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Turning Tables: Translation Approaches Within Organisation Studies

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In this chapter, we introduce translation approaches used in organisation studies, which is a field of enquiry concerned with understanding the construction, constitution, and change of organisations, organising and management through individual, collectives and agents (Clegg et al. 2006). In our earlier work, we argued for the added value of interlingual translation in understanding translation work in multilingual organisations (Piekkari et al. 2020). In this chapter, we introduce translation approaches used in organisation studies.

Organisation studies is part of the broad and varied field of business and management studies, and much of its research is empirical, and uses social science methods for systematic enquiry and analysis. This field draws on a variety of academic disciplines, such as sociology, psychology and anthropology, and also the arts and humanities, philosophy and linguistics. More recently, organisation studies has started to borrow directly from translation studies, to make sense of organisational phenomena by appropriating some of its authors and concepts. This multidisciplinary character also means that, sometimes, borrowing from other disciplines leads to metatheoretical challenges and unintended consequences, such as confusing the appropriate level of analysis or compromising definitional clarity (Whetten et al. 2009) – an example would be the easy appropriation of some aspects of Venuti's work (1995) in organisation studies. Notwithstanding these challenges, we see such appropriation as a sign of organisation studies evolving as a field of inquiry, thus, beginning to embrace phenomena of multilingualism, including translation.

Organisation studies has developed particular language-sensitive approaches to guiding research enquiry, and it is these approaches we review in this chapter, to establish how and why translation is (or is not) drawn upon by organisational research. It is important to emphasise early on that, within organisation studies, translation is not typically understood to denote interlingual translation (i.e. translation between two or more languages). We show that translation is used, instead, either in a fairly loose way to describe organisational change processes, or as a means to understand the movement of ideas, practices, objects and resources across borders and how they therefore change when being received in a specific locality. From the perspective of translation studies, this state of affairs creates a challenge that is similar to that facing several other fields: Translation as a concept is evoked to discuss movement, change, innovation and transformation, but not necessarily the actual process of expressing talk and discourse in another language. In other words, the kind of concrete interlingual translation we might call prototypical (Halverson 2000), or translation proper (Jakobson 2000), is often overlooked, whereas a broader, more metaphorical meaning of translation is theorised extensively and studied empirically.

We start this chapter by providing a brief overview of organisation studies, including an explanation of its position *vis-à-vis* the English language. We want to demonstrate the (interlingual) translation blindness of this field, which occurs even in research projects located in multilingual environments. Our main aim in this section is to establish the key characteristics of organisation studies, as these are pertinent also to its current treatments of translation and a possible future integration of interlingual translation. After providing an overview of organisation studies, we outline different approaches to translation, such as translation as organisational change, and as a metaphor for movement across the globe, as established by particular schools of thought within the broad field of organisation studies. We then proceed to introduce three contemporary empirical studies that started to focus their enquiry on language plurality and the concomitant existence, use and function of interlingual translation. While we acknowledge that these approaches could be linked to existing research in translation studies and elsewhere – and this might be an interesting intellectual exercise in its own right – our current aim is not to tease out connections to translation theories where they have not been created by the original authors. Instead, we want to illustrate what kinds of translation concepts have been evoked in organisation studies and to highlight when the authors have, indeed, turned to translation studies for inspiration, and when not. Our own position, as expressed before (Piekkari et al. 2020), is strongly in favour of continued dialogue with translation studies.

In what follows, we explore the benefits of including interlingual translation, understood as a language practice in multilingual contexts, in the intellectual project of organisation studies. We argue that such an approach is aligned well with the purposes and orientations of organisation studies. As we show below, existing research draws on many sources and conceptualisations of translation, though direct borrowing form translation studies is still rare. We conclude with an optimistic look into the future of translation as fully integrated into organisation studies. This optimistic view is based on the existence of some contemporary studies, both empirical and conceptual, in which collaborations between organisation studies and translation studies scholars enable analysis of organisational processes from a translation perspective (Ciuk et al. 2019; Piekkari et al. 2020).

A Brief Introduction to Organisation Studies

It is important to clarify from the beginning that, when most organisation studies scholars use the term language, they do not refer to language as a natural language (such as the Finnish, the German, the English language); instead, they are likely to refer to agency exercised through language-based acts (Watson 1995). Doing so may involve the activation of meaning systems, and the use of particular discourses, conversations and communications through which organisations are created, sustained and, potentially, also terminated. For example, leaning on Foucauldian thinking, discourse is seen as an historical 'powerful ordering force', through which ideas are formed and ordered into systems of governance and discipline (Alvesson and Kärreman 2000: 1126–1127). Discourses are seen as being so powerful that they create and sustain author and subject positions. Watson's (1995) definition of discourse as systems and repositories of meanings that become activated by human agency addresses the role of human interventions in activating meanings in the pursuit of their individual, collective or organisational goals. Studies that use this thinking tend to focus on daily social encounters to understand the relationships between discourse, power and subjectivity (see Mueller and Whittle 2011).

Discourses are understood as being expressive of wider hegemonic struggles (Fairclough 1995: 128), which give rise to particular social structures and constellations of governance. There are, of course, other takes on discourse, on how to apply it, and its usefulness to organisation studies. Despite some differences, there are common denominators that the vast majority of organisation studies scholars share. Their critical view of the construction of organisations is the most central one: Actors are seen as situated in cultural, political and historical contexts, rather than as objective or benevolent decision-makers without vested interests. The use of language-based acts is seen as a vital resource for shaping organisational worlds, in line with preferred perspectives – often taken to represent dominant Western values (e.g. Ciuk and James 2015; Mir and Mir 2009). However, despite this awareness of the use of discourse to make preferred outcomes happen, there is little awareness of or interest in the role that languages (such as the English language, the Finnish language, the Chinese language) may play in the construction process of multilingual organisations.

