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(eds)

COLLABORATION IN TRANSLATION

*From training to platforms
and publishing*

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INTRODUCTION

*Giuseppe De Bonis**

This volume comes in a double guise. Firstly, as an expression of the Laboratorio sulla traduzione delle lingue europee¹ operating at the Department of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies of Ca' Foscari University of Venice, which brings together academics and researchers working in the field of translation, interpreting and lingua-cultural mediation in the foreign languages that are part of the Venetian university's curriculum. This volume follows in the footsteps of the Laboratorio, taking up its spirit of collaboration and interdisciplinarity whose strength lies in the dialogue and fruitful interaction with other scholars, both national and international. This means being open, debating and collaborating not only among academics, but also with professionals who work in the field of translation.

Secondly, the volume takes shape following the *TEW - Translating Europe Workshop*, organised in November 2021 at Ca' Foscari University in Venice in collaboration with the European Commission. This is not, however, the publication of the proceedings of that conference, but a volume that ideally follows in the wake of that event, carrying on the discussion begun there. It contains new and original contributions, again promoting the spirit of openness mentioned earlier. An openness that goes beyond the ivory tower in which academic research often retreats, and which instead reaches out to the world of professionals in the field, represented by the four contributions in the last part of the volume. Given this background, it should therefore come as no surprise that the central theme of the book is collaborative translation.

The volume consists of thirteen chapters and is divided into three parts. Out of the thirteen contributions, five are written in English, eight in Italian. The decision to publish an Italian-English bilingual volume is due to the desire to maintain that plurality of voices, as well as languages (or rather, language pairs) that represent not only the Workshop, but also the authors of each contribution. English, it is well known, is the language mainly used in academic research, and this is also the case in translation studies, even

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¹ Research group on the translation of European languages.

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though translation, by its very definition, is always a process that takes place between at least two languages. With this in mind, the editors of this volume have nonetheless decided to take the risk and offer their readers a “polyphonic” text, a musical metaphor that also applies very well to the concept of collaboration, the key word and common thread of all the chapters presented here.

The first part of the volume (*Theory and Practice of Collaborative Translation*) is more theoretically oriented than the other two. It consists of four contributions, three of them written in English. It tackles central themes such as collaboration in translation and the (often problematic) relationship between human translators and digital translation technologies.

Mirella Agorni's contribution is the point of departure for looking at the relationship between translation and collaboration. The concept of collaboration has characterised translation processes throughout history, and in the field of Translation Studies it has been linked to other fundamental concepts, such as the visibility of translators. Visibility and collaboration have not been regarded as opposites but have often proven to be incompatible when looking at the past. The past, Agorni argues, allows us to better understand the present and take action to bring about cultural change. For instance, if we consider the translation metaphors, we realise that up to now they have mainly focused on the individual translator: they can now instead be conceived in a plural and collaborative form. Talking about the present and the future, the author observes how translation is increasingly driven by technological progress that translators can hardly ignore, with all the advantages and disadvantages that it may entail. To look at translation practice today, Agorni suggests a broader, ‘ecological’ approach that embraces the world around us, both human and non-human.

The next three chapters continue, each from its own perspective, the argument started by Agorni's chapter. **Federico Gaspari**'s contribution challenges the cliché that the work of the translator is a lonely job, shedding light on the subtle and covert ways in which data-driven translation technologies and digital resources (such as online dictionaries, terminological databases, translation memory software and state-of-the-art neural MT engines) rely on and, in turn, promote various forms of indirect and hidden collaboration (“what you get is not what you see”, as effectively summarised by the second part of the title). Translation has always been characterised by invisible collaboration, and nowadays translators are constantly immersed in collaborative dynamics and exchanges, often unconsciously and perhaps even despite themselves. After reviewing the

main theoretical, professional and ethical issues that come into play in this scenario, Gaspari also discusses the possible implications for the training of future translators.

The collaboration between human translators and digital technologies is also the main topic of **Giuseppe Sofo's** contribution, which ideally continues, and in some respects brings to a close, what has emerged in the previous chapters. After examining the evolution of translation in the digital age, also discussed within the increasingly plural and multilingual context that has led to the need to translate from and into more languages than in the past, Sofo moves on to analysing a third possibility of collaboration between human translators and digital tools for computer-aided translation (CAT) and machine translation (MT): the way towards 'augmented' translation. This consists in an increasingly deeper and more conscious interaction that human beings may have with the technologies they themselves have created. 'Augmented' translation represents an opportunity rather than a threat: it is about moving towards a cultural and professional horizon in which humans 'exploit' technology to improve not only their work conditions, but also, and above all, their living conditions, and their knowledge of the world.

