The (de-)professionalisation of translation: an exploration of the impact of contemporary industry practices and attitudes on translation's status as a profession.

Mariah Hussain

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School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

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Abstract

From the academisation of Translation Studies to the establishment of professional bodies and their creating of codes of conduct, for example, the translation industry has witnessed a series of measures over time that aimed to promote translation as a specialised activity and translators as professional experts. Despite such efforts, the translation profession is typically associated with low to middling status and poor public perceptions (see Ruokonen and Mäkisalo, 2018; Dam and Zethsen, 2011; 2013; Katan, 2009; Liu, 2022; Svahn, 2016), and has also previously been categorised as a practice rather than a true profession (Chesterman, 2001), as a semi-profession (Sela-Sheffy, 2008; Gümüş, 2024), and as under-professionalised (Sela-Sheffy, 2023). Additionally, the impact of machine learning technologies on the socio-professional role and value of the professional human translator cannot be understated. With these ideas in mind, my PhD seeks to clarify, from a sociological standpoint, the implications of the growing tendencies towards automating translation processes on the professional status of translation as well as the extent to which translation is professionalised and whether it is at risk of regressing into a less professionalised state.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, this research draws on the sociological concepts of professionalisation (i.e. the process of an occupation becoming a respected, fully-fledged profession) and de-professionalisation (i.e. the breaking down of established professions). These concepts enable explorations of how a service's occupational dynamics shift in accordance with the evolution of technology and of society. Against this backdrop, my PhD employed surveys and focus groups, with survey questions and focus group themes framed around (de-)professionalisation criteria that were established as part of this study's bespoke framework on (de-)professionalisation, to gather practitioners' and non-practitioners' perceptions of the contemporary translation industry. Data was gathered on a variety of themes including, amongst others, translators' agency, societal recognition, translators' skillsets, the socio-professional, financial and practical impacts of the deployment of machine translation and artificial intelligence, and professional sustainability (i.e. the maintenance of a long-term and fulfilling career). The collected data reveals practitioners' first-hand experiences of navigating a translation career in the current climate, in addition to non-practitioners' perceptions of machine translation and of the value, necessity, prestige and complexity of human translation services.

By channelling perspectives drawn from the sociology of professions (professionalisation and de-professionalisation) and aligning them against contemporary data on the modern translation industry, my PhD evaluates the extent to which translation is professionalised and whether the growing deployment of general and translation-specific technologies and their influences on agency, security and recognition render translation susceptible to a de-professionalising effect.

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List of Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
APE	Automatic Post-Editing
ATA	American Translators Association
BDÜ	Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer (German Association of Interpreters and Translators)
CIOL	Chartered Institute of Linguists
CoCs	Codes of Conduct
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
EMT	The European Master's in Translation
EU	European Union
FAUT	Fully Automatic Useful Translation
FIT	Fédération International des Traducteurs (International Federation of Translators)
GALA	Globalization and Localization Association
GILT	Globalisation, Internationalisation, Localisation, Translation
ITI	Institute of Translation and Interpreting
LSP	Language Service Provider
MT	Machine Translation
NMT	Neural Machine Translation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PACTE	Process in the Acquisition of Translation. Competence and Evaluation
PEMT	Post-Editing Machine Translation
PM	Project Manager
SMT	Statistical Machine Translation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
STBs	Simulated Translation Bureaus
TAUS	Translation Automation User Society
TEP	Translation-Editing-Proofreading
TS	Translation Studies

TIS	Translation and Interpreting Studies
TWB	Translators Without Borders
UGC	User-generated Content
UNESCO	The United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UN	United Nations

1 Introduction

Amitai Etzioni, a notable sociologist who is most famous for his work on socioeconomics wrote in 1969 that “yesterday’s non-professions may be tomorrow’s professions” (Etzioni, 1969, ix). While translators themselves typically view translation as a profession, translation is, nevertheless, associated with low to middling status and poor public perceptions (see Ruokonen and Mäkisalo, 2018; Dam and Zethsen, 2010; 2011; 2013; Katan, 2009; Liu, 2022; Svahn, 2016), and was also previously categorised as a practice rather than a true profession (Chesterman, 2001). Therefore, in light of the dynamic nature of professions, there is reason to be optimistic that translation may one day professionalise further and potentially make the relevant strides towards elevating its professional status.

1.1 Key Definitions

But what exactly is meant by a profession? As defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, a profession is a specific type of occupation in which “a professed knowledge of some subject, field, or science is applied; a vocation or career, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification”. It is important to note that the term profession is often used interchangeably with occupation, but one should delineate the dissimilarities between these two concepts in order to foster a better understanding of the realities of professions and work. In fact, occupation is a hypernym for profession, and is broadly defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as a “particular job or profession; a particular pursuit or activity […] in which a person is engaged […] habitually”.

Law and medicine, for example, are typically regarded as established professions, likely due to the requirements of prolonged training, the acquisition of credentials and the ability to apply specialised knowledge, all of which serve as prerequisites to be able to enter the professions and to handle the tasks at hand. Nevertheless, it is also technically correct to describe law and medicine as occupations. However, being a cashier or a taxi driver, for example, are indeed occupations, but they may not always be regarded as professions because dedication to prolonged training and the implementation of esoteric knowledge, for example, are not necessarily mandatory to be able to carry out the jobs’ activities.

However, the concepts of profession and occupation are much more complex and fluid than the aforementioned dictionary definitions may suggest. To elaborate, from the perspective of the sociology of professions, there are different approaches to conceptualising ‘profession’, ‘occupation’ and all of the categorisations in between. On the one hand, there is the functionalist trait approach, popular until the 1960s, which classified occupations as ‘professions’, ‘semi-professions’ or ‘non-professions’ based on their constellation of

professional traits (e.g. professional bodies, academic training, regulatory code of conduct (CoC), professional authority, etc). The crux of the trait approach is that the more professional traits that a particular occupation displays or implements, the more professionalised it is (see Section 3.1.1 for an overview of the trait approach). On the other hand, there is the power approach, popular from the 1960s onwards, which defined professions as monopolies and holders of power, control and authority. Essentially, the more power that an occupational group wields over the internal and external conditions of their service (e.g. clients, subordinate groups, policies, training etc.), the more professionalised they become (see Section 3.1.2 for an overview of the power approach).

The sociology of professions is a field that encompasses, however, much more than simply conceptualising profession and occupation, also theorising the process through which an occupation becomes a profession. As per MacDonald (1995), the underlying question does not only concern, therefore, how to classify a particular habitual activity or service as an occupation or profession, but also "the more fundamental one [of] what are the circumstances in which people in an occupation attempt to turn it into a profession and themselves into professional people?" (MacDonald, 1995, p.6).

In other words, how does an occupation transform itself into a profession? In fact, attempts to define professionalisation (i.e. the process of an occupation becoming a profession) appeared from as early as the 1920s, with Carr-Saunders (1928) proposing one of the first definitions as "specialised skill and training, minimum fees or salaries, formation of professional organisations, and code of ethics governing professional practices" (1928, p.8). From thereon, there were numerous attempts to develop theoretical frameworks and models of professionalisation (see Section 3.1.3) in order to be able to map out the professionalisation process, to distinguish professions from non-professions and to determine the factors that influence the development of occupations (Frost, 2001).

However, as Abbott (1988; 1991) explained, the development of occupations and professions is not unidirectional. This is because the workplace can witness the strengthening of some professions alongside the weakening of others. For clarification, the weakening of professions is typically a byproduct of, for example, the democratisation of knowledge (see Section 3.2.2), changes in social, economic and political movements that may impact the organisation, structure, funding and training of/for professional roles (see Section 3.2.1), or the incorporation of technology into the workplace to simplify or automate work tasks (see Section 3.2.3). In other words, the inverse of professionalisation, namely de-professionalisation, represents the dismantling of an established professional service of their necessity and professionals of their authority, exclusivity and control (Malin, 2017; see also Section 3.2).

1.2 Context and Scope of Study

Attempts to professionalise translation have, indeed, been persistent (Sakamoto, 2025). Whether it's the introduction of international standards (e.g. ISO 17100:2015), the academisation of Translation Studies, or the establishment of professional bodies and their creating of codes of conduct, the translation industry has witnessed a series of measures over time that aimed to professionalise translation and to promote it as a legitimate profession (Sakamoto, 2025). Nevertheless, translation is, as explained in the opening paragraph, a profession that reportedly suffers from low status and a lack of public recognition and is also yet to become a respected fully-fledged profession. While a detailed literature review is forthcoming in Chapter 2, it is worth briefly glossing over some relevant studies in order to contextualise how translation is currently situated in society as a service and as a profession.

