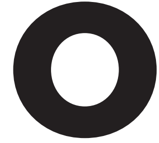

Online and digital contexts

The terms online and digital are not synonymous. Online applies to any type of activity that is networked or connected through the Internet, specifically Web 2.0 – the "social web" that makes it possible to "us[e] the internet to enact relationships rather than simply share information" (Zappavigna 2012:2). Digital refers more specifically to the technologies that have progressed from analogue circuits, which account for most of the technology with which we interact today, for instance tablets, smart phones, interactive smart walls that create immersive experiences and spaces, and 3D printers. Not all mobile or digital technologies are necessarily online: for instance, a reader can peruse a webzine or e-book using a reading tablet but the device may not be connected to the Internet or be web-enabled as the user reads. Nevertheless, the two terms tend to be used interchangeably in translation research, making it difficult at times to classify research under either heading.

The term social media may warrant similar caution. It most commonly refers to online social media, which leverage digital technologies and usually require Internet/WiFi connection for optimized use; however, as Standage (2013) indicates in his account of the evolution of social media, media used in social settings or to support socializing are not new or specific to the digital age. Newspapers are social media in that they report social events and current affairs. Moreover, newspapers create a space in which readers are encouraged to socialize, for instance, by providing the opportunity to write and publish letters to the editor or to disseminate other types of social content, such as obituaries and wedding announcements. Littau (2016b:908–909) thus argues that "digital media are second-order or meta media, repeating – that is, remediating – the outputs and tasks once conducted in other media".

Terminology related to digital and online media and the realities it designates evolves rapidly. Terms that once designated a technological or online reality can quickly become obsolete or replaced by new terms, posing a challenge to research on or with new technology. This instability is not surprising given the speed at which technological advancement occurs and the relative lack of historical precedent for such exponential change. As soon as one concept or term gains currency, a new disruptive technology or new web-based development can bring about a whole new set of neologisms. Verbs such as *to Google* and *to Facebook* were once rejected by many but are now commonplace, and the overlap between mobile phones and cameras renders the two terms synonymous in many cases. Terminological research, which is a branch of translation studies, must keep apace. Web-based tools such as those listed by Folaron (2010) can be helpful in tracking new terms and usages; Desjardins (2013a) cites UrbanDictionary, an online and crowdsourced dictionary, as an example of user-generated content that can provide further support in this area.

Research themes and foci

The emergence of research interest in translation in online and digital contexts roughly coincides with the advent of Facebook, around 2006–2007. This research trend was anticipated and supported by an earlier body of work that engaged with the implications of digital technology and the web, including research on the localization of websites and software (Schäler 2010; Pym 2011c; Jiménez-Crespo 2013b;

Dunne 2015). Nevertheless, the two strands of research remain distinct. As Cronin (2003:63) points out, localization is a "corporate linguistic response" aimed at satisfying market demands. Web-based and social media-based translation activity is not always commercially motivated; in many instances, user-generated content (UGC) is produced by individuals with no corporate or commercial connection or motivation. Users on Instagram and Facebook, for instance, may translate their own photo captions and status updates in order to reach a multilingual audience of (close) friends and family members. Studies on this particular type of self-translated UGC are rare, although Desjardins (2013a, 2017) investigates some user motivations, with later work (Desjardins in press) proposing a taxonomy of social media-based self-translation.

Desjardins (2017) offers an initial categorization of research that attempts to account for the intersection of translation and online contexts/ digital technology. The six categories she proposes cover crowdsourced translation, which overlaps with but is distinct from collaborative translation, as discussed by O'Brien (2011), Jimenez-Crespo (2013a) and Desjardins (2017); translation and activism; translation and crisis management; professional translation and the impact of the web, digital mobility and social media, including the impact of crowdsourcing, online behavioural economics and translator status; fan translation, including the online practices of fansubbing, fandubbing, rewriting and the role social media play in these contexts and practices; translation quality assessment, user feedback/assessment and social media monitoring.