Finally, **David Katan** and **Cinzia Spinzi's** contribution focuses on an aspect of collaboration that has been little explored thus far: the translator *plus*. The *plus* refers to the fact that translation is seen as just one of the components of the translator's profile, and it is this *plus* that enhances his or her status and pay. The authors distinguish between two forms of collaboration: 'horizontal' and 'vertical'. In the first case, this includes teamwork, collaboration between translator and experts, focus groups, proofreaders and so on. In the second case, it involves more active interaction with the author, the client and all the other agents involved in the translation process, often from its earliest stages. The translator thus moves from the habitus of a language expert, whose work ends with the delivery of the translation, to that of a translator who has an active role, who is consulted and who discusses options and alternatives. This shift from the end of the vertical chain towards the collaborative circle is discussed and underlined by the two authors through their personal experience as translators of museum material, by referring to a list of established translators *plus*, through data obtained from two questionnaires administered online to translators and interpreters about their perception of their profession.

The second part of the volume (*Training and Professional Practice*) brings together five contributions: the first three are written in Italian, the other two in English. The keywords are translation practice and translation

didactics. Whilst the first chapter deals with the new forms of collaboration adopted in the field of audiovisual translation, the other four – even if from different perspectives, places, and language combinations – look at translation and collaboration in the context of university training.

Linda Rossato and **Valentina Di Francesco**'s contribution analyses some forms of collaboration, through cloud-based workflows, in the dubbing industry. Between 2020 and 2022, as restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic led to the temporary shutdown of dubbing studios and the simultaneous increase in the use of video-streaming platforms by final users forced into lockdown, professionals in the field had to resort to innovative solutions, including cloud dubbing. Not only the process of dialogue transcription and adaptation, but also the subsequent recording of the soundtrack took place remotely, with the dubbing directors directing their voice actors from remote locations. The chapter examines the technical aspects of this new practice and its possible effects on quality, but also questions the human and ethical consequences that a more extensive use of cloud dubbing might have in the future.

From collaboration in professional practice, the next four contributions look instead at collaboration from the perspective of translation didactics. **Tiziana D'Amico**'s chapter offers important insights into the numerous advantages that the collaborative approach to translation provides, particularly in the didactic field, when applied to complex texts such as comics, which by their very definition are multimodal and 'hybrid' in their semiotic and linguistic codes, as well as plural in their realisation. Starting from the classroom, D'Amico's contribution aims to enrich the discussion and investigation on collaborative translation by proposing the hypothesis of a "commonality of spirit" between collaborative translation and comics. The author identifies some shared characteristics at the basis of this hypothesis, including mediation as a constitutive and operative core, and the questioning of the concept of the Author in the singular, i.e. as a single creative agent.

The next two contributions have a more applied approach. **Yannick Hamon** presents a research project on the collaborative revision of texts translated from Italian into French carried out during the language practice classes with students enrolled in the third year of the Bachelor's Degree course in Language, Civilisation and the Science of Language at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. The project, conducted within the framework of action-research applied to the teaching of French as a foreign language, 'exploits' the potential of new technologies for educational purposes (specifically, wiki, a collaborative writing tool of the Google docs suite provided by the

University). The results of the project, although still preliminary, appear promising both in terms of the didactic validity of collaborative peer review and in terms of the satisfaction of the students who participated in the activity, measured through an evaluation questionnaire.

Elisa Fina describes an experience of collaborative translation from English into Italian conducted with a class of third-year students of the Bachelor's Degree course in Language, Civilisation and the Science of Language at Ca' Foscari University of Venice during the Covid-19 health emergency. This experience made use of Padlet, a web platform where users can interact and collaborate in real time, and which can thus be used as a 'virtual noticeboard'. For each translation task assigned on the Moodle e-learning platform, a Padlet was set up, in which students were asked to identify and solve translation problems through peer-to-peer discussion. Fina's contribution provides a number of interesting preliminary observations, highlighting both positive and critical aspects of this form of collaborative translation by analysing some examples from the Padlet-based discussions. It definitely paves the way for further discussion and research on this subject.