This (English) monolingual orientation is shared by yet another stream of organisation studies scholars, who heed the performative role of communication and dialogue between organisational actors. Communication constitutes organisations (CCO) studies is conceptually related to discourse studies (Schoeneborn et al. 2019: 478). It shares the intellectual heritage designed to 'problematize the relationship between language and social reality' and shows this 'relationship to be inherently processual, indeterminate, and conflict-laden' (p. 476).

We are not overly concerned here with the differentiation between these approaches. Instead, we wish to point out the intellectual richness and diversity of approaches that organisation studies has developed to understand 'the world and every person's situated existence' in relation to the availability, creation and use of language and discourse (Deetz 2003: 421). Consequently, most research explores communicative and discursive acts through which organisations are seen to be constructed and, thus, come into existence (Cooren et al. 2011). The most favoured epistemological orientation of organisation studies is constructionist, that is, the social world is viewed as an ongoing process, in which agents, located in structures and contexts, negotiate, shape, discuss, and also contest the meanings that underpin social (and organisational) institutions. The majority of organisation studies scholars employ qualitative methodologies (Cassell and Symon 2004), which means that most empirical research projects are informed by un- or semi-structured interviews or conversations and observations in ethnographic or case study approaches. That said, there are also innovative lines of methodological inquiry that use visual or other sensual data (Boxenbaum et al. 2018).

Of course, organisation studies has also responded to globalisation. Scholars study how organisational practices, objects, knowledge and ideas move between different societies and institutional contexts and, in particular, across national and cultural borders. This question has been approached using several different concepts, such as recontextualisation (e.g. Meyer 2014), hybridisation and bricolage (Frenkel 2008), as well as translation (Czarniawska and Sevón 1996). Increasingly, scholars opt to use the concept of translation to describe the transformation and movement of organisational practices, ideas, objects and people when they are transported from their point of origin to 'elsewhere' (Røvik 2016; Wæraas and Nielsen 2016). We discuss this approach in a separate section.

A Word about the Use of English in Organisation Studies

Organisation studies is monolingual – it relies solely on English to express all possible situated experiences and phenomena. Unintentionally or not, the consequence is that many non-English and multilingual organisational contexts are ignored. In general, organisation studies does not find this monolingual status quo particularly problematic – other than having to deal with the technical nuisance of translating data or manuscripts into English for journal publications (Wilmot and Tietze forthcoming). A subfield of organisation studies – cross-cultural management – concerns itself with differences and similarities in business and management practices based on analysis of mainly national cultural dimensions. However, language is often seen to be a sideshow of culture, with multilingualism featuring on the research agendas of few cross-cultural researchers (for a contemporary exception, however, see D'Iribarne et al. 2020).

Of course, all academic disciplines are affected by the English language, at least in so far as their endeavour is to have global reach (e.g. see Lillis and Curry 2010; Montgomery 2011). It is important to realise that business and management studies, in general, of which organisation studies is a major field, is even more an English-only discipline (Tietze 2018). This is because the earliest and still dominant centres of management knowledge production are located in the United States (Westney and Piekkari 2020) and the United Kingdom. Űsdiken (2010: 721) proposes that European management and organisation research is characterised by contending perspectives and research logics, with the United States having been the core source of influence worldwide since the end of the Second World War. The United Kingdom is seen as an influential secondary centre, with Western and Northern European countries constituting a semi-periphery and some Central and Eastern European countries the periphery (Űsdiken 2010). Despite developments in establishing bodies of organisation and management knowledge from other geopolitical locations (e.g. Africa, Asia), the influence of the dominant centres and their language (English) is still unbroken (Boussebaa and Tienari 2021).

For the authors of other chapters and the readership of this book, which represent many different disciplinary areas, we believe that the above excursion on the role of English was necessary to appreciate why organisation studies scholars tend to use translation as a concept for framing organisational change and transformation, rather than as a linguistic practice. The field has largely not engaged with phenomena of language plurality and interlingual translation (or interpreting) as concomitant phenomena of globalisation. Instead, organisation studies scholars have developed conceptual approaches to understanding translation as a metaphor for agentic sense-making. Doolin et al. (2013: 259) refer to this monolingual status as 'colonization' through translation, by which they mean the 'dominance of an American world view in management knowledge, and the silencing of other ways of organizing'. We see this non-treatment of language plurality and interlingual translation as problematic and as a legacy of the continuing influence of English-speaking centres of management knowledge production and values embedded in neo-liberal market values, irrespective of social and political contexts.

In summary, organisation studies espouses a constructionist epistemology and is concerned with understanding how situated agency shapes organisations through the marshalling of discourse-based resources, mainly in micro-settings. Its main thematic focus is on organisational change and the use and role of power as it unfolds and manifests in these processes. The disciplinary field is mainly monolingual (English) and at least partly translation-blind. Its responses to phenomena relating to globalisation have mainly been to develop bodies of knowledge around (national) cultures and

comparative approaches. It has yet to engage fully with language plurality, including explorations of interlingual translation.