Turning now to technology, many elements of the translation workflow are already experiencing automation, such as the deployment of neural machine translation (NMT) and the subsequent imposition of post-editing workflows in certain segments of the market, and there is even a growing sentiment that artificial intelligence (AI) will impact areas of translation that were previously believed to be resistant to automation (Moorkens, 2022a). On the one hand, some fear that their creativity and knowledge of languages will no longer be needed in the foreseeable future, yet on the other hand, new roles relating to AI and MT (e.g. post-editors, prompt engineers, language consultants and language technology experts etc.) are emerging in the wake of ongoing technological advancements (Eszenyi et al., 2023; Guerberof Arenas, 2025). While many translators express great passion for translation and are insistent on the importance of their expertise, they are, nevertheless, feeling undermined due to concerns over the automation of translation processes (Moorkens, 2020a). Although professional human translators still play a critical role in refining automated translations, the impact of automation and machine learning technologies on the perceived and actual socio-professional role and value of the professional human translator simply cannot be understated (see also Section 2.1 for a review of literature relating to technology and automation).

Aside from the risk of complete automation of translation activity, the rise of Web 2.0 technologies (e.g. cloud-functionalities, social media and photo- and video-sharing platforms, wikis, and blogs etc.) also appears to be affecting the professional areas of translation work in terms of inviting users, whether professional or non-professional, to offer translation services online. More specifically, the last decade has witnessed individuals, who may not possess translator credentials (e.g. academic qualifications, certifications, memberships to translator associations etc.) but flaunt adequate fluency in a foreign language, rally online for paid and volunteer opportunities to offer their linguistic and cultural knowledge (Drugan, 2013; Liu, 2022; Piróth and Baker, 2020). Online translator communities may initiate their own translation projects (i.e. fan translation and fan subbing), or they may select jobs posted by businesses and organisations who use free and paid crowdsourcing methods to harness the

knowledge and skills of online communities (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017). Despite possible cost- and time-cutting benefits for the customer, professional translators may not reap such desirable benefits, with a major repercussion of such methods being the weakening of translators' professional image (e.g., Angelelli, 2020; Jiménez-Crespo, 2021; Liu, 2022). Nevertheless, crowdsourcing and fan translation, for example, are argued to be advantageous in certain translation scenarios, such as tackling specific market niches, working with under-resourced languages, and handling crisis scenarios (e.g. Munro, 2010). That being said, the ensuing debates surrounding crowdsourcing, platform economy, and fan translation suggest that non-professionals are infiltrating the professional sphere of translation (O'Hagan, 2017), challenging whether professional intervention is even necessary for all situations (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017; see also Section 2.2 for a more detailed review of literature on online translator communities).

This thesis considers more than just the influences of general and translation-specific technologies on the socio-professional role and value of human translators, also bearing in mind the instruments and institutions that promote translation as a specialised service and translators as professional people. In fact, professional organisation in terms of adhering to ethical values (see also Section 2.3.1) and becoming a member of professional bodies (see also Section 2.3.2) is pertinent to translators and interpreters alike so that they can affirm their collective identity as professional experts (Pym, 2014). Profession-orientated networks within translation exist in order to advance the recognition of the translation profession and to enhance the status of translators in society, focussing on defending the rights of their members as well as promoting translation as a professional and specialised activity (McDonough, 2007; Cornelius, 2025). Meanwhile, CoCs are expected to be enforced by professional translators to act as a further symbol of professionalism, providing guidelines on how a professional should act in terms of their behaviour towards their translations, clients, colleagues, and other professionals (Lambert, 2020). Essentially, adhering to CoCs and becoming a member of an association are not only acts that can bolster one's perceived professionalism, but they also serve to promote the notion that translation is a specialised service delivered by professionals (see also Section 2.3 for a review of literature relating to professional organisation).

In addition to the adherence to CoCs and memberships to professional bodies, translation-related qualifications and certifications constitute another asset that signal quality and professionalism to translation buyers (Chan, 2013; Lommel, 2013), with many translator associations, technology developers, and universities offering programmes and courses (e.g., ATA certification, CertTrans and DipTrans, RWS Certification) that provide vocational or academic training and CPD (Budin et al., 2013; Koby and Melby, 2013). For the most part, qualifications and certifications are not always essential if a practitioner would like to identify as a professional translator (Pym et al., 2012) or win jobs with translation agencies (i.e. intermediary between clients and freelance translators) or other types of clients (Chan, 2013).

Yet certifications and training options can formalise, to a certain degree, the translation profession (Hlavac, 2013). In particular, it is the growth of TS as a university and research discipline that is believed to be a key contributor towards the professionalisation of translation (Biel, 2011; see also Section 2.4 for a review of literature relating to translator training).

Moreover, the language industry is estimated to grow to approximately 92.3 billion USD by 2029 (Nimdzi, 2025). In turn, it can be assumed that translators are undoubtedly necessary to sustain globalisation and to keep up with the demand for cross-border communications. Despite this growth, translators are not only contending with low rates of pay (Carreira, 2024), but translators also often find their skills undervalued by those who require them, mostly agreeing that they will remain invisible in society and that professional visibility, fame and societal recognition may not be in reach for them (Dam, 2013). Previous studies have alluded to the assumptions that non-translators are consistently negative towards translation with an overall attitude that "anyone can do it" if you are competent in a foreign language and with language-related tools, such as MT and online dictionaries (see Sela-Sheffy, 2008; Dam, 2013; Liu, 2022). Even translation students' opinions resonate with the consensus that non-translators display ignorance and that they fail to appreciate the expertise required to succeed within the industry (Ruokonen, 2016). As a result, such viewpoints can inherently damage the professional reputation of freelance translation (Moorkens and Lewis, 2019), with previous studies suggesting that translator status ranges from middling to rather low (Gümüş, 2024), and this is the case for various countries (see Dam and Zethsen, 2011; 2013; Katan, 2009; Liu, 2022; Svahn, 2016; see also Section 3.3.2.1 for a summary of literature relating to perceptions of translation).

In short, previous studies have discussed the influence of general and translation-specific technologies on the perceived complexity of translation activity as well as on the role and purpose of the human translator (see review of literature in Section 2.1), the expansion of online collaborative translation approaches and the accompanying rise of non-professional and amateur contributions (see review of literature in Section 2.2), the professional, social and ethical roles of CoCs and professional translator associations (see review of literature in Section 2.3), the scope of translator and translation competences in addition to the limitations and benefits of translator training in its present state (see review of literature in Section 2.4), and the various perceptions of translation as a service (see review of literature in Section 3.3.2.1). In other words, previous literature provides the context required to determine the practices and attitudes that shape the contemporary translation industry in addition to the ways in which certain measures (i.e. the academisation of translation and the establishment of translator associations etc.) have been enforced or implemented to further professionalisation and to elevate the professional status of translation.

However, there are few studies that critically discuss the aforementioned themes en masse through the specific lens of the sociology of professions. This theoretical paradigm offers a

clear approach to understanding how recent changes in industry practices and in attitudes have influenced the (de-)professionalisation and thus the professional status of translation. My PhD contributes to this research objective as I critically reviewed key concepts from the sociology of professions (professionalisation and de-professionalisation) and devised my own original (de-)professionalisation criteria (see Section 3.5; see also Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion and its description). These sets of original criteria formed my bespoke framework of (de-)professionalisation which navigated this thesis' discussions determining the practices and attitudes that shape the contemporary translation industry, how translation's professionalisation journey is currently unfolding, and whether the profession is susceptible to a de-professionalising effect. In other words, this study advances a new analytical framework for examining (de-)professionalisation in translation, which can also serve as a framework for the examination of other professions within the wider language industry. Although the studies addressed above and in Chapter 2 may not directly or holistically address questions relating to the (de-)professionalisation and the professional status of translation, they provide, nonetheless, the context required to complement newly generated empirical data on the perceptions of the contemporary translation industry (see Chapter 4 for methodology) as well as the sociological concepts of (de-)professionalisation to be able to determine what translation's professionalisation outcome currently is.

Initially, this research set out to collect the perspectives of UK-based translators only, including both in-house and freelance practitioners. For the purpose of this study, professional translation is initially understood as the work carried out by individuals who derive the majority of their income from translation and/or translation-adjacent work (e.g. post-editing), who identify as professional translators, and for whom translation constitutes their primary occupation. This starting position guided the recruitment of participants for the practitioner survey, which targeted translators largely meeting the above criteria. By focussing on individuals for whom translation is both their primary occupation and main source of income, this study aims to capture what it is currently like being a professional translator in addition to the industry practices and attitudes that shape the contemporary translation industry.

However, there was a concern that restricting the survey and focus groups to this geographical scope (UK-based translators only) would not be representative of the broader global translation industry and that the results could not be generalised. Therefore, the scope was broadened during the survey design to include practitioners from any location and to also investigate the opinions of non-practitioners (see Section 4.1.1.4 for details on the survey population). The decision to conduct a non-practitioner survey was made not only for triangulation purposes, but also on the back of my (de-)professionalisation criteria which emphasise that societal recognition and validation are central for successful professionalisation (see Table 3.3 and Table 3.4). In this way, the practitioner perspective provided discourse on the first-hand experiences of what it is currently like being a

professional translator, while the non-practitioner survey offered an external perspective on the value and role of translators and translation services in modern society.