Finally, **Alexandra Krause's** contribution offers an overview of the *EMT Competence Framework - European Master's in Translation*, which, updated in 2017, is an important reference frame for all the courses in translation at university level. Krause explains how the Centre for Translation Studies (ZTW) at the University of Vienna has adopted a curriculum in line with the EMT Competence Framework for its Master's degree course, which includes the practical course 'Basic Competence Translation' among its first-year teaching activities. The course, which is compulsory for all students, provides them with an introduction to all the EMT competences necessary for the two specialisation areas ('Specialised Translation and Language Industry' and 'Translation in Literature, Media, the Arts'). The contribution describes the didactic objectives and contents of some selected classes from this introductory course, whose aim is to build a bridge between the theoretical framework behind each competence and the concrete translation practice. Dialogue and collaboration between translation theory and practice for the improvement of the profession are the ultimate goal of implementing the EMT Competences for training purposes.

Krause's chapter represents the ideal transition between the two sides of the book – theory and academic research, on the one hand, and professional practice, on the other. From training, the last part of the volume (*The Professional World*) thus moves on to professional practice, with four

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contributions written by Italian professionals working in the field.

The contribution by **Mirko Silvestrini**, president of Unilingue (one of the most important associations of language service providers in Europe) offers an overview of how professional practice is currently shaped. Translators, interpreters, and translation companies today face new challenges that were inconceivable in the past. These challenges affect the profession on a global level, forcing translation professionals to make choices that affect their working future. The demands of the market have changed not only in terms of quality, but also in terms of execution speed, technological knowledge, and resistance to the stress generated by tight deadlines and increasing competition. Within this framework, Silvestrini focuses his attention on the importance for translation professionals of combining three different elements in the best synergy possible: the technological tools at their disposal, their training, and the human factor, which – as the author emphasises – remains the key element for the success of any quality professional service.

Samanta K. Milton Knowles' contribution deals more specifically with the role of collaboration and teamwork in the field of publishing. Specifically, the author offers the example of the trade union Strade Slc-Cgil and its second core, the cultural association StradeLab, whose services represent an important resource to get professionals out of their solitary situation that has traditionally characterised the circle of literary translators working with the so-called 'minor languages' (in particular Scandinavian languages), in the past veritable 'lone wolves', to quote the author. With their activities, which range from assistance on a more strictly bureaucratic and legal level to the construction of collaboration networks (trade union mentoring, lifelong learning), Strade and StradeLab appear as a place where professionals come together with the aim of promoting a new perspective, namely that of enabling their members to become professional colleagues rather than just competitors, especially in a sector as varied, and in some ways as complex, as that of minor languages.

From literary translation, the contribution written by **Leonardo Marcato** and **Francesco Riccobono** of Keywords Studios takes us to the field of videogame localisation. The videogame industry has grown considerably in recent years, becoming a sector capable of competing with film and television in terms in size, revenues, involved skills and artistic value. In this scenario, the need to distribute a videogame title in several different markets, each with its own language and culture, requires a localisation service structure capable of working within deadlines and following specific

methodologies. Although linked to the sphere of translation, videogame localisation constantly makes use of new technologies and relies on specialised professional figures who work as a team: the project manager, who acts as an intermediary not only with the client, but also with all the other operators involved in the complex localisation process; the Language Project Lead, who coordinates the work between the various translators in the early phase of translating the (written) texts of the game; together with the language tester, the dialogue writer and all the other professional figures involved in the dubbing of the videogame itself.

The third part of the book closes with the contribution of **Tiziana Sicilia**, president of COM&TEC and tekomp Europe, who introduces us to the technical communication process, highlighting the opportunities for collaboration and synergies between two areas of activity within it: technical writing of product information and corporate content, on the one hand, and technical translation and localisation, on the other. Sicilia emphasises how the market increasingly demands new solutions to communicate and transfer information in a clear, effective, and emotionally engaging manner. The objective for those involved in technical communication is therefore to create an experience that can be appreciated by users/addressees who want to feel involved and encouraged to learn more. The solutions, innovative tools, norms, and standards that currently available make it possible to improve the design, creation, and development phases of content for translation and localisation. However, there are still ‘gaps’ to be bridged and skills and abilities to be implemented, as well as new synergies to be experimented with to ensure effective, quality and legally compliant communication in these two areas (technical writing and technical translation/localisation) that are more and more interconnected.

This volume was designed with the aim of bringing new perspectives and offering new food for thought on the relationship between translation and collaboration not only to researchers and scholars, but also to professionals and all those who, for various reasons, are interested in studying and/or working on the issues addressed here. Without claiming to be exhaustive, the volume has tried to cover as many and as diverse aspects and problems of the complex and articulated world of collaborative translation as possible.