Translation Approaches in Organisation Studies

We now turn to literature which aligns the concept of translation with an understanding and conceptualisation of organisational change. We begin by discussing a special issue that was published in 2013, and which was accompanied by an editorial paper in which new trajectories for the use of translation in organisational change literatures were set. This collection of six empirical papers in the *Journal of Change Management* was titled Translating Translation and Change: Discourse-based Approaches; it was edited by Doolin, Grant and Thomas. This collection is of interest to this chapter, as it integrates different language-based approaches (*viz.* discourse and communication) with translation as a conceptually new take on the discursive-communicative construction of organisations. As mentioned earlier, organisational change is mainly researched and theorised through discourse-based studies that focus on the use of discursive resources, on the one hand, and communication-based studies focusing on language-based exchanges between organisational actors, on the other hand. These approaches overlap strongly, as they share the same epistemological orientation and a strong focus on micro-settings and concomitant methodologies. Thus, there is more commonality than difference between discourse and communication-sensitive scholars.

Translation as Organisational Change

In special issue of *Journal of Change Management*, translation is conceptualised from a translation-as-organisational-change perspective, that is, as a means to understand organisational change. Doolin et al. (2013) stress the creativity of translation in the context of organisational change. Discursively oriented approaches to organisational change see 'organizing as arising from, and comprising, ongoing, iterative, and recursive process of translation' (Doolin et al. 2013: 253), through which new meanings are introduced and taken up in organisations. Translation is understood 'to be the modifying, adjusting, and changing of specific change initiatives by particular actors in context in relation to their particular agendas' (Doolin et al. 2013: 253).

Focusing on discursive approaches to the study of organisational change, Doolin et al. read extant organisational change literature from a translation perspective and offer a categorisation of translation-as-change in terms of how it is used in the organisational change literature. It is important to note that not all the organisational change literature reviewed by these authors actually uses the term translation in any systematic way, nor do any of the papers published in the special issue develop deep theoretical insights into translation-as-practice. Rather, the respective authors frame their empirical findings through using translation as part of their vocabulary, with the main understanding of translation being descriptive, expressive and useful to engage with for analysing processes of organisational change. Based on their reading of extant organisational change literature, together with the six published papers included in the special issue, the editors demonstrate that it is possible to establish six different approaches to translation that are discernible in the discursive and communication-oriented change literature.

The first of these six approaches is 'translation as engagement'. It sees organisations as conversationally constructed realities, and organisational change is achieved through change agents who facilitate a change in the conversations. In other words, translation is viewed as part of changing organisational conversations to an ongoing dialogue. This approach stresses the importance of dialogue in the change process, and the co-construction of meanings by organisational members. Both change agents and change recipients are engaged in initiating effective change. The second approach, 'translation as endless transmutations', is also focused on the organisation, as an emerging achievement of the process of ongoing conversations, which are regarded as translations in themselves. The authors explain that 'translation can be understood as endless transmutations as the organisation forms and reforms in communicative interaction' (Doolin et al. 2013: 256).

Such a conversational and communicative process is always accompanied by struggles regarding meanings and is, therefore, caught up in relations of power. Doolin et al. relate to this as 'translation as struggle', and different actors bring their perspectives, values and vested interests to the ongoing negotiations. In these micro-processes, change can also be resisted, subverted and appropriated. 'Translation as translocation' is, in turn, concerned with 'the movement of meanings across space and times to bring about institutional change' (Doolin et al. 2013: 257). The fourth approach is called the 'translocation approach' and it stresses that, through the translation of new meanings across institutional boundaries, meanings are not merely spread, but actively reshaped as they move across time and space. The fifth approach, 'translation as transgression' highlights the importance of also targeting change discourse from a resistance perspective. Resistance can be individual or collective and may be displayed through humour, irony, cynicism, satire and so forth. The last approach is titled 'translation as colonization'. In this case, the editors turn to the production of knowledge about organisations and the use of language (English) in the research process, and point to issues of privileging English language scholarship. They base their critique on assumptions that such scholarship can be universally applied across cultures.

These six approaches are a useful starting point to describe the complexities that accompany organisational change. Doolin et al. point out that many of the approaches identified overlap. Indeed, we could add that, at times, they even conflate completely. For example, we see 'translation as transgression' to be closely related to the 'translation as struggle' approach, as it acknowledges translation as a way through which resistance to change can be expressed and enacted. The former approach also explores 'other voices' (Doolin et al. 2013: 259) such as those of subordinates or managers in translating change initiatives for their own interest, and the means they deploy to do so. While the six approaches are useful descriptors, they are not as yet finely honed analytical categories. A quick citation analysis also confirms this: most scholars citing this paper use it to justify their conceptualization of organizational change as discourse rather than to make nuanced distinctions between approaches to translation. Yet, this categorization can inform the reading of the organisational change literature, as well as guide future research. For example, it would be interesting to investigate how and to which consequence the different approaches to translation interlink and interact. These approaches also serve as a useful heuristics to expand the vocabulary of organisational studies.