In terms of survey distribution, links to both surveys were posted on my social media platforms (LinkedIn and Facebook in addition to Instagram for the non-practitioner survey only). The practitioner survey was primarily distributed through professional associations, CIOL and ITI, by reaching out to geographical, language and subject network coordinators and requesting them to email my survey to their colleagues and to their networks of translators. To reiterate, although the surveys primarily circulated within the UK, respondents based outside the country were welcome to participate, enabling a wider, international perspective.

Furthermore, this thesis focusses specifically on the (de-)professionalisation of translation from the perspective of professional translators and, to a lesser extent, non-practitioners. While it does not examine market demands or the perspectives of translation commissioners (e.g. direct clients, translation agencies), this focus allows for a detailed exploration of how translators themselves experience, perceive and respond to contemporary industry practices and attitudes. The absence of client perspectives represents, however, a notable limitation, as securing societal recognition and maintaining authority over clients are fundamental elements of professionalisation. Unlike the non-practitioner narrative, for which empirical data was collected to compare actual non-practitioner views with those assumed by translators, conclusions about client attitudes and perceptions remain provisional and are based on informed speculation. Collecting data from clients could potentially have influenced the findings regarding practitioner-client relationships, perceived deskilling, and attitudes towards human translation services, however, the decision to omit a client survey was made in order to enhance the feasibility of the methodology which had to be completed within the stipulated timeframe of a PhD project, which already included a practitioner survey, focus groups, and a non-practitioner survey. Framing the study in this way ensured a clear focus on the socio-professional experiences of translators and their opinions of the industry, while acknowledging that a holistic understanding of (de-)professionalisation would also require future research incorporating client perspectives.

Viewed as a whole, this thesis is an explorative and conceptually original study that advances our understanding of translation's (de-)professionalisation through the development and systematic application of a bespoke framework on (de-)professionalisation (see Section 3.5 for an overview of the framework). Rather than examining industry trends in isolation, this study's framework brings together contemporary practices (i.e. automation, post-editing workflows, non-professional translation and current recruitment practices) and attitudes and evaluates them against explicitly defined (de-)professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3 and Table 3.4). In doing so, this study channels a better understanding of the ways in which contemporary industry practices and attitudes are influencing and reshaping translation's

status as a profession and whether these industry practices and attitudes are, in any way, risking the de-professionalisation of translation.

Fortunately, sociological approaches within Translation Studies (TS) have gained traction post-millennium, with significantly more focus on addressing issues relating to translators and their socio-professional role in society. Chesterman (2008) explains how sociological approaches include topics such as the translation market, translating as a social practice, as well as the social status, the self- and public-identification, and the role of translators and the translator's profession. Meanwhile, Gambier (2006) defines sociological research within TS as an exploration of life stories, professional careers, working conditions, as well as how translation projects are sought after and financed. In short, these approaches facilitate the exploration of translation in a larger social context whereby ethical, political, social, and professional questions are raised (Zheng, 2017). In response to the growing scholarly interest in the agents involved with producing and distributing translations, Chesterman (2009) suggests that TS has witnessed the development of a new sub-field, namely Translator Studies. This sub-field positions those involved with translation at the centre of research, focussing on their activities, attitudes, and their interactions with their translation environment (Chesterman, 2009). More recently, Walker and Lambert (2025) identified Translation Industry Studies as an emerging sub-field on the back of a notable increase in research relating to the socio-economic and professionally-orientated aspects of the industry[1]. They specify that research of this kind examines the ideological, ethical and historical influences shaping the industry, in addition to investigating decision-making processes, industry attitudes, professional networks, status, workplace processes and also economic matters. This thesis straddles the sociological visions proposed by both Chesterman (2007; 2009) and Gambier (2006) and also falls within the scope of Translation Industry Studies as coined by Walker and Lambert (2025), exploring the contemporary industry practices and attitudes that are influencing translation's (de-)professionalisation.

1.3 Significance of Research

Having established the focus of this thesis, I will now pivot to clarify why this research is significant. As explained in the preceding section, efforts have indeed been made to elevate the professional status of translation. However, the claim of translation as an automatable activity, as a democratised activity that can be performed by less-qualified translators and in non-professional contexts with the assistance of MT systems, and as a profession of a low or middling status, nevertheless, persist. In turn, as mentioned in the previous section, it is

[1] Notable publications on the translation industry and the wider language industry include *The Bloomsbury Companion to Language Industry Studies* (Angelone et al., 2020), *Handbook of the Language Industry* (Massey et al., 2024) and *Routledge Handbook of the Translation Industry* (Walker and Lambert, 2025). Other relevant publications focussing more on the translation profession and what it takes to become a translator include *Working as a Professional Translator* (Penet, 2024) and *Becoming a Translator* (Robinson, 2019).

pertinent to address questions regarding the risk of translation becoming de-professionalised. Whether translation is professionalised or whether it is de-professionalising is significant because it directly affects how translation is valued, regulated and practised. Potential benefits of professionalisation for translation may include a greater recognition of translators as professional experts, greater trust in and reliance on human translation services, stronger professional identity and status for translators, as well as fairer remuneration. Conversely, there are a number of risks associated with de-professionalisation. Essentially, the de-professionalisation of translation may not necessarily result in the disappearance of translation services and translators, rather it may risk reduced professional autonomy for translators, increased standardisation of translation workflows and reliance on technology, and blurred professional boundaries surrounding translation (see Chapter 3 for theoretical concepts). Examining how translation is currently perceived and practised therefore matters not only for understanding translation's professional standing, but also for anticipating its future trajectory in an increasingly technologised industry. My thesis contributes to debates on (de-)professionalisation by identifying the industry practices and attitudes that emerged since 2015, exploring how these industry practices and attitudes are shaping the professionalisation of translation and whether they are inducing a de-professionalising effect.

Research of this kind is imperative because, firstly, modern society's relationship with advanced technologies is influencing the ways in which certain professions are perceived and performed. In fact, the use of technology in modern society is projected to have a greater negative impact than ever before on the nature, structure and perception of professional and knowledge-based work (Lester, 2020). In other words, technology and any subsequent deskilling and automation are some of the leading causes of de-professionalisation (Lester, 2020; Susskind and Susskind, 2018), with the worst-case scenario likely entailing technology and machines substituting trained professionals (Lester, 2020). As such, given that translation is already undergoing automation, it is pertinent to examine the long-term implications that the growing deployment of and reliance on technology are likely to have on translation's professionalisation and whether these circumstances set up an environment for the de-professionalisation of translation to occur. On a related note, it is important to also respect professionals' needs for meaningful work and to ensure that their wellbeing is not overlooked (Spencer, 2025). If translation is indeed undergoing deskilling and de-professionalisation as a result of an increased deployment of technology and also because of any other changes to custom and practice, then this may have a knock-on effect on translators' professional and/or personal livelihood(s) as well as on their perception of the profession itself. For many translators, professional pride and the feeling that their work is essential and fulfilling are important considerations (Robinson, 2019). For this reason, evaluating current translators' response to the contemporary translation industry is pertinent and sheds light on whether their experiences of being a translator correspond with a profession that is professionalised or with one that is undergoing de-professionalisation. Above all, this thesis contributes to explorative research on (de-)professionalisation, focussing on the specific case of translation.

1.3.1 Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the United Nations established their Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as part of Agenda 2030[2], constituting an urgent call for a united global front to bring forth long-term peace and prosperity for both people and the planet. There are 17 SDGs in total focussing on education, poverty, clean energy, business and innovation, as well as equality. This thesis falls within the scope of two of the goals.

Firstly, SDG4 (quality education) seeks "inclusive and equitable quality learning and promot[ing] lifelong learning opportunities for all". This goal aims to substantially increase the number of individuals pursuing relevant training to possess technical and vocational skills that will help them to find employment with reasonable incomes or allow them to develop entrepreneurial skills. A key theme of this research pertains to attitudes towards professional development and formal translator education. With the data gathered on this subject (see results in Section 6.3), it became possible to begin evaluating the scope of training and development opportunities available for aspiring and tenured translators, the extent to which translator education aligns with the demands of the translation market, as well as the extent to which it is perceived to be useful and valuable when preparing for a career in translation. As it will be elaborated on further in Section 6.4.2, the data on professional development and translator education reveals what current translators think about the current state of development and training opportunities in terms of their professional benefits and limitations. In turn, it became possible to assess whether and to what extent the professionalisation criteria, developed for the purpose of this study (see Section 3.5; see also Table 3.3 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description), pertaining to training and education have been fulfilled in a translation context.

Secondly, this thesis also pertains to SDG8 (decent work and economic growth) which seeks to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all". This goal aims to reduce unemployment levels while enhancing overall job security as well as to get more young people into education, employment or training. The results reported and discussed throughout Chapters 5, 6 and 7 shed light on the overall financial situation and job security of current translators as well as on their experiences of what it is currently like belonging to the translation profession. This data at hand, Section 7.3.4 positions SDG8 within the context of translators, exploring the extent to which current translators feel satisfied, secure and stable in their careers. As noted above, evaluating current translator experiences permitted me to assess whether current experiences of being a translator correlate to a profession that is professionalising or with one that is de-professionalising instead.

