it is a descriptor of the noun "consequence" ("posljedica"). Conversely, the new version of the text, in which the expression is preceded by "such as", designating an exemplification, conditions the expression to be in the nominative case, and therefore have the form "visoka cijena plina" (seg. 67), which is why the first two words of the expression are also marked in bold and italics in the new and the previous version, even though they are unmarked in the English text. The word "plina" (genitive case of "plin" – gas), although forming a part of the expression, is unmarked because it is unaffected by the change in case. This example illustrates how the process of translating amendments can, and often does, include many steps that go beyond the single translation activity of target-to-source transposition and that the inherent differences in two languages make this process even more demanding, requiring a high degree of concentration and textual analysis. Naturally, this also implies the additional verification step before submission, in which it is necessary to establish whether all the introduced changes have been properly marked in bold and italics, which can be checked either in the exported Word file or in the Trados Studio Editor by comparing the blue and black target text and seeing whether the same lexical units remain unmarked between the previous and the new version. If they all match, then the final published document will enable the reader to immediately recognize the parts that have been amended, which is the ultimate purpose of the two-column document layout and the bold and italics markings.

As this practical example indicates, other than being one of the most commonly translated document types within the European Parliament, amendments certainly pose a unique challenge in terms of translation work, requiring translation skills that are adapted to the register of the EP documents and their variety, but also a very high degree of attentiveness to the technical requirements specific to amendments, all of which imply more time required to be spent on these kinds of projects. This is why this document type was selected for the purpose of illustrating the varied activities that translation of EP documents can include, many of which translators will probably not encounter in other translation areas.

3.5 Relevant sources

In light of the complexities that have been described in the previous sections, ranging from detailed evaluations in which a multitude of quality requirements are analysed, to translating amendment documents which involve both linguistic and formatting challenges, it is to be expected that any translation work would have to make use of only the most highly legitimate and verified sources, with top priority given to official EU publications. Nevertheless, given the sheer quantity and variety of material published by EU institutions, researching terms or concepts on the basis of all available publications can be time-consuming and sometimes even counter-productive, in cases where terminology within a certain domain has evolved over time or is not uniform between different domains (as in the example given in Section 3.3.1). During these several years of experience with EP translation, I have found that it is important to have a few “umbrella” sources always at hand and the knowledge of where to look for more specific document types or which ones might be relevant only for specific domains. For purposes of providing an overview of the three most relevant sources to be used for translating European Parliament documents, according to my experience, I will include a brief description of each source and their purpose in translation.

3.5.1 EUR-Lex

EUR-Lex is a portal providing official access to previously and currently applicable EU legal documents in the 24 official languages of the EU, which makes it the first and fundamental referential source in translation of any EU institution document. The documents it contains are categorized into 12 sectors: treaties, international agreements, legal acts, complementary legislation, preparatory documents, EU case-law, national transposition measures, national case-law, parliamentary questions, consolidated texts, Official Journal C series and EFTA (European Free Trade Association) documents[17]. Therefore, it encompasses much more than just documents published by EU institutions, but also those by other bodies and organizations with relevance for the EU, such as, for example, United Nations conventions, which make a frequent appearance by reference in EP translation projects. The documents can be searched by keyword, document reference, author, CELEX (unique identifier) number, Official Journal edition, theme and language. The site is run by the Publications Office of the European Union and its main source of information is the Official Journal of the European Union, which can be accessed directly through the portal. The usefulness of EUR-Lex in translation is multifaceted; apart from containing most of the referential documents that may be required for translation of a project (with few exceptions, e.g. external reports), it also offers the option of displaying a document in multilingual columns, i.e. its version in two or three different languages in which the document was published, in column form, which enables the user to have a parallel overview of the different language versions of the same text, as shown below on an example of a regulation:

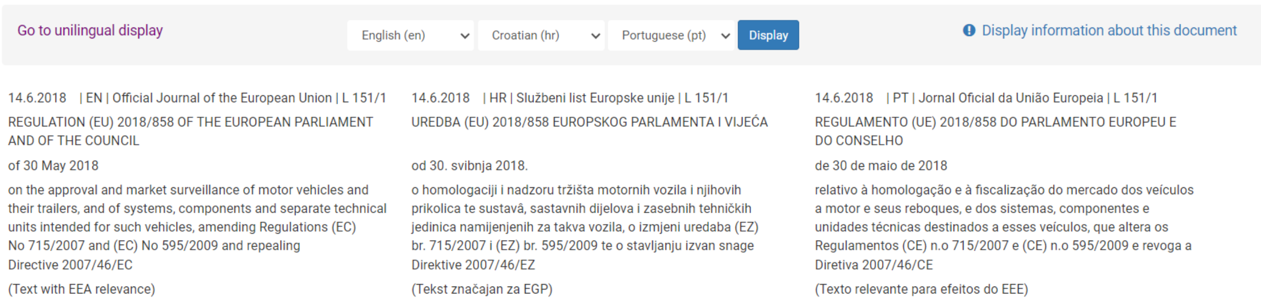

Figure 12: Multilingual display in EUR-Lex

This greatly contributes to terminology searches, since it provides a direct display of officially published terms in different languages within relevant related documents, as well as contextualization, especially in projects where the lack of context can be a hindrance, therefore, being able to visualize parallel texts that will be used as a resource in translation and easily browse through them makes it that much easier for the translator to become

[17] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/content/tools/TableOfSectors/types_of_documents_in_eurlex.html

familiarized with the general theme of the document. This is particularly relevant in the case of amendments which are heavily based on existing official publications (whether still on force or not); since only the parts that contain amendments are translated, translators are often found in the middle of a new topic and text, with little time to get informed regarding the relevant terms, themes and style. In such cases, EUR-Lex enables them to analyse the underlying documents quickly, as well as simultaneously in the source and target language, which saves a significant amount of research time. The site also provides information on the stage of adoption that documents are in at any given moment and whether the version that is being displayed is currently in force or not, which is helpful in the translators' efforts to use only the terminology that is updated and applicable.