Scandinavian Institutionalism

A lasting contribution to the translation approach was made by Scandinavian institutionalism (Czarniawska and Sevón 1996; 2005) – a school of thought inspired by actor network theory (Callon,

1986; Latour, 1986). As its name indicates, Scandinavian institutionalism initially consisted of the work of scholars based in Sweden, Denmark and Norway (Boxenbaum and Pedersen 2009; Brunsson 1989; Brunsson and Olsen 1993; Czarniawska and Joerges 1996; Czarniawska and Sevón 1996; 2005; Sahlin-Andersson and Engwall 2002; Wedlin and Sahlin 2017). It has developed a clear definition of translation in response to the movement and change of meanings, ideas, practices, objects and resources across the globe. It is also an influential school of thought, and its definition of translation continues to be adopted by organisational researchers. As an intellectual project, it is more strongly committed to translation than the discursive-communicative approaches developed by other organisation studies research.

By translation, Scandinavian institutionalism scholars understand the 'modification that a practice or an idea undergoes when it is implemented in a new organisational context' (Boxenbaum and Pedersen 2009: 190–91). Such contexts can entail the same language environment (e.g. the implementation of a private sector practice, such as performance management, within a public sector setting in an English-speaking domain), but also two different contexts, when practices generated within a particular cultural and language context are transported into a culturally and linguistically different one. In this regard, Scandinavian institutionalism corresponds to the 'translation as translocation' approach proposed by Doolin et al. (2013).

Such translocation processes are, of course, always characterised by uncertainty and are expressive of the 'ambiguity of change' in organisations (Czarniawska 2008: 772). Understanding translation as a process triggered by movement and relocation of practices and their reception at different locations provides an explanation for why organisational practices are distinct, rather than becoming isomorphic and standardised in an organisational field (Boxenbaum and Pedersen 2009). Organisational practices are understood as a bundle of routines and actions, such as diversity management (Boxenbaum 2006), quality circles (Saka 2004), total quality management (Erçek and Say 2008), or lean management (MacDuffie and Helper 1999) that are used to accomplish a certain task and often meant to render the organisation more effective and modern, making it, in turn, also more standardised.

Organisational scholars have stressed the need to develop 'a micro-level component of institutional analysis' and connect macro-framings with mundane practice (Powell and Colyvas 2008: 271). Scandinavian institutionalism researchers study the agency of local actors as 'translators' who actively receive, transform and spread organisational practices to fit local agendas and who render foreign ideas understandable and meaningful for local practice (Boxenbaum 2006; Czarniawska and Sevón 1996; 2005). These local actors have also been conceptualised as carriers (Sahlin-Andersson and Engwall 2002) and editors (Sahlin-Andersson 1996) of knowledge, as well as boundary-spanners, who enable knowledge to transfer across boundaries (Søderberg and Romani 2017; Barner-Rasmussen et al. 2014). Thus, translation work, like other institutional work, is characterised by 'embedded agency' (Battilana and D'Aunno 2009), which ordinary employees and managers, external organisational consultants, or even friends or family members of employees, mobilise to get their work done (Piekkari et al. 2013). The empirical paper by Mueller and Whittle (2011), published in the journal *Organisation Studies* and titled 'Translating Management Ideas: A Discursive Devices Analysis', provides a typical application of the ideas expressively contributed by Scandinavian institutionalism. The paper is located in a monolingual (English) environment and investigates how management ideas (total quality management) are translated in a private-public partnership. It demonstrates how, in meeting

conversations, and also informal conversations over the coffee machine, skilful agents activate a series of discursive-rhetorical devices through which the (new) meaning of total quality management is translated into the new organisational context. The authors execute a discursive devices analysis (a method to distil rhetorical expressions from naturally occurring talk) of how management ideas about quality improvement are employed by two individual organisational agents. These agents render the incoming practices of quality management derived from the private sector palatable to the recipient audience, that is, employees in the public sector. The authors identify particular discursive devices that the two agents use (e.g. display of empathy/sympathy, footing, categorisation, concession, spontaneity), with a view to introducing the notion of quality improvements as necessary, important and legitimate in observed training meetings. This approach to analysis of talk locates the study, in the first instance, as a discourse-based one. However, the totality of the discursive devices is framed as a skilful translation process, in which several participants exchange views and perspectives. This process is ultimately (rhetorically) managed by the two key agents, who are also tasked with enabling the implementation of new practices. Translation refers to the translation process whereby incoming practices are received, made sense of and integrated into existing practice through dialogue.

Many studies in Scandinavian institutionalism happen to have been conducted in multilingual organisations, such as multinational corporations (MNC), although this setting does not receive much attention. Becker-Ritterspach et al. (2010) studied two subsidiaries (in the United Kingdom and Germany) within a Dutch MNC, and focused on determining why these subsidiaries had developed such different learning strategies. While the study adopted, in general, Scandinavian institutionalist ideas about the importance of local actors in receiving and implementing an incoming practice, it also contains empirical data that points to interlingual translation work. For example, in the German subsidiary, an initiative labelled 'Star Trek' was translated into *nichts ist unmöglich* [nothing is impossible], in order to gain the cooperation of the local workforce. The reason was that it was believed that an Americanised appeal to the pioneering spirit of the space-bound founding fathers would not be well received by the German workforce; thus, this possible unease with the American title was resolved through an interlingual translation. The interlingual translation act here deletes the original meaning and replaces it with local ones. The main themes of this study are embedded in social learning theory and theorised within the translation approach of Scandinavian institutionalism, as showing that 'learning is intimately connected to translation' (Becker-Ritterspach et al. 2010: 30). As the German case shows, the institutionalisation of new practices means that local actors need to translate these practices interlingually into their own languages, meanings and practices, if people are to identify with them and render them their own.