[2] List of the UNs' SDGs: https://sdgs.un.org/goals

1.4 Research Questions

As outlined above, a growing research topic within TS relates to the socio-economic and professionally-orientated aspects of the industry. Additionally, a growing interest within sociological research in general and within TS concerns the sustainability of professions, particularly in light of the threats posed by advanced technologies such as those relating to automation and deskilling. It is these thematic areas that I intend to develop, for which I systematically reviewed relevant literature (see Chapter 2) and conducted surveys and focus groups (see Chapter 4 for methodology) to unravel the contemporary industry practices and attitudes that influence the (de-)professionalisation of translation. The overarching question of this thesis is:

To what extent do contemporary industry practices and attitudes (de-)professionalise the translation profession?

In order to address the overarching question of this thesis, it is important to first gain clarity on the influences that contemporary industry practices have on how translation is currently performed and purchased as well as how the profession and its practitioners are perceived. Therefore, addressing the following sub-research question provides the foundations for this thesis' forthcoming discussions by identifying the industry practices and attitudes that may be facilitating or constraining the (de-)professionalisation of translation:

1. How are contemporary industry practices – such as those involving technology and automation, the platform economy, non-professional translation and recruitment practices – and attitudes reshaping the translation industry?

In addition to identifying how the translation industry is being reshaped, it is equally important to evaluate how professional translators are responding to these industry developments and whether these developments have influenced how they perceive the translation industry and thus their profession. The second sub-research question is, therefore:

2. In what ways have translators' attitudes towards their profession changed in response to the ongoing transformation of the translation industry?

Finally, the outcomes to research questions one and two will, subsequently, enable me to map out the translation industry in terms of practices and attitudes as well as to evaluate the extent to which translation is professionalised in accordance with my professionalisation criteria that I devised by deconstructing various sociological theories and approaches for professionalisation (see Section 3.5; see also Table 3.3). However, as Abbott (1988; 1991) explained, the development of occupations and professions is not unidirectional. In light of

notable changes to and trends within the translation industry, especially that of technologisation and automation, the increasing contributions from amateur and non-professional translators, and poor public perceptions, the questions of deskilling and de-professionalisation come to the fore as pressing concerns (Toren, 1975; Zola and Miller, 1973). In light of this potential de-professionalising effect, my final sub-research question is:

3. To what extent is there a risk of translation becoming de-professionalised as a result of contemporary industry practices and changing attitudes?

By systematically applying (de-)professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion and its description) against empirical data on practitioners' and non-practitioners' perspectives on the contemporary translation industry (see Chapter 4 for methodology), it became possible to holistically probe my overarching research question, which is exploring whether contemporary industry practices and attitudes are facilitating the professionalisation of translation or risking de-professionalisation instead.

Having pinpointed the focus of this research as well as the general context in which it is situated, I progress with an overview of what the remainder of this thesis entails. This introductory Chapter has already delineated the key definitions that are pertinent to this thesis (Section 1.1) as well outlined the context behind the research (Section 1.2) and why it is significant (Section 1.3) along with an overview of the research questions that this thesis intends to address (Section 1.4). This thesis continues with Chapter 2 which consists of a detailed review of literature of four key themes, namely technology and automation (Section 2.1), focussing in particular on neural machine translation (NMT), post-editing workflows, and artificial intelligence (AI); online collaborative translation and non-professional translation practices (Section 2.2), introducing the practices of free and paid crowdsourcing, fan translation, and the platform economy; professional organisation (Section 2.3), covering the roles of ethical codes of conduct and professional bodies in the wider translator community; and translator training (Section 2.4), discussing translator competences, the scope of professional and academic training available to aspiring translators, as well as the benefits and limitations of current training initiatives. Chapter 3 explores the various theoretical and conceptual orientations that contributed towards the development of this thesis' bespoke framework on (de-)professionalisation, exploring, in-depth, professionalisation from the perspective of the sociology of professions (Section 3.1), the concept of de-professionalisation (Section 3.2), professionalisation of the translation and interpreting services (Section 3.3) and previous evaluations of translation's occupational status (Section 3.4). Chapter 3 closes with an explanation of my original (de-)professionalisation criteria that guided my survey design and navigated my data analysis and subsequent discussions (Section 3.5). Chapter 4 outlines my methodology, presenting my data collection (Section 4.1) and data analysis (Section 4.3) approaches in addition to the main ethical questions that had to be considered during this research (Section 4.2). Chapter 5 opens with a report of the first theme of results which is

made up of two sub-themes, namely demand for the service (Section 5.1) and changes to translation workflows (Section 5.2), before progressing to a discussion of these results that explores practitioner-client relations (Section 5.3.1), societal recognition of the necessity and complexity of translation (Section 5.3.2), occupational prestige (Section 5.3.3), and the current landscape of translation (Section 5.3.4). Chapter 6 reports on the second theme of results which is made up of three sub-themes, namely professional characteristics of translators and translation services (Section 6.1), amateur and non-professional translators (Section 6.2), and necessity of translator training (Section 6.3), which is followed by a discussion of these results that touches on commitment to ethical professional behaviour (Section 6.4.1), the quality of education for translators (Section 6.4.2), the proactivity of UK professional bodies (Section 6.4.3), maintaining professional control (Section 6.4.4), and a constellation of professional traits associated with translation (Section 6.4.5). Chapter 7 reports on the final theme of results which is made up of two sub-themes, namely job security (Section 7.1) and risk of de-professionalisation (Section 7.2), and the ensuing discussion explored the deskilling of translation tasks (Section 7.3.1), whether bilingualism is enough to translate (Section 7.3.2), the hypothesised future of translation services (Section 7.3.3), sustainable employment (Section 7.3.4), and whether translation is de-professionalising (Section 7.3.5). The concluding Chapter reflects on each of the research questions (Section 8.1) before closing with the main limitations of this research (Section 8.2) and finally any avenues for future research (Section 8.3).

2 Literature Review

The language industry, sometimes referred to as the language services industry, is vast, complex and encompasses a multitude of overlapping services relating to multilingual communication. According to the 2025 Nimdzi 100 report, the language industry reached 71.7 billion USD in 2024, and the industry is projected to grow to approximately 75.7 billion USD during 2025, with an estimated further growth to approximately 92.3 billion USD by 2029. Meanwhile, rapid advancements in various forms of technology, namely neural machine translation and generative AI, have not only led to a proliferation of new careers and workflows, but also to significant changes in the kinds of tasks that language industry professionals need to undertake to meet demand and also in the methods used to complete these tasks (Angelone et al., 2020; Angelone et al., 2024). While translation and interpreting are the pillars of the language industry and have been grounded as established professions for quite some time (Angelone et al., 2020), there are now many other related services that fall within this category. In its broadest sense, the language industry comprises of, according to the Globalization and Localization Association (GALA), globalisation, internationalisation, localisation and translation (also referred to as GILT), along with other services including, amongst others, interpreting, subtitling, project management, transcreation, terminology management and consulting (Angelone et al., 2020; Angelone et al, 2024). Many stakeholders (e.g. translators, interpreters, terminologists, revisers, translation agencies, quality assurance specialists, consultants, technology and software developers etc.) are, therefore, involved in the daily operations and the development of the language industry (Angelone et al., 2020).

This thesis focusses on the translation industry, a pillar of the wider language industry that refers to the economic ecosystem comprising of different types of stakeholders (translators, project managers, translation agencies, translation software companies etc.) involved in the production and distribution of translations as well as with carrying out other translation-related tasks (e.g. editing, revision, pre-/post-editing) (Walker and Lambert, 2025). Primarily as a result of globalisation and of the technological revolution, translation has outgrown its historical roots as a solitary craft typically practised by individuals, having transformed into a “cottage industry” comprising of small-to-medium locally based translation companies and individual translators, and it has now become an international, technology-driven industrial sector that continues to grow financially (Dunne, 2012; Sakamoto, 2025; see also van der Meer (2024) for an overview of the evolution of the translation industry).

Meanwhile, the translation profession is nested within the translation industry and relates more to the professionals who carry out the tasks associated with translation (Walker and Lambert, 2025; see also Robinson (2019) and Penet (2024) for handbooks on becoming and working as a professional translator). Translators are often self-employed, working for translation agencies or direct clients. That being said, many translators may also offer

additional services other than translation (e.g. interpreting), or they may work as a translator as their secondary profession alongside of, for instance, teaching or project management (Schäffner, 2020).

This present review of literature explores the language industry, and more specifically the translation industry, in more depth, delving into various areas of TS that contribute towards determining the practices and attitudes that shape the contemporary translation industry and thus the translation profession.