Crowdsourced translation projects such as Wikipedia have been critiqued for the dissonance observed between their declared objective of supporting linguistic diversity and the realities revealed upon close scrutiny of their language practices. Research indicates that linguistic asymmetries found elsewhere in the exchange of cultural and knowledge capitals (Brisset 2008; UNESCO 2009) also exist on these platforms, in part due to the language expertise and demographic profiles of 'the crowd'. McDonough Dolmaya's (2017) study of Wikipedia concludes that translation activity primarily flows from major languages such as French and German and that recourse to English as a lingua franca and pivot language dominates on the platform. Research on participatory knowledge production, for instance in the field of citizen science, has rarely addressed the import of crowdsourced translation head on, alluding instead to linguistic diversity as an ideal to achieve, which recalls discussions on the importance of diversifying STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) demographics. Research on online translation flows can tell us not only how translation can and does impact online knowledge dissemination, but also how other fields largely ignore the role translation plays in this context, and simply assume that language diversity occurs as an obvious by-product of the plurivocality and nationless character of the web. Similar studies on translation flows in Wikipedia include H. Jones (2018) and Shuttleworth (2018b). This body of work points to the need for further studies on translation flows in online and digital contexts, to examine how participatory knowledge is construed, not only after the fact, but as part of an evolving, real-time process.

The revolutions that took place at the start of the second decade of the twenty-first century – in Tunisia, Egypt, Spain, Canada, Iran and other countries – are distinct in their motivations and demands, but they all leveraged, to different degrees, mobile and digital technologies as well as social media to pursue their activist agendas. Howard and Hussain argue that while discontent was brewing for years in North Africa and the Middle East, it was the wider-spread use of mobile phones and easy access to the web that allowed oppositional groups to grow and reach a wider public. These media, they assert, "were singularly powerful in spreading protest messages, driving coverage by mainstream broadcasters, connecting frustrated citizens with one another, and helping them to realize that they could take shared action regarding shared grievances" (2011:41). Translation played an important role in all these developments. Baker's (2016a) study of subtitling in the Egyptian Revolution analyzes the work of two activist collectives, Mosireen and Words of Women from the Egyptian Revolution, which posted documentary videos on YouTube. Baker found that while the filmmakers were aware of the importance of translation in making their documentary output accessible to an international audience, translation remained somewhat of an afterthought for them. At the

same time, subtitlers themselves were not proactive in either collective and at times tended to "prioritise semantic content over nuances of register" and to "focus on the core message of the speaker and ignore the specificities of their individual voice" (ibid.:11). Focusing a different platform, Colón Rodríguez (2013, 2016) and Desjardins (2017) examine the role played by social media in the Printemps Érable (Maple Spring) movement in Canada, one of whose objectives was to counter mainstream Anglophone media interpretations and translations of student uprisings and protests in Québec in 2012. Primarily mobilizing Tumblr, a microblogging social networking website, the collective sought to provide its own English translations of Francophone media reports, claiming that its versions (translations) corresponded more accurately to the reality of the events and messages associated with student demands and protests, which were related to rising tuition costs and access to postsecondary education. By offering a more nuanced, plurivocal (Nappi 2013), multilingual and translated account of the student protests, the Printemps Érable protesters effectively slowed down and disrupted media coverage and the debate related to these events. Colón Rodríguez's (2013, 2016) work highlights the crucial role translation can play in forcing power structures to acknowledge local experiences and understandings. Pérez-González's (2010) study focuses on political blogs and examines how lay, untrained translators contribute to anticapitalist discourses and structures by drawing on their linguistic and mediation skills to engage a wider circle of activists. His analysis engages with the comments attached to a political blog published by a Spanish journalist on a broadcast interview with the former Spanish Prime Minister Aznar, aired in English on *HARDtalk*. This case study demonstrates how fluid networks of engaged, untrained translators can emerge over time through dynamic processes of contextualization in online spaces. Sadler (in press) offers an extended analysis of translation practices on Twitter during the 2013 military intervention in Egypt, demonstrating that bilingual Twitter users adopted various strategies to translate both their own tweets and those of others, and that "a significant subset of tweets were oriented towards conveying the affective, bodily aspect of the period, rather than linguistically mediated meaning".