Another example is provided by Meyer and Höllerer (2010), who studied how the concept of 'shareholder value' was received in an institutional-cultural context (Austria) where economic stakeholder models prevail. They found that the concept of shareholder value changed when it moved from an Anglo-American context to Austria; this change was partly brought about through interlingual translation. It is reported that the German translation of the English term was more ambiguously framed than the original, accentuating the local tradition of a strong stakeholder approach to governance. The authors interpreted the interlingual translation process as a deliberate attempt to protect the local meaning and values from incoming meanings of shareholder values. In this regard, the translatorial *skopos* was oriented to protecting the local meaning in light of the powerful incoming meanings of shareholder value discourses.

Neither of the two studies we introduced above concerns itself directly with interlingual translation. The authors may present individual words or phrases rather than more extensive textual features (e.g. style or tone). Their use of interlingual translation can almost be likened to a cunning 'smuggling in' of some of the local meanings, values and perspectives. For example, in the study by Meyer and Höllerer (2010), the dominant, original concepts in English are translated into the local language, and through this act of translation they are also changed. While these scholars show awareness of the existence of interlingual translation acts and subsequent changes in meanings, and their studies contain empirical examples of important adjusting or challenging aspects performed through translation activity, they do not seriously engage with it.

Our discussion has shown that, while Scandinavian institutionalism does acknowledge the interlingual meaning of translation, it is certainly not explicitly investigated or theorised. In fact, the founding authors explicitly distanced themselves from this view (Czarniawska and Sevón 1996), thus, leaving Scandinavian institutionalism a monolingual school of thought. Interestingly, Scandinavian institutionalism scholars initially developed their approach in relative isolation, because research in this tradition was often published in Swedish or Danish (Boxenbaum and Pedersen 2009). Choosing Swedish or Danish as the language of publication meant that, due to lack of translation, English-language audiences of management scholarship could not immediately access the knowledge generated by this group of researchers. This legacy may explain why the actual language component is elided, and collection of multilingual data is not part of research design in this tradition – obliging readers rely on the authors' interpretation. Translators in Scandinavian institutionalism often just happen to be bilingual, or otherwise have access to the language in which the incoming organisational practices are expressed. From our perspective, the lack of multilingual data could be seen as a missed opportunity.

In conclusion, we propose that organisation studies uses translation 'liberally' as a theoretical approach (as per Scandinavian institutionalism), a loose descriptor of changes in meaning, or a conceptual approach stressing particular aspects of the change process (as per Doolin et al. 2013). Organisation studies are mainly monolingual in orientation and rely – unreflexively – on the assumed, in-built ability of the English language to express and capture all existing and potentially possible situations and events. Philosophically, these approaches embrace constructionist epistemologies and have an interest in language as used in contexts, where skilful acts of translation enable communicative and dialogic exchanges upon which organisations are talked into being by individual or collective agents.

In the next section, we present three recent studies in organisation studies that explicitly draw on interlingual translation and vocabulary from translation studies to understand change processes in multilingual organisations. We take these three studies as indicative that the field is starting to intellectually engage with translation in the interlingual sense, and with the discipline of translation studies.

Interlingual Translation: Application and Use in Organisation Studies

In this section, we look into three recently published papers that are oriented towards translation studies, and provide a commentary on how the authors of these papers applied the interlingual translation approach empirically in their research. The studies by Ciuk et al. (2019) and Outila et al. (2020) draw on interlingual data, while Westney and Piekkari (2020) undertake an historical analysis in

order to understand the movement and change of practices. They also integrate concepts and terminology from translation studies to analyse and theorise their findings. Together, this set of studies is indicative of a shift in the treatment of translation in the field.

The first study, by Ciuk et al. (2019), provides a fine-grained analysis of how new corporate values in a United States-owned subsidiary in Poland were translated into the local context and into the local language – the translation process was from English to Polish. This interlingual process was enmeshed with the translation of values, through which these values became localised. When expressed in English, these corporate values reflected North American views and raised inappropriate or undesirable connotations locally. Therefore, a group of Polish subsidiary managers had to engage with these incoming values and rethink and re-establish what they meant, and how they could be made sense of and implemented in a Polish context. These managers deliberately redesigned the corporate values to facilitate the desired outcome among the Polish subsidiary employees, i.e. attitudinal and behavioural changes in line with expectations of the American headquarters to improve subsidiary performance. While they were given considerable discretion to translate, many of them were under the impression that they did not have the option to disregard the corporate perspective to any great extent. The subsidiary managers engaged in what can be called 'accommodating interlingual translation' (Piekkari et al. 2020: 1321), so that, overall, the understandings of the United States headquarters were given priority over Polish meanings. Thus, this a case of literally translating the language in which the corporate values were expressed, and localising the meaning of these values in the new context.

Empirically, this study draws on rich data gathered in the Polish subsidiary of the United States-based MNC through personal interviews, scrutiny of company documents and formal observations of a six-hour team translation session. Furthermore, one of the authors was a participant-observer in the translation session, which generated additional insight in the intricacies of the translation process. Conceptually, the paper refers to translation studies (Vermeer 1996: 136) to understand interlingual translation as a tool for power.