3.5.2 Interinstitutional Style Guide

Whereas EUR-Lex provides materials used for crafting translations, the Style Guide contains guidelines on the writing itself on the basis of established standards of the EU institutions in terms of text form, structure and language rules so that documents that differ in category, purpose, source institution etc. are still as harmonized as possible, while retaining the specificities of the official languages. One of the main postulates of the Guide is that the rules contained therein "prevail over any other solution proposed elsewhere or used previously; they must be applied at all stages of the written work"[18]. Therefore, any publications containing text in a form that differs from the Guide, even if they are official EU documents, are not to be used as precedent or template for new documents; the conventions of the Guide are always the first and foremost reference and starting point. The site is divided into four general parts: Official Journal – structure of the OJ, structure of a legal act and rules on drafting documents; General Publications – document preparation and identifiers and structure of a publication; Conventions Common to All Languages – countries, languages, currencies and their abbreviations, footnotes and other conventions; and Publications in English (or the relevant language) – house rules for preparation of the text (punctuation, verbs, spelling, etc.). It is important to note that the conventions described in the Guide, even though they are shared by all EU institutions, are not universal for all languages, especially in terms of house rules. The standards for each language are established according to norms

[18] https://publications.europa.eu/code/en/en-000900.htm

that are intrinsic to that language. This is the case, for example, with punctuation used in situations that are not as common, like numbered lists. Below is a comparison of punctuation rules for multiple listed points (point 5.7 in the Guide) for English and Croatian:

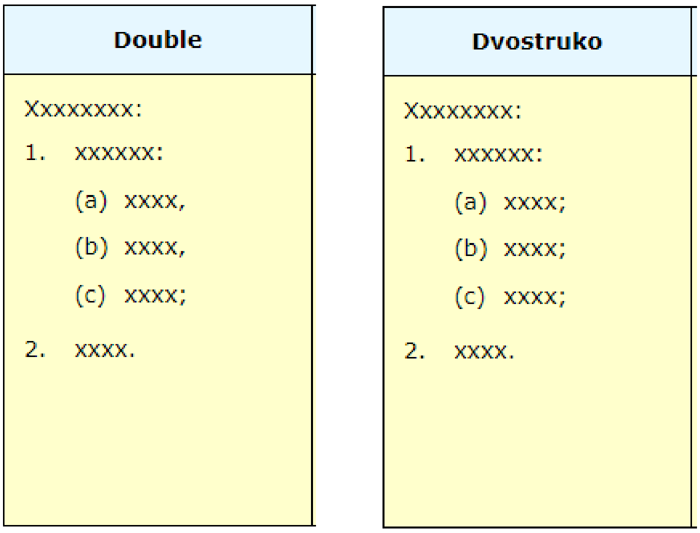

Figure 13: Rules for double listed points for English and Croatian

Even though the difference is not great, writing conventions are not necessarily the same in any given two languages. In English, the listed points marked with letters are divided by commas, except the last one, whereas the same points in Croatian are divided by semicolons. Needless to say, failure to adhere to these rules, even though they seem to relate to minute elements, would result in a poor translation evaluation score. There are many such instances of differing writing standards that might be unfamiliar to translators who have not encountered texts with complex formatting or editing requirements. This also includes the issue of non-breaking (hard) spaces, which is a concept that I was first introduced to precisely within the framework of EP translation projects. These types of spaces ensure that a particular set of words, e.g. a number and a percentage point, will not be separated due to a line break and thus be less legible, which is crucial in the phase of preparing a document for publication. Translators commencing an assignment for the European Parliament or any other EU institution should be instructed by their contractors or by the institutions themselves regarding the importance of the Style Guide and become familiarized with the areas of writing it covers in order to be able to use it quickly and efficiently during a translation.

3.5.3 IATE

IATE (Interactive Terminology for Europe) is the EU's terminology management system for the collection, dissemination and management of EU-specific terminology[19]. The website is run by the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union, which makes it the most reliable terminology-oriented resource available for translating Parliament documents. It enables multilingual searches of terms in any of the 24 official EU languages, as well as Latin (mostly for legal terms and taxonomy). The search results in IATE consist of the following elements:

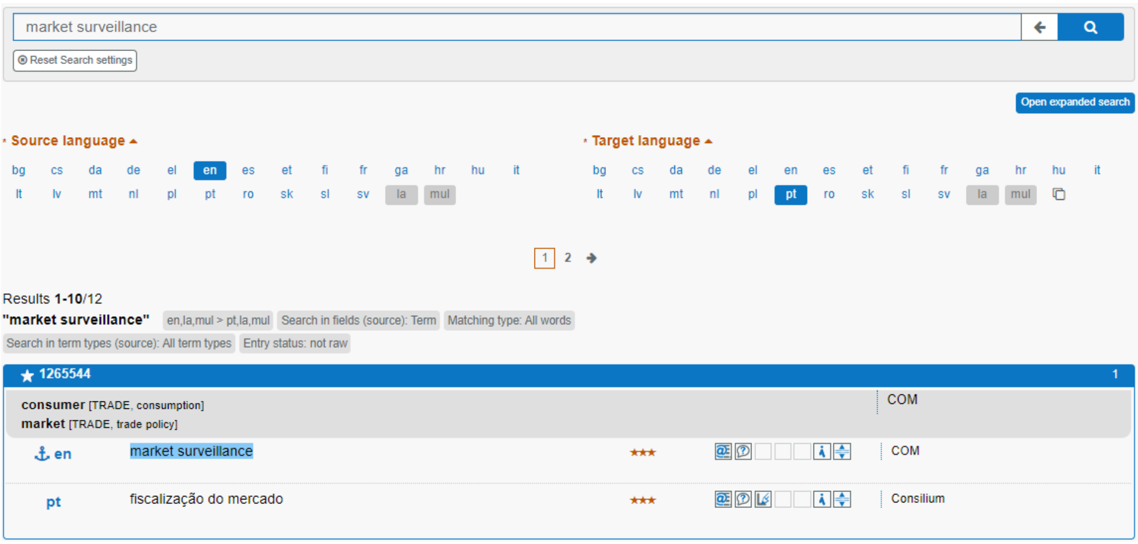

Figure 14: IATE term search

The search results are rated by reliability, which is scored by a range of 1–5 stars, as seen in the bottom right part of the image. This refers to the level of current relevance of the term, i.e. whether it is outdated or in use and whether the suitability of the term translation should be further confirmed by checking additional sources. Apart from the reliability score, IATE also displays the area in which the term is prevalent, as well as other information regarding the term that appear within small squares to the right of the term result, which indicate the term reference (the main document from which the term was extracted), its definition, the context and other additional information. It should be noted that not all term entries contain the same amount of supporting information – some terms that are not found in many documents or that still have not had a lot of information associated therewith may not contain a definition or context in their results. Nevertheless, IATE's features greatly facilitate the translator's job

[19] https://iate.europa.eu/about

of verifying the reliability of a term's existing official translation (i.e. the translation currently in use in EU institution documents) and even provide its references, which markedly reduces the time required to research a term's context and trace it to relevant documents in which it appears. The fact that it is managed and updated by translators and terminologists working at EU institutions further amplifies its credibility and contributes to IATE being the most relevant terminology base for any EU-related translation project.

In projects assigned by the European Parliament's Directorate-General for Translation, there is an intimidating amount of elements which have the potential to be misused, under-researched or overlooked – outdated terms, differing orthographic rules between languages in seemingly inconsequential details, technically correct but no longer valid previously translated text, to name only a few. In these projects, translation becomes a multi-disciplinary activity requiring the professional to simultaneously adhere to project-specific translation requirements, the general principle(s) of making the translation fit for purpose, the complex formatting and technical elements, style parameters which must correspond both to the document type and domain, as well as timeliness, since the projects are usually given a constrictive deadline. These criteria make it clear that successfully fulfilled assignments (as per DGT's evaluation) require substantial experience with the register, variety and domain of EU institution documents, with using multiple resources and evaluating their reliability, as well as with managing a project of this scale on an internal level, i.e. being able to assess the workflow and make sure that enough time is provided for each step of the assignment process (which includes preparation, translation, QA and delivery). Despite the level of complexity, these projects are invaluable in terms of knowledge and skills gained through the attempts at fulfilling the aforementioned criteria. European Parliament documents, as well as EU institution documents in general, are created and supported by a dense network of experts in writing, languages, legislation and sector-specific domains. Immense effort has been invested on their part to create sources of knowledge in the form of different sites and term bases offering access to pooled information contained in the form of textual material that makes up the foundation of the functioning and work of the European Union. Learning how to make use of those resources in translation and navigate the abundance of document versions, types and roles, all the while attempting to create translations on par with the existing material, has been one of the pillars of my professional development.

4. Post-Editing of Clinical Trial Documents

4.1 Characteristics of post-editing

As a linguistic service, post-editing has become increasingly visible within the professional translation domain during the last couple of decades, even though the activity has existed since the 1950s[20], or "about as long as operational machine translation systems have existed" (O'Brien et al., 2014, p. vii). The evolution of the quality of machine translation has also given rise to the demand for post-editing services, which consist of making changes to machine translation output, with or without access to the source text (bilingual or monolingual post-editing), that are necessary for achieving a target text that is considered fit for purpose, a faithful rendition of the source text, and pertaining to the norms of the target language. Machine translation may be performed on the basis of one of three general systems: rules-based (corpora is based on grammar rules and dictionaries), statistical (results are gained by analysing large amounts of translations available), or neural (based on a neural-type network that adapts in accordance with new input)[21]. MT systems "typically contain millions of human-translated sentences (...) while specialized and freely available online systems can contain even more data from thousands of translators collated over many years" (Doherty, 2016, p. 953). Nowadays, there is a plethora of such free MT systems which can be accessed via browser, such as Google Translate (and its Microsoft equivalent, Bing Translator), DeepL, Reverso, Matecat, Yandex Translate and Systran, to name but a few of the most prominent ones. Machine translation technologies have also been implemented in existing computer-assisted translation software as well; widely used tools such as Trados Studio and memoQ now contain the option to purchase a license to use an external or internal MT feature.