O'Brien (2016) uses the umbrella term crisis communication to encompass conflicts, disasters, emergencies and other types of crises. Governments, non-governments organizations and other institutions increasingly mobilize digital technology and social media to communicate messages in crisis situations. The government of Canada, for instance, encourages citizens to register mobile information in order to ensure that they receive important alerts before or during a natural disaster or civil unrest (Government of Canada 2016); this service is offered in English and French, revealing the presence of a hidden translation activity. Federici (2016:2) observes that crisis communication necessarily involves recourse to mediation, both cultural and linguistic; and yet, although planning, preparedness, training, resilience and crisis management are all central topics in crisis communication literature and research, intercultural, and by extension interlinguistic, communication receives no attention (ibid.:5). Similarly absent from the research agenda is the interconnectedness of mobile telephony, data analytics, translation/interpretation and crisis management, though all are leveraged by NGOs and other institutions to manage different kinds of emergencies. For the most part, research on the use of computer-assisted machine translation in crisis situations tends to follow mainstream debates on reliability, accuracy and the potential threat to professional translation. Other concerns include whether translators (and other mediators) are adequately trained to use the relevant technologies, and how translation studies might contribute to developing coherent and cohesive crisis communication plans across social media platforms. Very few studies have addressed these issues. Sutherlin (2013) examines crowdsourcing translation during crises, focusing on the use of mobile telephony, SMS and Twitter. O'Brien (2016) examines the role of translation in crisis communication more broadly, as well as the use of "translation-enabling technologies" (ibid.:92), and the importance of appropriate training in these contexts. One of the questions prompted by this research strand concerns the use of geolocation data: if translation flows for specific geographic locales could be mapped, these could be leveraged in crisis situations to determine which language

combinations are most needed and how interlingual communication flows between different language groups in the impacted locales, not only during crises but also as part of a preparatory strategy. Federici (2016), O'Brien (2016) and Sutherlin (2013) all address the importance of preparedness in relation to adequate translation resources and strategies in crisis contexts. This line of research also points to the relevance for translation research of the potential intersections of big data and social networking analysis.

In terms of professional blogging and social networking, the emphasis has been on how translators congregate in online contexts. McDonough Dolmaya (2011c) examines how professional translators blog about their work, working conditions in the industry and their uptake of new technology. Using content analysis, she analyzed 50 blogs between January 2009 and June 2009 and concluded that translator blogs as an object of study are particularly significant in the way that they help researchers map networked behaviour or perceptions, which could supplement existing research on the sociology of translation phenomena. Flanagan (2016) examines attitudes to crowdsourcing among professional translators based on an analysis of their blogs. Desjardins (2013a, 2017) argues that investigating how translators make use of professional networking sites such as LinkedIn can provide an opportunity to reexamine the dichotomy of translator and translation visibility vs invisibility (Venuti 1995b/2008). Because translators describe their own work and professional competencies on these sites – for instance, by using tags that identify skills, accreditation, professional rank and tasks – they are able to offer a more nuanced representation of the archetypal translator. These translator profiles then elaborate a counter-discourse to mainstream perceptions that translator competency rests exclusively on linguistic skills. Moreover, translator profiles on LinkedIn and other online professional networks are no less visible or invisible in online ecosystems than the profiles of any other professional group such as lawyers or doctors. If translators now enjoy as much agency in representing themselves as any other group of professionals, the assumption of invisibility needs to be revisited.

Social media provide a space for amateur and professional translators alike to participate in fan translation, dubbing and subtitling of content, and to discuss strategies and tools as they work collaboratively on a particular project. Users and fans are now increasingly taking to YouTube to discuss the translation, dubbing and subtitling of their favourite shows and series, prompting the creation of channels and vlogs on the subject. YouTube even provides its users with translation tools to "boost channel audience" (YouTube 2018), signalling that translation tools are not just useful for fans wishing to participate in the subtitling and dubbing process, but also for influencers and content-creators interested in discussions of fan translation and fan culture with wider audiences. Olohan (2014c) offers an extended analysis of the motivations of amateur translators who subtitle TED talks on YouTube. Of the various fan translation activities in online and digital spaces, fansubbing is the most extensively studied, and is the subject of a separate entry in this volume (O'Hagan 2008; Dwyer 2012; Pérez-González 2013a).