The Ciuk et al. (2019) paper is highly significant for organisation studies, because it uses interlingual translation, as observed in the meeting and the collective translation of United States English to Polish to demonstrate how, in these allegedly 'innocent' or 'neutral' acts of translation, power relationships representing headquarters–subsidiary hierarchies were enacted through translation processes that the authors categorise as purposing, reframing, domesticating and inscribing. Through these processes, meanings are adjusted, but in such a way that the preferred meanings of the more powerful headquarters remain intact, yet become sufficiently acceptable to Polish recipients. This was achieved through interlingual translation acts – acts which are, by and large, still ignored by organisation studies, but which are shown to be as important in setting trajectories as other discursive devices, means, recontextualisation processes or editing work previously identified by scholars. Within multilingual organisational settings, it can be presumed that such interlingual translation acts are ongoing and multifaceted and constitute organisations as much as other forms of communication.

The second study, by Outila et al. (2020), reports how middle managers in a Russian subsidiary translate empowerment – a 'Western' management concept imposed by the Finnish headquarters of the MNC. Empowerment refers to a set of practices that gives power to someone in a subordinate position. In Russia, managers are less expected to share power with their subordinates, because the country is characterised by authoritative leadership (Fey and Shekshnia 2011). As there is

no equivalent term for empowerment in Russian, middle managers ended up translating this concept both literally and metaphorically during research interviews. They mobilised proverbs to address competing discourses of what is considered 'good management' in Russia and the Western world. Although the disciplinary convention is to publish in English only, the authors made the use of Russian visible in some of the transliteral and idiomatic translations of the proverbs.

The authors explain in detail the methodological challenges of translating proverbs from Russian to English, and document the collective effort of several rounds of translation during which both professional and paraprofessional translators were involved. The authors highlight the value of proverbs as an understudied discursive resource in translation activities on the ground. The paper also examines the dual role of middle managers, as both translators and implementers of an imported and imposed concept in a local subsidiary. The study is of interest for organisational scholars, as it documents how ongoing translation processes were part of data analysis in multilingual research. During data analysis, researchers were linguistically challenged to translate Russian proverbs into English, and engaged in extended translation work, including the involvement of a professional interpreter, and also a proofreader.

Firstly, this study demonstrates how the lack of equivalence of meaning of particular concepts between different languages (see also Xian 2008, Tietze et al. 2017) causes complexities when implementing practices expressed in words that do not exist in another language context. Secondly, Outila et al. (2020) provide a rare insight into the open-endedness and collective nature of the translation process of data when reporting findings from a non-English context to English-speaking audiences. Detailing the translation process in full is an aspect yet to be explored by the reporting protocols of organisation studies.

The third paper, by Westney and Piekkari (2020), is a historical case study of the movement of organisational practices from Japan to the United States from the 1970s through the mid-1990s. The study examines the challenges caused by reversing the translation flow of management knowledge, which, since World War II, had been overwhelmingly from the United States to the rest of the world. Due to the deep-reaching societal, cultural, political and institutional differences between the sending and receiving contexts, both American and Japanese translators struggled to move Japanese management models into the United States. Moving management models and practices from Japan – which was long viewed by Americans as a 'copycat' and imitator of American models – into the very different social context of the United States, was an unusual case of 'reversing the translation flow'. The Westney and Piekkari (2020) study drew on translation studies to make several contributions to the organisational translation approach.

Organisational translation scholars have studied the movement of American management models and practices to other societies in terms of two types of paraprofessional translators. The first is the set of management consultants, academics, and practitioners who construct general models of 'best practice' based on American organisations (e.g. Sahlin-Andersson and Engwall 2002). Westney and Piekkari (2020) observe that these translators created different general models of 'Japanese management', depending on managers' field of expertise. For example, operations management experts produced models focusing on Japanese operations management practices, using the terminology and concepts of their field, whereas human resource management experts observing the same Japanese factories saw practices through the filter of their discipline. The researchers paid attention to work

teams, shared incentives and training, people-centric managers, and lifetime employment as the key success factors in Japanese management. Westney and Piekkari (2020) call this group 'indirect translators'. The second group of translators, on which previous organisational translation scholars had focused, were what might be called 'receiver translators: Those who are actively engaged in trying to move the imported Japanese models into actual practices in local American organisations (e.g. Boxenbaum 2006; Wæraas and Sataøen 2014).

The employees of Japanese companies that were setting up factories in the United States (especially automobile factories, which were so effective in moving practices from the Japanese parent plant to the United States that they were called 'transplants') were identified as 'direct translators'. They were sent into the subsidiaries in remarkably large numbers to take practices that they knew first-hand from their own experience directly into practice on the factory floor in the United States. Because these translators were engaged in taking very specific practices into the receiving organisation and demonstrating them directly to American employees, Westney and Piekkari (2020) call them 'direct translators'.

Another insight provided by the lengthy period covered by Westney and Piekkari's study relates to the importance of sustained interaction over time across translators, translations, and translation processes. The authors drew on the concept of a 'translation ecology', which had recently been proposed by Wedlin and Sahlin (2017), to investigate how, over time, translators both built on and contested previous translations. In this way, the translators positioned and differentiated the new translations, creating a dynamic 'translation ecosystem'. Audiences too frequently 'read' the new translations in terms of their relationship with earlier, often established, translations, as the Japanese context became more familiar to them. For both these processes – the interactions between translators and audiences, and the development of the translation ecosystem – Westney and Piekkari (2020) drew on Venuti's (1995; 2013) typology of foreignisation and domestication.