The use of machine translation systems is regulated by the ISO 18587:2017 standard on machine translation, however, due to the technology behind MT evolving at a swift pace, it is difficult to say to what extent it will be universally accepted[22]. Nevertheless, the fact that there is a norm in place attempting to standardize "requirements for the process of full,

[20] https://towardsdatascience.com/evolution-of-machine-translation-5524f1c88b25
[21] https://www.memoq.com/tools/what-is-machine-translation
[22] https://www.intertranslations.co.uk/machine-translation-post-editing-and-iso-185872017-certification/

human post-editing of machine translation output and post-editors' competences" (ISO Online Browsing Platform[23]) is valuable and will surely serve as a good foundation for any future machine translation standards, since it clearly states that "there is no MT system with an output which can be qualified as equal to the output of human translation and, therefore, the final quality of the translation output still depends on human translators", which is an important message that is rapidly gaining relevance in light of the unprecedented development of MT. As this technology is developing and being adopted on a larger scale, even though it still requires human intervention, the quality of its overall output is on the rise, which, according to Doherty (2016) represents a tendency towards automation within many language service activities, i.e., not just translation, "but also in the overall translation project management systems required to coordinate large numbers of translators, on- and off-site, multitudinous projects, and languages" (p. 954). The improvement of this type of technology, which enables production of a translated text at a level that may, in certain cases depending mainly on the domain and language, require little human intervention, certainly signals a new phase in the translation industry and has been rousing a wide spectrum of opinions. This stems from the general assumption (and apprehension) that MT development is heading into a direction which would consist of completely removing the human translator from the process of processing a source text and creating its translation. Whether or not there is merit in such hypotheses, and to what extent, is a complex issue and currently at the centre of attention and discussion in the context of global professional translation trends. At the time of preparing this paper, technological breakthroughs regarding artificial intelligence, and specifically its use in automated translation systems (i.e., as part of the aforementioned neural MT systems), have exacerbated those discussions.

Whether or not it is appropriate or cost-effective to subject a certain source text to machine translation and subsequently post-editing, in opposition to a fully human-managed translation, depends on the effort it would entail and the MT or final target text quality. The process of machine translation is heavily dependent on the quality of the MT output, which in turn depends on the domain and complexity of the source text. Vieira (2020, 2022) categorizes the effort required for post-editing into three types: cognitive (the mental activity of editing), technical (the mechanical activity of editing) and temporal (the time spent on

[23] https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/en/#iso:std:iso:18587:ed-1:v1:en

editing). The overall effort also relies on the level of post-editing that is required – nowadays, the concepts of “light” and “full” post-editing are being used more frequently to make a distinction, as per the ISO 18587:2017 definition, between producing, in the case of light post-editing, a target text “merely comprehensible (...) without any attempt to produce a product comparable to a product obtained by human translation” (point 3.1.6), and in full post-editing “a product comparable to a product obtained by human translation” (point 3.1.5).

This chapter will provide an overview of my own first contact with and impressions of the activity of post-editing within the context of machine translation of clinical trial documents. It is an area I started professionally exploring relatively recently, and I am still exploring its possibilities and the linguistic services that are offered within that context. Since this domain is highly specialized and complex, I will provide a brief overview of the main characteristics of clinical trials and the most prominent documents created within their framework from the translator’s point of view, as well as provide examples of the most common issues I encountered while editing machine translation of those types of documents from English into Croatian. The potential for MT improvement with regard to the clinical trial field will be highlighted and some suggestions will be made as to the direction that its development might or should take. The chapter will be concluded with a reflection on the rise of machine translation technology and the impact thereof on the significance and role of translators.

4.2 Clinical trial translation

Organisations that most often require the assistance of external translators and linguists in the field of clinical trial translation, and sometimes even have translation services established in-house, are clinical research organizations (CRO). CROs are, broadly speaking, service providers for pharmaceutical and biotech companies that conduct clinical trials. Clinical trials (occasionally also referred to as clinical studies) involve testing newly developed pharmaceutical products, medical devices, treatments or methods on patients who fulfil certain requirements in terms of their medical indication, medical history or physical characteristics. Trials are carried out in several stages (officially, “phases”) which differ in terms of scope, that is, the size of subject population[24]. As a trial phase is successfully

[24] https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/what-are-clinical-trials-and-studies

completed, that is, if the results are promising, the trial transitions to the next, more extensive phase in which the testing continues on a larger scale, i.e., involving a greater number of subjects. Once the CRO has successfully completed the necessary phases of a trial, the pharmaceutical company (the “trial sponsor”) submits the drug for market approval, which, if granted, means that the drug may be made available commercially. Considering that clinical trials are extremely complex processes, one clinical trial will produce enormous amounts of data, primarily in the form of documents. Clinical trials are specific insofar as they involve predefined types of documents that are statutorily required to be translated based on regulatory requirements for each country in which the trial is to be conducted. In particular, all patient-facing[25] documents need to be translated into the patients’ native languages. Moreover, all documents submitted to and in correspondence with regulatory authorities, as well as Ethics Committees (ECs) or Independent Review Boards (IRBs), which are the most common trial monitoring bodies, also need to be translated. This means that the recipients of clinical trial documents vary greatly, from official bodies and medical professionals to the general public and/or individual laypersons, requiring the documents to be written using either highly specialized and/or administrative terminology, or plain language. This expansive target audience variety is one of the things that makes translation in this domain particularly challenging, since it requires a high level of understanding of the context and level of knowledge at which the target text will be received, i.e., read. As Nord (2005, p. 10) formulates it, it is “not the source text as such, or its effect on the ST receiver, or the function assigned to it by the author, that operates the translation process (...) but the intended function or *skopos* of the target text as determined by the initiator's needs”. This is particularly applicable in clinical trial translations, where it is very clear that the target text has a function that is determined by the needs of the initiator, in this case the CRO, and that function will depend on the type of document submitted for translation.