Firstly, incorporating technology into the workplace can provoke very real changes in how a profession is structured, particularly in terms of risking the automation or deskilling of certain strands of professional work (Haug, 1972; 1975; Toren, 1975; see also Section 3.2 for an overview of de-professionalisation). With this in mind, Section 2.1 explores literature pertaining to the integration of general and translation technologies into translation workflows, focussing on Neural Machine Translation (NMT) (Section 2.1.1) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) (Section 2.1.2). This section discusses how MT and AI are used to streamline translation workflows (i.e. post-editing) and the subsequent implications for a translator's role, in addition to how such technologies democratise translation outside a professional translation context.

Secondly, Section 2.2 focusses on online collaborative translation and non-professional translation practices, discussing the contributions of volunteer and non-professional translators in addition to the ways that Web 2.0 technologies (i.e. the internet, social media, blogs, wikis etc.) facilitate their integration into the translation profession. In particular, this section focusses on free crowdsourcing and volunteerism (Section 2.2.1), the platform economy (Section 2.2.2) and fan translation (Section 2.2.3), discussing these practices in terms of how they are influencing the expectations of translation services as well as what it means to be a translator. As such, Section 2.2 begins to evaluate the professional image and exclusivity of professional translators by reflecting on the different types of translators offering their linguistic and translation expertise either professionally or casually.

Thirdly, the enforcement of regulatory codes of conduct (CoCs) (Section 2.3.1) and the establishment of professional associations (Section 2.3.2) are assets that distinguish professions from non-professions (see Section 3.1.4 for summary of professionalisation approaches). Section 2.3 discusses, therefore, the extent to which CoCs are enforced by professional and non-professional translators, evaluating whether there is a sense of commitment to professional organisation and behaviour. Remaining on the theme of demonstrating professionalism, this section also explores the role and contributions of professional translator associations towards exhibiting high professional standards and supporting their members.

Finally, Section 2.4 reviews literature relating to translator training within the scope of translator and translation competences (Section 2.4.1), the necessity of formal training (Section 2.4.2), and tertiary education (Section 2.4.3). As explained in Section 1.3, the United Nations established SDGs as part of Agenda 2030, of which one of the goals relating to education is to increase the number of individuals possessing technical and vocational skills that will help them to find employment with reasonable incomes or allow them to develop entrepreneurial skills. Furthermore, establishing formal training, whether certifications or university degrees, is also a prerequisite for an occupation to become a profession (see Section 3.1.4 for summary of professionalisation approaches). In response to these goals for education, Section 2.4 aims to evaluate the limitations as well as the professional benefits of translator training in its current state.

The studies addressed in this forthcoming review, coupled with my novel framework on (de-)professionalisation that was devised for this thesis by deconstructing various theories and approaches for (de-)professionalisation (see Section 3.5; see also Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description) and the data gathered on practitioners' and non-practitioners' perceptions of the contemporary translation industry (see Chapter 4 for methodology), set up the foundations for a comprehensive exploration of the industry practices and attitudes influencing translation's (de-)professionalisation. Conceptually, this thesis contributes a new way of interpreting the professionalisation and potential de-professionalisation of translation.

2.1 Technology and Automation

Globalisation and the growing levels of cross-border communications have brought forth an increase in demand and urgency for translation services (Benmansour and Hdouch, 2023; O'Hagan, 2016) that cater for the translation of a vast amount of content as well as for a variety of language pairs that need to be covered (Nurminen and Koponen, 2020). With pressing demands for robust translation services also come the need for efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and productivity, all of which can hypothetically be achieved through technologies such as MT and AI (Benmansour and Hdouch, 2023; O'Hagan, 2016; Xiao, 2021). These tools were created with the intention to enhance the experiences of translators and also of those in a casual need for general translation services, not only by optimising productivity (Rodriguez de Céspedes, 2020), but also by supporting communication across a breadth of language pairs.

Adapting to new general and translation technologies and mastering them has become more essential than ever for any language service provider (i.e. freelance translator or translation agency) wishing to keep up to speed with market trends and to secure jobs (Benmansour and Hdouch, 2023; Eszenyi et al., 2023). However, against the backdrop of the availability of free

online MT systems, and more recently of AI, a shared feeling amongst many professional translators is fear of a decline in the amount of available translation work (Moorkens, 2022a; Hao and Pym, 2022; Rojo, 2018; Sakamoto et al., 2017). Specialising at the premium end of the market is, however, considered a solution in order to remain competitive and to maintain strong rates and job satisfaction (see Durban, 2011; 2022; Jemielity, 2018). In other words, nowadays, only translators who specialise in domains that machines cannot handle are more likely earn a decent living (Robinson, 2019). Nevertheless, Moorkens (2020a, p.27) describes a "hollowing out of the middle section of the market" which may make it more difficult for some translators positioned at the lower end of the market to transition to the premium end of the market.

With the advent of advanced machine-learning technologies, the translation industry has experienced a transformation over recent years. This digital revolution invites us to take a closer look at the ways in which modern technologies are transforming the landscape of the translation industry.

2.1.1 (Neural) Machine Translation and Post-Editing

The use of neural networks[3] in MT dates back to the early 2000s (see Schwenk et al., 2006). In relation to the use of MT particularly over the last decade, it has been estimated that machines translated more than 250 billion words per day, amounting to approximately 100 times more than the total production of the global translator workforce (van der Meer, 2020). Meanwhile, Google Translate alone was averaging 143 billion words per day in May 2016 across 100 language combinations, also translating between language pairs that were previously unknown to the system (Way, 2020).

The European Union (EU) is also a pioneer in this area, developing MT systems from as early as 1976 (European Commission, 2014). Over the last few decades, new member states have been welcomed into the EU, not only leading to a diverse range of languages spoken within the EU, but also to a greater pressure to translate official documents into numerous different languages (Torres-Hostench, 2022). The development of MT accelerated on the back of this expansion of the EU. The current iteration of MT provided by the European Commission is eTranslation and it is regularly employed by institutional translators as part of their workflow (Eszenyi et al., 2023). Furthermore, with the possibility of being accessed directly or integrated into systems, eTranslation is offered as a service to those working in public administration in the EU, Norway and Iceland (European Commission, n.d.; Eszenyi et al., 2023). The overall

[3] Neural machine translation (NMT) is a subfield of MT. Instead of relying on rule-based or statistical methods, NMT uses deep learning techniques and neural networks to process and comprehend languages to produce fluent and natural translations (Koehn, 2020).

aims of this technology are not only to promote multilingual inclusion and participation, but also to increase productivity and to reduce costs (Torres-Hostench, 2022).

As indicated by the previous paragraph, the development of MT is not a recent endeavour, with MT having greatly improved since its inception in the 1950s (van der Meer, 2024). MT has since become widely accepted in the translation profession as part of the standard workflow (Jakobsen, 2019). Therefore, translation is no longer a solely human act due to the normalised deployment of MT, and more recently of AI (see section 2.1.2), to fulfil translation needs (Gümüş, 2024; Eszenyi et al., 2023).

The most notable improvements of NMT relate to the fact that its output was found to contain fewer errors than that of Statistical Machine Translation (SMT) and that it displays increased levels of accuracy and fluency (Castilho et al., 2017a; Moorkens, 2018; O'Brien and Conlan, 2019). Additional advantages include speed, cost-effectiveness, and the ability to handle large volumes of text (Benmansour and Hdouch, 2023). These improvements, in addition to the media hype revolving around MT, led to an increasing number of translation agencies offering services using the technology, namely via post-editing workflows, as a response to their clients' demand (Moorkens, 2020a). As such, due to the ongoing enhancements of current MT systems and the expansion of their deployment, particularly by translation agencies and the general public, the degree of professional human involvement in the production of translations is, as discussed in the forthcoming paragraphs, becoming frequently debated (Al-Hemyari, 2023).

Despite clear improvements, NMT still has its limitations. For instance, depending on the language combination, NMT's performance still deteriorates with longer sentence structures, ambiguous and complex vocabulary, as well as cultural nuances and idiomatic expressions, thus potentially generating mistranslations and omissions (Benmansour and Hdouch, 2023; Castilho et al., 2017b; Moorkens, 2018). These shortcomings highlight the need for human expertise, but human intervention may only be enacted through post-editing, a term coined when MT produced good enough translations but could be improved by translators (do Carmo and Moorkens, 2020), rather than through translating from scratch (Ragni and Nunes Vieira, 2022; Rodriguez de Céspedes, 2020). Although not popular with many professionals, post-editing is now considered an important component in the skillset of any modern translator (Al-Batineh and Tenaijy, 2024), but it is also the fastest growing sector of the translation market (Moorkens, 2020a) and is used in cases where employers want to cut costs but using raw MT would be too risky (Lommel and DePalma, 2016). In other words, human translators remain integral within translation workflows as they enhance MT output through post-editing, bringing their linguistic expertise, cultural understanding, and their ability to capture the subtleties of language (Benmansour and Hdouch, 2023).