To sum up, these papers are, as far as we know, rare examples of empirical analyses that borrow directly from translation studies as a means to investigate the reception process of imported organisational practices. They emphasise the multifaceted nature of translation work undertaken in MNCs and beyond. These studies draw implicitly on the core concept of translators' *skopos*[1] – the purpose or goal of translation work – which underscores the purposeful nature of translation work. They also highlight the role of *paraprofessional interlingual translators* who engage in translation activities alongside their recognised organisational role and who are, therefore, more extensively embedded in the organisational reality than translation professionals. Because of their double role, these translators are more likely to use their agency in translation work (Piekkari et al. 2020). Finally, the three papers deal with the issue of *translator (in)visibility*. They challenge the common understanding of interlingual translation as a mere mechanistic act and, instead, make visible translators' agentic role and active involvement in meaning-making. Table 1 summarises how the three articles borrow from translation studies.

Table 1. Borrowing from translation studies to organization studies: Three examples

How the example articles borrow from translation studies	***Ciuk, James and Śliwa (2019)***	***Outila, Piekkari and Mihailova (2020)***	***Westney and Piekkari (2020)***
Research question(s) of the article	Why did the subsidiary managers pursue particular interests and agendas when translating corporate values from English to Polish? How did translation contribute to the unfolding of subsidiary-level micropolitics?	How to study empowerment for which there is no word in the languages of the fieldwork?	How does the movement of organisational practices from Japan (a peripheral country) into the United States (the centre of management knowledge production) develop over time, when the Japanese society is so unfamiliar with the Americans in terms of culture, language, social structure, and history?
Use of interlingual translation	Interlingual translation provides an internal forum for the exercise of micropolitics	Interlingual translation of Russian proverbs into English presents methodological opportunities and challenges in data collection and analysis	Interlingual translation is used to show how American and Japanese translators struggled to address the enormous challenges of making organisational practices from a distant and unfamiliar culture such as Japan accessible and acceptable for the receivers
Traces of multilingual data in the published article	Original Polish management terminology left visible in the use of direct quotations from field data; Polish pseudonyms of research participants used in the text	Transliteral and idiomatic translations of the Russian proverbs left visible in the published article	Transliterated Japanese management terminology left visible in the text; some original Japanese sources referred to
Concepts from translation studies	Collective interlingual translation; domestication; functionally communicative; linguistic equivalence; target text; translatorial action; source text	Literal translation; idiomatic translation; professional translator	Paraprofessional translator; direct translation; indirect translation; foreignisation; domestication; audience
Examples of sources from translation studies	Chesterman (2006); Hermans (1985); Holz-Mänttäri (1984); Munday	Implicit	Bassnett (2014); Venuti (1995; 2013)

	(2016); Schleiermacher (1992); Risku (2002); Tymoczko (2013); Tymoczko and Gentzler (2002); Venuti (2008); Vermeer (1996)		

Discussion

Translation is an attractive term that is increasingly being used by organisational scholars. Often, it is used in quite a loose way – a synonym for organisational change and for describing change processes, including the movement of ideas and practices across time and space. Translation, if understood as interlingual translation enacted in multilingual organisational contexts, is hardly integrated into organisation studies' intellectual project. We consider this to be a serious omission, as many even domestically located organisations have pockets of multilingual activities within workforces, administration and supply chains, let alone customer bases and markets. In this regard, it is not only the MNCs that are multilingual in essence.

We regard the three studies we reviewed above as indicative of a new stream of inquiry that takes into account the existence of multilingual phenomena. Their existence is important for integrating language plurality and interlingual translation into the vocabulary and projects of organisation studies scholars. While useful, we critique the approaches developed by Doolin et al. (2013) as relatively vague and conflating. In multilingual settings, other studies have fine-tuned the change work achieved through the (hidden) means of interlingual translation and provided categories for establishing new meanings, such as purposing, reframing, domesticating and inscribing (Ciuk et al. 2019). As a way forward, one wonders whether it becomes possible to bring together some of the categories developed by Doolin et al. (2013) with the functions of interlingual translation identified by Ciuk et al. (2019). In this way, a more sophisticated understanding of interlingual translation in multilingual settings could emerge: for example, could 'repurposing' be used to shed light on 'translation as struggle', as one of the organisational change realities? A strong engagement with issues of power, whether individual or institutional, is an important step forward for organisation studies in terms of including how it plays out in multilingual settings. Westney and Piekkari (2020), for example, stress that MNCs are powerful socio-political institutions and highlight their role as important players in the wider 'translation ecology'. MNCs are engaged in managing and coordinating subunits located in different societies and cultures and these activities include the rejection of old translations and the production of new ones: Thus, their power base and their exercise of power could be conceptualised as the movement of translations across space and time, and introducing meanings and practices in new contexts. In this regard, the meeting of multiple languages in and around an MNC serves as a 'translation incubator' for developing managers who serve as organisational – and often interlingual – translators and for testing and refining translations for different audiences. At some point, subsidiary employees may experience 'translation fatigue' from successive waves of change initiatives, each involving yet another set of translated practices.

Piekkari et al. (2020) opened up a theoretical position; they attempt to align metaphorical translation (as movement of knowledge, resources and ideas across different settings, and consequent sense-making at the recipient location) with interlingual translation when such movement involves the crossing of language boundaries. They offer a matrix that outlines the mutually constitutive relationship between interlingual and metaphorical translation, where each can have a high or low occurrence. They are seen as dependent on each other, with their respective dominance in different settings influencing the extent to which agency can be exercised. Here, moving forward, it may be possible to populate their matrix with voices that are included or excluded from the constitution of multilingual work contexts; mapping their translatorial agency may yield more depth of understanding of their involvement in this complex relationship. It would also be an avenue to integrate a key theme of discursive studies, i.e. that of power, voice and agency, into their enactment in multilingual contexts.