The types of clinical trial documents that are, according to my experience, most frequently outsourced for translation are informed consent forms (ICF), clinical trial applications and clinical trial agreements. The ICF is a crucial clinical trial document which provides the patients with a detailed description of the clinical trial in terms that they find understandable, it is characterized by the use of non-specialized or simplified language. The

[25] Documents intended for and received by patients participating in clinical trials.

document lays out and describes the whole course of the patient's participation in the trial and their expected engagement (i.e., necessary visits to the study site, procedures, tests, assessments, drug intake, etc.). By signing this document prior to participating in the research, the patients confirm that they have understood what is required of them and give their voluntary consent to participate in the trial[26]. Clinical trial applications are uniform documents produced by CROs and directed at national regulatory authorities which serve the purpose of requesting the approval of said authorities for the conduct of a clinical trial in the country in question. Clinical trial agreements are documents with legal effect, in essence, agreements concluded between the CRO and the medical institution(s) where the trial procedures will be conducted and/or the trial investigator (the medical doctor overseeing the trial). As is evident from the main features of these document types, even though they are part of the same broader medical/related domain, each of them possesses features of different document categories; ICFs are essentially forms with legal effect written in plain language intended for laypersons, clinical trial agreements are legally binding contracts between legal persons, whereas clinical trial applications represent an official administrative form aimed at national authorities. Therefore, a translator dealing with projects in the area of clinical trials needs to possess solid knowledge of (at a minimum) each of these categories, as well as the awareness that the target audiences for each of them differs greatly.

4.3 My engagement in clinical trial translation

My own professional experience in the field of clinical trials started with applying to a LinkedIn post by one of the major global CROs, in which they were looking for an English-to-Croatian freelance translator for long-term collaboration with regard to clinical trial documentation. Due to confidentiality obligations I agreed to by signing a translation services agreement with said CRO, I am not at liberty to divulge identifying information regarding the company, therefore, they will hereinafter in this paper be referred to as the Company. Prior to starting my collaboration with them, I had previously had some sporadic experience in translating clinical trial documentation from English to Croatian and was interested in delving deeper into that area in order to explore whether this might be a potential specialization area for me. What appealed to me about this area was the variety of content, i.e., that translations

[26] https://www.clinicalleader.com/doc/the-role-of-language-translation-in-clinical-trials-0001

would not always involve the same types of documents or the same approaches. I was led by the idea that the domain being specialized meant that the demand for translators pursuing that area would be high. Of course, the high degree of specialization means that a great deal of medical knowledge is required, at least on a level that permits the translator to distinguish between the levels of specialized language used to explain a medical concept, ranging from plain language to specialised terminology. Translation work done in this domain also implies ethical responsibilities and potential repercussions, as any errors may potentially have very grave consequences. Not only does there exist the responsibility towards clinical trial patients, in the case of patient-facing documents, to faithfully transfer the information that directly concerns how they will be medically treated, and in a manner that they are able to comprehend regardless of their background, but also to accurately maintain or adapt all technical and scientific information intended for professionals. Taking all of this into consideration, I decided to approach this engagement very conscientiously and only perform the work that I felt I was able to prepare for and research to an appropriate degree.

After registering for the freelance engagement at the Company's website, I received two short sample texts as test translation; one was about glioblastoma and the other contained a description of the testing process for a medical drug, both written using highly specialized terminology. Some time after submitting the texts, I was notified that I fulfilled their quality requirements. After receiving the technical details of our collaboration, i.e., the terms, payments etc., it was explained that the activities that I would be offered to perform were translation (either of new documents or tracked-changes document versions), machine translation post-editing and review (which sometimes includes a 2nd step review). Machine translation is a process quite regularly used by the Company, which I concluded on the basis of the fact that the majority (over 70%) of the activities offered to me within projects were post-editing, out of a total of 95 projects I have worked on. The system of taking on the Company's projects as a translator is as follows: project offers for translation or post-editing are emailed to all relevant translators or linguists simultaneously, and the translator/linguist who confirms their availability the fastest is attributed this first step. Afterwards, the method is repeated for the purpose of finding the linguist who will handle the review step, and, lastly, the cycle is repeated for the third time so as to assign a linguist for the 2nd step review. The successful attribution of one of the project's steps is confirmed by the receipt of a purchase order which states the scope, rate, deadline and other details regarding the particular project. I find this method of attributing projects depending on the quickest reaction very problematic for various reasons, not least because I do not believe that this method ensures that the most appropriate translator is attributed to a particular project. Moreover, this approach does not enable translators collaborating with the Company to consider their schedule or the text itself first, due to the rigid time constraint, before accepting or declining participation. However, this topic is not directly relevant to the theme of this chapter, therefore, it will not be elaborated upon at this point.

Most projects are performed in memoQ, with the exception of the translation of tracked changes, a task which is common with regards to clinical trial documentation, since most of the documents I mentioned earlier pass through various stages of approval and/or amendments by various parties within the process, made or proposed either by regulatory authorities, internally within the Company or by the contracted institution(s). This also means that machine translation is provided and subsequently post-edited also within memoQ. CAT tools that provide machine translation systems within their software may do so internally, which means that the software has its own integrated machine translation system (e.g. Trados Studio), or externally, as is the case with memoQ, which links to external machine translation systems via plugins[27]. Linguists working on the attributed projects in memoQ may not change this feature or any other predefined setting in the project in any way.