Furthermore, post-editing is argued to be quicker than translating from scratch (Jia et al., 2019; Toral et al., 2018), and many translation agencies are increasingly keen to limit translators' role to post-editing only (Sakamoto, 2019). Adopting NMT is, thus, perceived as a valuable asset that can complement a translator's skills, allowing them to hypothetically work more efficiently (Al-Hemyari, 2023; Benmansour and Hdouch, 2023) and to remain competitive. Despite these supposed benefits, do Carmo and Moorkens (2020) believe that the demand for efficiency and the urgency to remain competitive are factors that add pressure for the translator rather than provide them with much-needed satisfaction. Moreover, spotting and correcting errors in NMT output has been reported to be more difficult than translation by both translation students and by professionals due to poor error visibility (Moorkens, 2018; Castilho et al., 2017a). Essentially, the translators themselves may not spot errors or mistranslations due to the perceived fluency of the target text, which can pose problems especially for post-editing or for monolingual quality control (Ragni and Nunes Vieira, 2022). Additionally, under certain circumstances, post-editing actually requires more time and effort than the traditional translation process. The domain of the source text and its complexity as well as the language combination of the task are known to have an impact on MT quality, which in turn, affect the level of effort required to complete any subsequent post-editing (Nunes Vieira, 2019; Koponen, 2016). These challenges highlight the need to educate new and current translators on the ways to handle NMT output appropriately, and this includes when to intervene and to what extent (Ragni and Nunes Vieira, 2022; Rodriguez de Céspedes, 2020).

In addition to NMT's practical shortcomings, the transition to post-editing has also been reported to significantly cut translation prices (Moorkens et al., 2016; Sakamoto et al., 2017; 2019; Nunes Vieira, 2020), an issue that is likely to be exacerbated considering that the level of automation for low-risk or perishable translations continues to increase (Way, 2018).

Additionally, automatic post-editing (APE)[4], a more recently developed process, involves automatic correction of MT output before it is sent to a post-editor, implying a further reduction of human effort (Guerberof Arenas and Toral, 2020; Shterionov et al., 2020). In response to such developments, the argument is often put forward that the human translator is situated in a "peripheral position" in relation to MT (O'Brien and Conlan, 2019). Regardless, while the overall aim of APE is to reduce certain MT errors, it is still up to the professional human translator to post-edit the output further to verify accuracy (Shterionov et al., 2020).

This transition towards PEMT workflows has been met with a strong sense of fear and resistance by many translators, who tend to perceive themselves as indispensable and as replaceable by the tools that are imposed onto them (Cadwell et al., 2018). That being said,

[4] APE systems are similar to MT systems in that both need to be trained. The difference is that the latter is trained by parallel datasets (i.e. source and target texts), meanwhile the former is trained by data that includes both MT input and output in addition to human post-edited version of the output (Shterionov et al., 2020).

many translation programmes, particularly those offered across Europe, incorporate PEMT into their curricular (see Section 2.4 for literature relating to translator training), and as such, there is most likely a growing body of translators who expect PEMT to be a core element of their work (do Carmo and Moorkens, 2020).

In essence, the availability and current level of quality of MT have made it a viable communication tool, triggering a surge in use by both translators and non-translators alike (Nurminen, 2025). While the rapid enhancements to MT technology may trigger feelings of replaceability for the professional translator (Cadwell et al., 2018), it is equally important to address the extent to which MT is beneficial to other groups within society. In fact, MT is used not only in professional translation contexts, but it is also used in more general contexts as well as by professionals of other fields. As depicted by the previous paragraphs, the use of MT within a professional translation context has been researched extensively. However, there are a myriad of purposes that lead to non-translators engaging with raw MT, whether it's simply for leisure or for professional reasons (Nurminen, 2021).

It can be argued that MT is actually used more frequently by general users than by professional translators for the purpose of obtaining a basic understanding of a text (Nurminen, 2021; Nurminen and Papula, 2018). This type of use is often referred to as MT gisting which "is the process of knowingly consuming raw machine translation with the aim of understanding as much of its meaning as needed for a specific purpose" (Nurminen, 2021, p. 30). In a later study, Nurminen (2025) further explains that MT gisting is a "receiver-led process in which the reader of the translation […] assumes some of the roles and responsibilities that are carried by the translator in translator led-processes". In this way, the receiver, or reader or end user, is involved in and is responsible for the translation process from beginning to end (see Figure 2.1 of Nurminen's (2025, p.9) initial mapping of MT gisting).

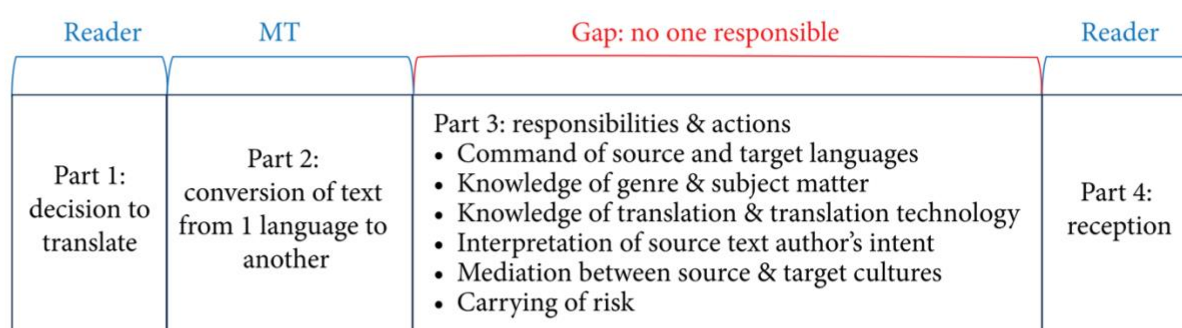

Figure 2.1: Nurminen's (2025, p.9) initial mapping of MT gisting onto the traditional translation process.

However, Nurminen (2025) clarifies that MT users are likely to have differing levels of understanding of both translation and of MT, using the technology in a variety of ways for different purposes. As such, Nurminen (2025) proceeds to explain that the mapping of MT gisting needs to represent a spectrum of capabilities, ranging from users who may know

nothing about MT and translation to users with high levels of MT literacy. In turn, Figure 2.2 illustrates Nurminen's (2025, p.11) alternative view of MT gisting which shows that the typical tasks and competences of the translator are not necessarily missing within a MT gisting context in that readers with higher MT literacy levels may knowingly or unknowingly take on the responsibilities that are typically associated with a translator in a translator-led process.

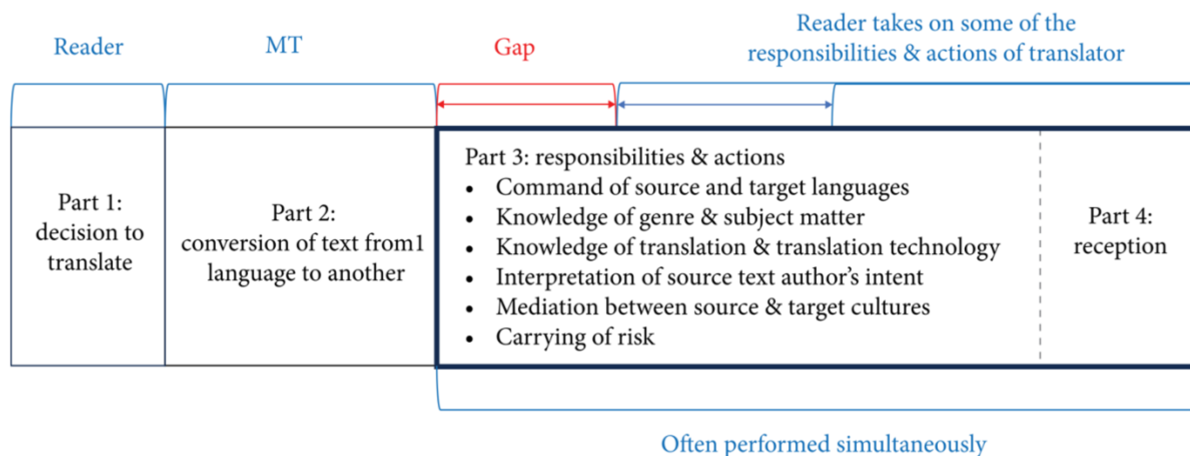

Figure 2.2: Nurminen's (2025, p.11) alternative view of MT gisting onto the translation process.

Within this context of MT gisting, a survey conducted by Nurminen and Papula (2018) revealed that the majority of their respondents use MT on a very regular basis for their own assimilation, using it primarily to seek understanding of documents but also to verify their own understanding. MT gisting is also commonly used for educational purposes (Robertson et al., 2021; Nurminen and Papula, 2018). Furthermore, in Nunes Vieira et al's. (2023) survey regarding the perceptions of MT by UK users, the majority of respondents use the technology for leisure, whereby the technology's portability and ease of access were the key drivers behind its use. The main circumstances under which the respondents use MT were to be able to read information that was in a different language, out of curiosity, and when browsing the internet (Nunes Vieira et al., 2023).