These themes have also been widely studied in translation studies, and much fruitful shared ground could be found. Koskinen (2020) offers a conceptual innovation informed by translation studies research to understand multilingual organisations as translatorial spaces, where different agents require different kinds of translation work to be done, or are involved in executing it. The range of translation activity extends itself, from formal translation of written texts by professional translators, to the more fuzzy and widespread *ad hoc* translation or interpreting work undertaken by individuals or collectives, including management. These agents happen to have language competence in both source and target languages and are able and willing to engage in meaning creation across languages, either to support inclusion or to actively direct the translation process in the direction they prefer. While, in many multinational organisations, professional translation is a more or less structured and visible activity, informal translatorial actions often unfold in an uncontrolled and hidden manner. Employees may resort to ingenious workarounds (Piekkari et al. 2013), or take translator roles flexibly (Koskela et al. 2017) and use interlingual translation as a tool for micro-political hidden power, which is often strengthened because of the smoke screen created by language skills other members lack (see Koskinen 2020).

As we discussed above, organisation studies has a strong preference for qualitative research, and interviews are often used to elicit information from the ground. Interviews can reveal important attitudinal and pragmatic aspects related to translation work, but by overlooking the comparative language evidence, this work leaves many elements outside the focus of research. Koskinen (2020) proposes linguistic ethnography and, in particular, translatorial linguistic ethnography (her neologism) as a methodological tool for including the empirical evidence from the field. We support the idea of interdisciplinary research to combine organisational studies scholars' in-depth understanding of the processes of organising with translation scholars' expertise on translation strategies and translator positions and how these play out in the minutiae of linguistic data.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we presented the field of enquiry called organisation studies and investigated its treatment of translation, in order to document, understand and analyse the emergence and changing constitution of work organisations and institutions. We showed that this field has yet to engage fully with the existence of multiple languages and translation, though some promising foundations to do so are currently being laid. Overall, we saw organisation studies' reluctance to engage with language plurality and interlingual translation as expressive of the continuing influence of the powerful centres of

knowledge production in and through the English language. However, in light of a recent editorial essay in *Organization Studies* (the key European journal), we remain optimistic that contemporary projects aimed at integrating interlingual translation into organisational analysis will bear fruit (Hjorth et al. 2019: 1779):

> the responsibility [of organisational scholars] remains to bring together different (intellectual rather than geographic) communities and to warrant that quieter voices and silenced themes are heard. In this respect, there is a difference between lingua franca and a dominant language. Attention to quieter voices and silenced themes means that the requirement to be reflexive about language, translation, and the visibility of multiple linguistic communities of practice in academia is even more pressing today.

The new voices in organisation studies have found relevant theoretical support in TS. The next fruitful step might be methodological borrowing. Translation-sensitive scholars in organisation studies have become increasingly aware of the power and agency vested in translatorial activities, and also the need to pay attention to who the recipients are and how their expectations and knowledge bases shape the translation process. Translation studies can offer a variety of methods, both in comparative text analysis and in studying the reception of translation, that will enable ever more fine-tuned analyses of translation work in organisations.

Continued exchange of ideas will be equally beneficial for translation scholars. Although it has, since the 1980s, become a truism to emphasise that translation never happens in a vacuum and that the context always shapes the intentions and the outcomes of translation work, research that fully combines a metalevel contextual understanding of organisation work with a detailed analysis of translatorial decisions is still rare. While translation studies can help organisation studies to engage with empirical linguistic evidence of translation, organisation studies and its metaphorical and practice-oriented understanding of translation can, in return, help translation studies to reconnect with the idea of contextualisation. This would allow translation scholars to link interlingual translation to core organisational processes of value creation and meaning making. Considering the trajectory of organisation studies, on the one hand, moving towards an increased understanding of the actual linguistic practices in multilingual processes, and translation studies, on the other hand, becoming ever more keen to explore the intralingual and intersemiotic areas of Jakobson's (2000) tripartite model, reveals a disciplinary chiasma that deserves further study. When other disciplines turn to translation studies, translation scholars maintain no particular advantage in understanding and theorising the wider contextualisation of translation. Instead, scholars from neighbouring fields are coming to translation studies to find answers to questions, such as the role and limits of equivalence, the interplay of the local and the foreign, and the issue of translational agency and shifts of meaning in *interlingual* translation, that is, the traditional core elements of translation research. The joy and the pain of interdisciplinary collaboration lies in pushing oneself to rethink and reconsider the fundamentals of one's own field. While the future of translation studies will no doubt lie in expanding the notion of translation further, it also has a unique contribution to make to any field interested in understanding interlingual communication through decades of empirical work on prototypical written and spoken interlingual translations, and translators in a multitude of contexts.

In conclusion, organisation studies is well equipped to understand the ongoing constitutions of organisations through discourse and ongoing acts of communications. The theoretical, philosophical and

empirical foundations for this sophisticated understanding have already been laid. In going forward, we wish for organisation studies to also include communications across languages, translation, as well as the use of English in its intellectual project, to provide deeper insights in the communicative construction of multilingual organisations.

Notes

[1] In a sister paper to the 2019 article, Ciuk and James (2015) explicitly draw on *skopos* theory.

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