Translation quality assessment (TQA) has also been impacted by social media. Companies such as Microsoft and Facebook have integrated user-generated feedback tools that allow users to provide feedback on localized and translated content, whether this content is translated using automatic machine translation, crowdsourcing or individual/professional human translation. Facebook, for instance, has embedded automatic machine translation to allow users of the platform to translate their friends' multilingual content. If users wish to provide feedback on the quality of the translation, they can. In some instances, the feedback options are limited: users may be invited to click a 'thumbs up' or 'thumbs down' version, which does not say much about what the user deemed satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Other user-based TQA feedback options include filling out surveys, sent via email or accessed through a pop-up window; star rankings; and sentiment feedback, through 'likes' or keywords that indicate user appreciation such as "loved it" or "great translation". Research linking TQA and machine translation/computer-assisted translations in online settings has been conducted by Anastasiou and Gupta (2011), García (2015) and Jiménez-Crespo (2015b). McDonough Dolmaya (2015) draws

on Mossop's taxonomy of editing and revising procedures to establish the extent to which crowdsourced translation by non-professional translators for Wikipedia displays transfer and language/style problems.

Future directions

One potential research strand that remains to be pursued involves comparing professional translator profiles across networking platforms, particularly between platforms that tend to be used more frequently in specific geographic locales or are frequented by specific networks of professionals. For instance, research could examine whether translators represent or describe their work similarly on LinkedIn compared to ProZ.

Other future research avenues include using social network analysis and network analyzer tools to map communities of translators on social platforms; investigating how and to what extent specific YouTube influencers leverage translation tools in the creation and curation of their content; comparative analyses across different audiovisual platforms of social media to establish, for instance, whether there are differences between digital-born content on different platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat or YouTube; and extended comparative analyses of commercially created subtitled or dubbed content and social media-based fan translations.

Perhaps one of the most fundamental questions to be explored as social media continue to evolve is their impact on our understanding of multilingual and cross-cultural communication and translation. Online content, user-generated content and social media blur the lines between source and target content, amateur contributions and professional work, paid labour and volunteer or fun labour (Desjardins 2017; Fuchs 2017). They operate within the borderlessness, nationlessness and plurivocality of digital spaces. This ambivalent, ever-changing environment provides some of the most theoretically disruptive avenues for future research connecting digital technology, mobility, social media and translation.

See also:
ACTIVISM; COLLABORATIVE TRANSLATION; CROWDSOURCED TRANSLATION; FAN AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION; MEDIA AND MEDIALITY; SEMIOTICS; TECHNOLOGY, AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

Further reading

Cronin, M. (2013) *Translation in the Digital Age*. London: Routledge.
Examines translation, digital technologies and their joint histories, and addresses key issues relating to the impact of digital technology and the Internet on translation.

Desjardins, R. (2017) *Translation and Social Media: In theory, in training and in professional practice*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Offers an overview of research on translation and social media and provides novel examples that connect the two areas of study.

Dwyer, T. (2012) 'Fansub Dreaming on ViKi: "Don't just watch but help when you are free"', in S. Susam-Saraeva and L. Pérez-González (eds) *Non-professionals Translating and Interpreting: Participatory and engaged perspectives*, special issue of *The Translator* 18(2): 217–243.
Examines amateur translation with specific attention given to fansubbing, raising questions related to legalization, linguistic justice and internationalization.

RENÉE DESJARDINS

Orality

Orality is as complex and hard to define as translation. It is a term that is used very expansively to describe a vast range of linguistic productions, often even as "a synonym for 'oral communication' or (even more narrowly) 'speech'" (McDowell 2012:169). While the following list of terms is by no means exhaustive, it indicates the complex, contested nature of orality as a term: aurature; ethnopoetics; folklore; oral art, culture, literature, tradition, text(s); oraliture; orature; non-literacy; verbal art and poetics. Each term has its own associations, and may be used in particular contexts to mark differing foci. For example, those working in folklore may treat orality as a "collectivity" which functions "as a repository of national heritage" (Dal Brun 2006:3). However, a scholar or translator working in ethnopoetics may see orality as a way "to hear and read the poetries of distant others, outside the