A further example of MT use outside of professional translation is in relation to immigration and refugee processes, and making social services and education accessible to immigrants (Biel and Sosoni, 2017). As the costs of interpretating and translation into multiple languages for immigration purposes are often high, information tends to be translated into selected languages only. This is where MT constitutes a solution for the challenges of tight budgets and limited human translation resources (Nurminen and Koponen, 2020). For instance, projects with the goal of facilitating access to public services include the Swedish project DigInclude, which assists recent immigrants and those with reduced reading capabilities (Jönsson, 2016), and the Japanese project MuTual, which focussed on delivering official and public information in languages other than Japanese (Miyata et al., 2015). From the perspective of those who are faced with language barriers, Ahmed (2018) observes that young refugees tend to rely on MT

to facilitate their everyday communications, accentuating that this technology supports refugees with gaining access to healthcare and other essential services.

On a related note, the contributions of MT at the times of crises (e.g. earthquakes, floods, epidemics/pandemics, and mass migration) are also of paramount importance because large volumes of text need to be translated quickly and accurately in order to deliver urgent messages during uncertain times (Cadwell et al., 2019; Federici et al., 2023; see also Federici, 2020; O'Brien and Federici, 2019; Hunt et al., 2019; Tekwa and Liu, 2024 etc. for additional studies on crisis translation). For example, MT was not only deployed following the Haiti earthquake in order to rapidly disseminate information in Haitian Creole (see Lewis, 2010; Lewis et al., 2011), but also during the European refugee crisis, providing services and sharing information in various Kurdish dialects (Cadwell et al., 2019). However, even when MT can be successfully deployed in a crisis, the texts most in need of quick translation are often not well served by MT because there is often a lack of domain-specific engines that cover crisis content (O'Brien, 2022), because the language combinations required are usually not economically viable enough to sustain a pool of professional translators (Cadwell et al., 2019), and also because data sets of sufficient size and quality are often not available as a result of the difficulty to train MT systems when infrequent language combinations are concerned (Ansari and Petras, 2018). As such, using MT can be helpful to quickly disseminate urgent messages during crises, but it is equally important to not overlook the facts that this technology is not perfect and that NMT's perceived fluency is far from ideal in life-threatening situations (O'Brien, 2022; Federici et al., 2023; see also Section 2.1.1 for literature on the benefits and shortcomings of NMT).

Furthermore, language barriers remain a significant factor that not only result in difficulty acquiring health information, but also contribute to disparities in the quality of care provided (Dew et al., 2017; Liebling et al., 2020). Although the risks of using MT are well-acknowledged, many still resort to online MT as the only other available alternative when healthcare information is not available in the languages that patients understand (Nunes Vieira et al., 2021). To illustrate, in Valdez et al's. (2023) survey regarding MT use for healthcare related reasons by migrants living in the Netherlands, they found that most (70.16% of respondents) use MT to read health-related letters sent by their doctor. Additionally, in an interview study by Mehandru et al. (2022), they report that healthcare providers relied on a combination of MT, interpreting, and their own knowledge of the patients' languages to develop communication strategies. In short, the implementation of MT within the healthcare sector facilitates the mediation of communication between doctors and patients and enables the diffusion of health-related information in multiple languages (Nurminen and Koponen, 2020; Valdez et al., 2023). For this reason, MT is often viewed as a potential solution for a "multilingual health system", enabling individuals from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, for example migrants, to access health information and medical care in the language that they understand best (Torres-Hostench, 2022, p.6; see also studies cited by

Nurminen and Koponen (2020) such as Birch et al., 2018; Blench, 2007; Kirchhoff et al., 2011; Turner et al., 2014 for projects that investigate the implementation of MT within healthcare).

MT can also enhance the accessibility of audiovisual media, including television, films, and news content, all of which are considered necessary for social inclusion (Nurminen and Koponen, 2020). Projects, such as MUSA and various EU-funded projects (e.g. MeMad and HBB4All), used speech recognition technology in addition to MT to produce subtitles for documentaries, current affairs programmes, and to assist with video content production (Nurminen and Koponen, 2020; see also studies cited by Nurminen and Koponen (2020) such as Piperidis et al., 2004; Matamala et al., 2015; Bywood et al., 2017; Braeckman et al., 2019). In other words, utilising the fully automatic translations of subtitles is seen as a potential method for service broadcasters to increase accessibility of current affairs and cultural programming for minority language speakers (Braeckman et al., 2019). While many projects aiming to address accessibility of audiovisual media focused on utilising MT to mass produce subtitles to cater for linguistic needs, efforts have also been made to consider how MT technology can be used to assist those who are visually impaired or hard of hearing (Matamala and Ortiz-Boix, 2016; Nurminen and Koponen, 2020). Essentially, Matamala and Ortiz-Boix (2016) suggest that post-edited MT can be used to create audio descriptions and voice-overs in whichever languages are needed in order to reach a wider audience (Ortiz-Boix and Matamala, 2017; Matamala and Ortiz-Boix, 2016). In turn, this caters for audiences who do not understand the source language and/or cannot access the visual and/or audio content, thus promoting both “linguistic and sensorial accessibility” (Matamala and Ortix-Boix, 2016).

All things considered, misuse of MT in high-stakes settings, such as in law and in healthcare, can have serious consequences (Nunes Vieira et al., 2021). Particularly those with low levels of MT literacy could face risks as they may not be fully aware of MT’s limitations, and this may include users overestimating MT’s capabilities and assuming that MT output is always accurate (Bowker, 2023). Additionally, MT may pose ethical concerns, and these can be serious especially for refugees and asylum seekers (Nunes Vieira et al., 2021). For example, the credibility of immigration and asylum applications may be unfairly questioned (see Schroeder, 2017), and there are also issues relating to confidentiality (Nunes Vieira et al., 2021). Essentially, if MT is used to communicate or to conduct interviews with refugees or migrants, then confidential information may unknowingly be shared with the MT provider (Kenny, 2019). Within the scope of healthcare, Dew et al. (2018) carried out a review of MT development within healthcare environments, and despite the possibility of positive outcomes (see Birch et al., 2018; Bergman et al., 2014), they concluded, at the time of writing their review, that the majority of initiatives relating to MT within healthcare were still at the pilot stage, with ongoing concerns over accuracy, the acceptability of using raw MT output in high-stakes situations, as well as a lack of standard evaluation methods.

The accessibility of information in multiple languages is regarded as “a basic condition for the development of a truly inclusive knowledge society” (UNESCO Executive Board, 2007, p.2). As such, a clear motivation that fuelled the development of MT was the idea that it can be used to benefit professionals of fields other than translation and the general public by promoting the accessibility to information and by lowering or removing language barriers (Nurminen and Koponen, 2020). However, even the most advanced MT systems harbour significant weaknesses (Nunes Vieira et al., 2021). While it can be argued that NMT is not yet sophisticated enough to perform better than human translators in certain market segments (e.g. medical and legal translations), this significant step forward has prompted discussions regarding the social, financial, and professional implications NMT can have for the future of professional human translation (O’Brien and Conlan, 2019; Ragni and Nunes Vieira, 2022). For instance, the ongoing enhancements of NMT allude to expectations that human translation will become cheaper and less in demand (Moorkens et al., 2016; Nunes Vieira, 2020). However, not only are human translators with specialised translation competences still indispensable (Durban, 2011), but post-editors have also become a new category of workers in the field of translation (Sakamoto, 2019). Additionally, Kenny (2018) argues that NMT is not necessarily a disrupting technology. Rather, as do Carmo and Moorkens (2020) explain, MT output constitutes another source of translation suggestions which contribute towards the translation decision-making process alongside TM matches and certain CAT tool features such as concordance searches. As such, while the threats posed by NMT should not be overlooked, there is an ongoing case that there is still a place for strong translation and linguistic skills to maintain professional level quality.

2.1.2 Artificial Intelligence

The emergence of AI technology has become a driving force of innovation, encouraging companies to invest in and implement new AI technologies to remain current and competitive (Dosyn et al., 2023). Within the context of this research, the advent of AI also deepens the ongoing technological revolution within the language industry (Moorkens and Guerberof Arenas, 2024). By leveraging the power and intelligence of AI, machine-learning researchers predict that AI will begin to show evidence of either matching or outperforming humans in certain areas of translation within the coming decades (Grace et al., 2018). This is supported by a recent study conducted by Microsoft (2025) on the applicability of generative AI to occupations, concluding that this evolving technology is the most useful for and has the most applicability to interpreting and translating. Meanwhile, other studies envision AI becoming capable of handling complex language and structures (i.e. cultural context, slang, and jokes) quicker and more appropriately than MT in its current state (Strach, 2022; Xiao, 2021) in addition to achieving even higher translation accuracy rates than current MT systems and offering increased speed and scalability in terms of the number of language pairs that can be translated (Benmansour and Hdouch, 2023).