4.4 Post-editing from English to Croatian in the field of clinical trials

The post-editing of machine translation required within the framework of my collaboration with the Company is bilingual; as described in the beginning of the chapter, this means that it is performed by having the source text at my disposal, i.e., it is visually present in memoQ on the left side in column-form, with the machine-translated text displayed on the right, where it is edited. In this sense, the type of display is identical to regular translation performed in the same CAT tool. It is also static, meaning that it is performed separately from the machine translation step, which is generated first, as opposed to an interactive post-editing approach in which the target text is created simultaneously by post-editors and MT, with the MT “learning” from the post-editor’s input (Vieira, 2020, p. 322). The Company’s

[27] https://www.memoq.com/integrations/machine-translation/public-plugin

briefs state that post-editing should consist of editing the TM/MT output against the source text to ensure completeness, accuracy in terminology choice and appropriate style for human parity. This description leads to the conclusion that this entails full post-editing, as described in the ISO standard for MT referenced previously in the chapter, since the expression "human parity" signifies that the result is supposed to reflect the level of a human-made translation.

Since machine translation systems, regardless of whether they are rule-based, statistical or neural-network-based, rely on their databases, it is only logical that languages for which there is a large amount of resources will result in higher-accuracy MT output. In other words, the more texts that are available for use by those systems in certain languages, the more it is ensured that machine translation of those languages evolves towards a higher degree of quality (with human-level translation quality as the benchmark). Within the framework of the analysis of machine translation into Croatian within the domain of clinical trials, it is interesting to observe its results both in the context of the high specialization of the domain and in the context of a language that is not significantly represented globally (there are around 5 million speakers of Croatian worldwide[28]). In the following sub-section, I will provide examples of MT output quality where English is the source text and Croatian the target, taken from the post-editing assignments I have worked on within the framework of my collaboration with the Company. The sample reviewed contained a total of roughly 6000 words. Apart from presenting these machine translation solutions, I will also describe the changes I made to these in order for the final version of the target text to "ensure completeness, accuracy in terminology choice and appropriate style for human parity", as per the Company's aforementioned general post-editing brief. I have broken down the examples according to the categories of significant editing changes that I had to introduce: grammar, punctuation and terminology.

4.4.1 Grammar edits

Upon reviewing the selected sample of my post-editing projects, the pre-edited text created by the MT system contained only a few grammatical errors, meaning that the MT used by the Company within memoQ has a large enough database for Croatian to be able to form grammatically correct sentences in most cases. There were no errors detected in the

[28] https://www.worlddata.info/languages/croatian.php

grammar areas in which the two languages differ most significantly, namely cases (total of 7 in Croatian versus 3 in English), gendered nouns and the passive mode, which is less present in Croatian scientific writing (Raos, 2006). However, where English scientific writing style contains abstract language in which the performer of the activity is not specified, MT misses the meaning behind the abstraction:

These questions may ask how safe an investigational medication is, how well it works, or what dose is best.	Tim se pitanjima može upitati koliko je ispitivani lijek siguran, koliko dobro djeluje ili koja je doza najbolja.

Figure 15: MT output with grammatical error

In the above example, the meaning of the words "These questions may ask" operates under the assumption that the source text reader is able to conclude that, even though "these questions" is the subject of the sentence, questions, as inanimate concepts, cannot perform actions such as asking, and that the "asking" is essentially done by the persons who have posed those questions. But the MT system is unable to distinguish that the noun "questions" refers to something that cannot perform actions, and has chosen to match the reflexive verb "upitati (se)" (to ask oneself something), with "tim pitanjima" (by/through those questions), which results in a conceptual redundancy in Croatian (ask oneself with questions). Moreover, unlike the source sentence, which has a clear subject, the translated sentence is impersonal, and the same phrase back-translated would state: "By those questions, oneself may be asked how safe (...)", ergo, the grammatical structure of this first part of the sentence is both unnecessarily complex and faulty, and requires a significant edit.

Common grammar errors found in Croatian texts and frequently made by native speakers of Croatian also find their way into MT output, since those texts "feed" the MT resources. An example of this would be the preposition "with" in Croatian, which can take either the form "s" or "sa", depending on whether or not it is followed by words beginning with the letters *s*, *š*, *z* or *ž* or with consonants followed by either of those four letters. Yet, the similarity of the two forms of the preposition causes their practical use by speakers to often be confused. Therefore, the erroneous use of one or the other form can also be found in Croatian MT results. An example I detected was found within a sentence containing instructions regarding the manner of administering a drug. In English, the phrase stated that it should be taken "with or without food", which was machine-translated as "sa hranom ili bez nje", when it should have been "s hranom ili bez nje".

4.4.2 Punctuation edits

In terms of punctuation, there is a clear tendency of maintaining English punctuation in the MT-translated target text in Croatian, especially commas, which are much more present in English scientific writing. In the example below, it is evident that the patterns of use of commas are identical between the source and the target text, which results in punctuation errors in the Croatian version:

For simplicity and traceability purposes, it would be best if two original copies of the informed consent form were first signed by the study doctor and sent to the subject by mail together with a franked envelope, so that the subject can sign them and return one signed copy by mail to the study site.	**Radi jednostavnosti i sljedivosti, najbolje bi bilo da dva izvorna primjerka obrasca informiranog pristanka najprije potpiše liječnik ispitivanja i pošalje ispitaniku poštom zajedno s frankiranom omotnicom, kako bi ih ispitanik mogao potpisati i vratiti jednu potpisanu kopiju poštom na mjesto ispitivanja.**

Figure 16: MT output with punctuation errors

The comma following the Croatian adverbial phrase "Radi jednostavnosti i sljedivosti" is redundant – adverbial phrases are not followed by commas in Croatian when they appear at the beginning of a sentence. The other comma within the segment is also incorrectly used, since subordinate clauses ("kako bi ih (...)") are not separated by commas from the main clause in Croatian when they succeed them.

