

Can Social Media Offer Some Clues about the Translators of Tomorrow and the Future of Translation?

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The threat of automation—particularly at a time when neural machine translation has proven to produce output that rivals human intervention—has many language service professionals at the least concerned and, at worst, contemplating new career paths. In Canada, enrollment in translation programmes has decreased, and in some cases, alarmingly so. However, in nearly ten years of researching translation and social media, I have found a number of instances where translation is gaining new ground and where it resists automation. I have argued in favour of conceptualizing translation using the lens of “augmentation” (Davenport and Kirby, 2015), demonstrating that automation is only a threat to translation if we allow it to be. In this vein, the fact that translation remains “anthropocentric”, despite accelerating innovation and digital shifts, is a positive. In this presentation, using a mixed-methods approach centered around Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) and social media analysis, I leverage data and examples from three different social media case studies (*Zooniverse*, *Instagram*, and *Netflix*) to argue that professional translators can find inspiration from content creators, social media influencers/marketers, and even citizen scientists to rethink how translation can be leveraged and provided in the next decade. From the self-translation of *Instagram* influencers, to the collaborative paradigms of citizen science on knowledge-based social platforms, to the favourable audience reception of multilingual series and films on streaming services, there is no shortage of translation and multilingual communication, most of which is human-generated. However, perhaps due to the perceived (and also, arguably, inherent) Anglocentrism of North American social media, little consideration is given in training as to how this niche might prove to be rather opportune for professional translators, interpreters, and language professionals. Following the overview of three distinct case studies, I will conclude with some future avenues for translator training and a proposed skillset for ‘the human translators of tomorrow’.

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