Another punctuation error detected several times in the MT output was the manner of writing quotation marks. Where English uses double upper quotes (" "), Croatian uses the left lower and right upper quote („ "). This is another instance in which the MT system transfers English punctuation onto the Croatian target text, which can be attributed to the system's resources, in which there is probably a considerable amount of Croatian texts containing English quotation marks.

Other punctuation errors found in the text sample can be traced back to errors in the source text, for example "Page-15" translated as "stranica-15", in which the system transferred the information as-is and maintained the unnecessary hyphen, since, at this stage of the system's development, it has not yet been equipped with the ability to recognise and automatically correct typography errors from the source text in the target text.

4.4.3 Terminology edits

The area of terminology is perhaps the aspect in which the specificity of machine translation or its features can be observed. It is also the aspect which perhaps bears the most weight in terms of the target texts intended purpose. This is because, in clinical trial documentation, it is crucial that the information transmitted is as accurate and faithful to the source as possible, Since the recipients of the information depends on that accuracy to be able to understand or fulfil their very specific roles within the clinical trial process. Unfortunately, this is also where the machine translation system used within memoQ seems to show the most room for improvement. Within the analysed text sample, it was generally found that machine translation resulted in very low in-document consistency, at times even within a single sentence. This means that the MT system is unable to maintain terminological consistency, that is, unable to translate the same source term using the same target term in several instances within a single sentence, paragraph, or document. In the example below, the MT system produced a translation in which two different terms in Croatian were used to translate the term "trial":

In the Appendix to the protocol, it is necessary to define the approximate duration for the Data Abstraction Period, ie in which period from the entry of the subject into the trial it is planned to abstract the data collected in the trial.	**U Dodatku protokola potrebno je definirati okvirno trajanje Data Abstraction Perioda, odnosno u kojem se razdoblju od ulaska ispitanika u pokus planira apstrahirati podatke prikupljene u ispitivanju.**

Figure 17: MT output with terminological inconsistencies

The first instance in which the term "trial" appears in the source text, it is machine-translated by using the term "pokus", which refers to a scientific experiment (as performed within a laboratory, for instance), and not clinical research. The second appearance of "trial" is translated correctly as "ispitivanje", the widely acknowledged term used in the related national legislation. Also, for the source term "data abstraction period" the MT system produced, inexplicably, a term in English and almost identical to the source term, but with the suffix "a" added to the word "period" in order to form the appropriate case (genitive). This could be the result of the system erroneously concluding that the term is a proper noun, i.e., a name or title, and that it should thus remain in the source language.

Within the same document which was part of the text sample, there was another target-text terminological inconsistency regarding the term "study". This term is interchangeable with the term "trial" and "research", which all denote the same concept when used in this context – a clinical trial. In the example below, there are three instances of the term "study" appearing in the source text:

If you agree to take part, and the study doctor determines that the study is right for you, it is expected that you will be in the study for about 10 weeks (2.5 months).	Ako pristanete sudjelovati i liječnik u ispitivanju utvrdi da je studija dobar izbor za vas, očekuje se da sudjelujete u studiji otprilike 10 tjedana (2,5 mjeseci).

Figure 18: MT output with terminological inconsistencies, part 2

The MT-generated target text contains two different terms corresponding to the single source term. One of those is the appropriate target term, "ispitivanje", used within the broader specialized term "study doctor" ("liječnik u ispitivanju"), whereas the second target term produced by MT is "studija", which is not adequate since it belongs to a different semantic area, denoting research of a nature and structure different from clinical trials (to be used, for example, within the Croatian term for an environmental or an impact study, i.e., "studija zaštite okoliša" or "studija utjecaja").

Considering the importance of terminological consistency and accuracy in clinical trial documentation, in the light of the various aforementioned purposes that those documents fulfill within the process of conducting a clinical trial and their different recipients, it would be fair to say that the machine translation performed by the systems provided within memoQ still require a substantial amount of human post-editing. That being said, the issue of terminology seems to be the only one requiring major interventions in the target text – in most of the above cases, the grammar and punctuation edits mostly do not require significant changes in the syntax (structure) of the sentence and could be categorized as belonging to the domain of light post-editing. They require the least amount of temporal effort (as per Vieira's categorization), but a great deal of technical effort. In terms of cognitive effort, terminology edits certainly prevail, considering the mental activities spent on introducing them, as well as on detecting terminological issues in the first place, since those errors cannot be detected by regular QA procedures. A feature that does not seem to exist within memoQ's MT functionality, but for which there seems to be a logical need, is interaction between the MT system and available translation memories. If the MT system would be able to base its results on terms within the translation memories, this would most likely bring vast improvement of the terminology issues that the system currently faces. That being said, I do not possess the information regarding the exact type of machine translation that the Company uses within memoQ, although its characteristics indicate that it might be statistical. If so, it would be interesting to compare results with a neural-based MT system, which is much more interactive and might already offer more advanced features that include translation memories to some degree.

4.5 Machine translation versus the translator

Based on my analysis, it is safe to say that there is a clear time-saving benefit to machine translation in the field of translating clinical trial documents. My subjective impression is that human translation “from scratch” in memoQ would require more mechanical (typing) effort, since the phrases that are used in those types of documents tend to be long and convoluted, as well as cognitive effort, because all words, even less specialized ones, require mental exertion, and so does ordering them in a sentence, which can be reduced when the phrase is already written out automatically by MT. These are the main contributions that I see as providing immediate positive workflow results when using machine translation. Nevertheless, these benefits are not universally and uniformly present in every type of project; they merely exist to a lesser or greater degree, depending on a large number of variables: the type of machine translation, the quality of the source text (whether or not it is coherent, free of typographical errors and internally consistent), the system’s database for a particular language, and the target audience. However, a greater obstacle to the usefulness of the analysed machine translation system is its ability to handle specialized terminology. Any time gained by the aforementioned relief of mechanical and cognitive effort is lost due to the need to verify the overall consistency of terms that are crucial to the document’s purpose, because this requires careful reading of the entire target text (not counting the necessary standard reading of the completed target text before delivery), which may in some cases be extremely time-consuming. Taking all of these aspects into consideration, it is difficult to say whether engaging in post-editing assignments from the point of view of a translator/linguist might be a more lucrative or beneficial professional activity in terms of the ratio of time spent versus income gained.

With artificial intelligence developing in leaps and bounds within a short time span, there has been a deluge of opinions and predictions as to what this represents for the translation industry. This type of machine translation is rapidly overshadowing the other two (statistical and rule-based) due to its ability to use existing knowledge databases to create completely new material and apply what it has learned. All it takes is a search of keywords such as “AI in translation” to see just how many articles and blog and social media posts have been published on the subject just within the last year. Many of those seem to agree that translation is transforming into a multi-role process in which the translator's input is one of several stages of creating target-language content[29]. I use the word "content" because the use of AI in translation is being introduced both in the case of textual material and spoken language[30]. Considering the fact that, apart from translation, the use of this technology is being actively explored in many specialised areas, it is reasonable to assume that it will continue to be an (increasingly) important factor in many professional activities for the foreseeable future. One thing is certain, however – translators can only gain by exploring different MT systems and gauge how best to use or not use them to their advantage; if anything, knowing what those systems have to offer enables human professionals to at least have a better idea of the added value that they as translators provide for the client. Eszenyi et al. (2023) speculate that these developments will lead to the prominence of two new roles: the post-editor and the translator technologist (p. 106). While the former role already has its place in machine-translation-based projects, as described previously in this paper, the latter is, according to the authors, still not as well-defined, but essentially consists of "tech-savvy translators capable of preparing texts for translation in CAT tools or MT engines" (ibid). However, any assumptions as to the loss of the traditional translator role apply first and foremost to the domains in which style is more uniform, formulaic and repetitive. The general opinion seems to be that more complex and subtle creativity in translation is beyond the capacities of artificial intelligence[31]. Nevertheless, since a considerable amount of content that has, until now, been translated by humans did belong to the category of those specialised domains, all language professionals, including myself, should carefully consider how they will market their services and direct their professional efforts in the future, paying special attention to the space that this technology is unfortunately creating for poor treatment of language professionals. I personally see several "antidotes" to this. As I stated previously, staying in the loop regarding technological advancements being used in translation can only contribute to the ongoing relevance of the translator as an inextricable element of any translation process, regardless of whether or not artificial intelligence replaces certain aspects of language service activities. Another is staying connected to other language professionals

[29] https://www.getblend.com/blog/ai-translation-2/
[30] https://phrase.com/blog/posts/artificial-intelligence/
[31] https://speakt.com/ai-translation/

and using those connections to share aspirations and experiences, since these latest developments bind us all in similar circumstances. Lastly, the need for adapting to new roles and emerging functionalities should not be seen as a burden, but as the only way to maintain a voice in the global conversation on translation.

5. Conclusion

The framework of this paper has included my professional trajectory, the approaches I have been employing in translation and my thoughts on some general practices, specialized domains and changes in the translation industry. I have presented my first steps in the direction of becoming a self-employed translator, with emphasis on details regarding the necessary administrative processes and the pros and cons of such form of employment, an aspect that I believe many young graduates are underinformed about, as I was at the time. This was followed by a detailed insight into two very specific areas of translation, which I aimed to describe in a manner that illustrates their specificities and the skills they require. Translating clinical research documentation is bound by its strictly predefined standards and requires a high degree of familiarity with the subject matter. This is also applicable in the post-editing step, especially since, as I demonstrated, machine translation within this domain tends to create problems with the overall consistency of medical terminology. Translation within the framework of European parliament documents also relies on stringent requirements and is additionally based on skilful use of reliable resources and reference documents. The purpose of the target text and, therefore, the delivery of a high-quality translation in both translation domains, is best served by adhering to standardized terminology, accuracy and consistency.

Reflecting now on the lessons I elaborated upon in this paper leads me to the conclusion that most of them were experienced without referring to any sort of support system or community which could have facilitated some of the processes I had to face on my own. I have stated the importance of seeking peer guidance, which can usually be found in translators' associations or similar professional groups. Generally speaking, I attempted to present the current challenges of the industry and provide a kind of guidance to anyone who is considering delving into some of the translation areas to which I refer or is pondering self-employment within the translation industry. Even though many of the conditions I describe herein are related to the country in which I am working, I believe that most of the principles can be applied to any national or particular context.

I aimed, perhaps more than anything, to provide a very personal snapshot of a period in the language services industry which is sure to be thought of in the future as the turning point for the role of translators. Machine translation is becoming an inevitable element of the translation industry landscape and I wished to express that it is important to decide to which extent we could or should incorporate it in our everyday work. By finishing the Master's course in Translation and Linguistic Services in Porto and through my experience as a translation professional, I believe that I am at a point of my professional development in which I feel secure in my abilities as a linguist, regardless of whatever the future holds, and I hope that this paper is a reflection of the path I traversed to get there.

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