AI-powered MT and voice translation technology are examples of novel tools that can quickly deliver language solutions (van der Meer, 2020), with applications such as Google Translate and Microsoft Translator offering communication and translation using speech, image and text recognition (Shahmerdanova, 2025). However, Rechtman (2018) proposes that AI-based systems will not replace human translators because of its obvious lack of human emotions as well as its inability to follow and translate real-time speech effectively. In other words, humans excel at creativity and at capturing cultural nuances, bias, tone, or context-specific meanings, processes that machines are yet to handle (Al-Hemyari, 2023; Benmansour and Hdouch, 2023; Das, 2018). Indeed, work opportunities for professional translators may be in decline in the wake of successful automated translation solutions, but new opportunities relating to managing advanced technologies have emerged (van der Meer, 2024) meaning that automation does not necessarily displace the need for human involvement (Moorkens and Guerberof Arenas, 2024). Nevertheless, AI is predicted to achieve various milestones within the realm of complex language services (Grace et al., 2018). For instance, translating a text written in an under-resourced language into English will perform just as well as a team of expert human translators; speech and dialogue can be translated or interpreted based on film subtitles; automatically transcribing accented human speech and background noises will showcase better efficiency; and AI translation's performance will match that of multilinguals or amateur translators for the majority of text types and common languages (Grace et al., 2018). In fact, respondents from Wang's (2023) comparative study of AI- and human-produced translations concluded that some AI translations have already reached the level of human translation, and that the respondents displayed much concern about issues relating to unemployment and how to improve their competences so that they trump the benefits of AI.

Furthermore, AI approaches are envisioned to permeate all of translation's neighbouring services (Chai, 2021; Grace et al., 2018; Hasbah, 2023; Xiao, 2021). Additional advancements include chatbots, auto-assignments, reading text aloud, generating recordings that can't be distinguished from a voice-over artist, auto-captioning videos, automating terminology extraction, automating alignment of texts, and handling speech-to-speech translations (Benmansour and Hdouch, 2023; Grace et al., 2018; van der Meer, 2020). These features are applicable within neighbouring practices, including voice-overs, post-editing, subtitling, project management, and transcription (Habash, 2023).

Despite AI's potential, this technology has partly lost its status as a positive opportunity and is mainly seen as a threat by both language companies and independent professionals (ELIS Survey, 2023; 2024; 2025). The progress towards perfecting AI creates the impression that expert human intervention, which also comes at an increased cost and turnaround time, will be less frequently demanded (Moorkens, 2022a; Sakamoto, 2019). This is also advocated by the Translation Automation User Society (TAUS), which predicts that society will soon accept fully automatic useful translation (FAUT) as the norm (van der Meer, 2020). However, despite

translation constituting an industry that is rapidly being reshaped by AI, the role of human translators remains critical, particularly in the domains where human touch is indispensable, such as in legal and medical fields where any error in translation could pose serious consequences (Benmansour and Hdouch, 2023). To illustrate, Wang (2023) scored AI- and human-produced translations based on their accuracy, linguistic style, choice of expressions, cultural context and ideology. The results revealed that while AI scored higher with language style, human translations were much better at logical expressions, fidelity to the original text, and offered more accurate translations overall (Wang, 2023).

All things considered, AI-powered tools are already changing the sphere of the translation industry, not only by democratising language services (Shahmerdanova, 2025), but also by transforming it in ways that we previously couldn't imagine by increasing the demand for instant translation solutions, by driving economic growth within translation technology, by conceptualising new research areas, as well as by establishing new roles for translators and by creating niche job opportunities (e.g. prompt engineer, linguistic data analyst and AI editor) (Chai, 2021; Habash, 2023; van der Meer, 2024). That being said, AI is still developing, and in its current state, it offers both various benefits as well as challenges (Al-Hemyari, 2023; Benmansour and Hdouch, 2023; Stasimioti, 2023). Particular challenges include responding to ethical and cultural concerns (Shahmerdanova, 2025), as well as ensuring content accuracy, combatting cyber security, mitigating confidentiality issues, and creating new laws and policies (Grace et al., 2018). Although there is a myriad of drawbacks that need to be overcome, new AI-based translation solutions are constantly being released, promising to improve the overall quality of automated translations (Benmansour and Hdouch, 2023), whilst also giving the impression that human translators can be phased out (Eszenyi et al., 2023; see also Section 6.4.3 for discussion on translator association's response to AI).

2.1.3 Section Summary

It can be argued that many elements of the translation workflow are already experiencing automation. For example, the deployment of (N)MT within and outside of professional translation contexts, the widespread imposition of post-editing assignments in certain segments of the market, and the concern that AI will impact areas of translation that were previously believed to be resistant from automation (Moorkens, 2022a). On the one hand, some fear that their creative intelligence, language expertise and specialised knowledge will no longer be needed in the future. On the other hand, new roles relating to the translation workflow (e.g. post-editors and language technology experts etc.) are emerging in the wake of ongoing technological advancements (Eszenyi et al., 2023). While many translators are passionate about languages and translation and may be appreciative of the efforts to design efficient translation tools, they are, nevertheless, feeling undermined due to concerns over the ongoing digitisation of translation workflows and over the threat of automation

(Moorkens, 2020a). Although professional human translators remain indispensable in refining MT and even AI output, the impact of automation and machine learning technologies on the perceived and actual value of a professional translator cannot be understated.

The studies discussed in this section addressed how the role of the human translator and the services that they offer are transforming in accordance with the implementation of MT and AI. However, these studies have not extensively discussed the implications of technology from the sociological perspective of de-professionalisation which sees deference to machines and the automation and deskilling of professional tasks as some of the key triggers of the breaking down of professions (see Section 3.2 for overview of the concept of de-professionalisation). The framework developed as part of this thesis, which incorporates an original set of de-professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.4), enables a critical examination of how the technological transformations addressed throughout this section are influencing translation's status as a service necessitated by society and as an established profession. Indeed, there is a possibility that a more efficient work system than what we currently experience today is in progress and that there will be minimal change to the structure of the profession (Lester, 2020; Susskind and Susskind, 2018). But the implementation of technology in the workplace is considered one of the primary causes of de-professionalisation (Haug, 1972; 1975; Toren, 1975), and in the worst possible scenario, workplaces are transformed through job losses and there may no longer be a continuing purpose for certain professional skills as increasingly capable systems and machines take on more and more of the tasks that we associate with traditional professionals (Lester, 2020; Susskind and Susskind, 2018). In response, I aim to contribute to TS literature pertaining to technology by systematically applying this thesis' bespoke framework on (de-)professionalisation to examine the implications that the deployment of general and translation-specific technologies in the translation industry is having on translation's professionalisation and whether these circumstances are setting up an environment for the deskilling and the de-professionalisation of translation to take place (see Chapter 5 for results relating to the impact of integrating general and translation technologies into the translation workflow; see also Section 7.3.3 for a discussion on the impact of technology on the sustainability of translation as a profession).

2.2 Online Collaborative Translation and Non-Professional Translation Practices

Web 2.0 is the state of the internet with which all of us are now familiar, offering increased usability for users and also hosting more user-generated content (UGC) than ever before that is shared amongst the global online population (Howe, 2006). Organisations have become aware of the vast amounts of information, experience, and energy that online communities bring to daily tasks, and this enthusiasm is present within the translation context too. Recent times have witnessed individuals, who may not possess professional translation experience

or translation qualifications but flaunt adequate fluency in a foreign language, rally online for paid and volunteer opportunities to offer their linguistic and cultural knowledge (Drugan, 2013; Liu, 2022; Piróth and Baker, 2020).

Online collaborative translation covers all the new ways of performing translation online, whether via platforms, forums, or even email (Zwischenberger, 2022). The translation industry has experienced, in particular, an ongoing expansion of platform economy (see Section 2.2.2) as well as non-profit translation approaches, namely free crowdsourcing and volunteerism (see Section 2.2.1) and fan translation (see Section 2.2.3). On the one hand, online translator communities represent an important factor in the efforts to satisfy the growing demands for translation and localisation services (van der Meer, 2020). On the other hand, the contributions of amateurs and non-professionals within translation have generated commentary regarding the identity of translators and their position as a professional group within society (Angelelli, 2020; Jiménez-Crespo, 2025).

2.2.1 Free Crowdsourcing and Volunteerism

As conceptualised by Howe (2006), crowdsourcing refers to the assignment of jobs to an undefined and generally large group of people in the form of open requests. Brabham (2013) clarifies that crowdsourcing leverages the collective intelligence of online communities in order to fulfil organisational goals and that these online communities are not necessarily composed of only amateurs but rather experts of selected domains. As such, the use of 'non-professional' or 'amateur' as concepts in relation to online collaborative translation is sometimes problematic given that online translation is not exclusively performed by those unqualified in translation (Zwischenberger, 2022) and that 'non-professional' holds negative connotations relating to low quality and low cost (Jiménez-Crespo, 2025). In fact, some participants in online collaborative translation projects work as professional translators and may also have a relevant educational background in translation (McDonough Dolmaya, 2012).

As a result of Web 2.0 technologies (i.e. internet, wikis, social media, photo- and video-sharing platforms etc.), both non-profit and for-profit organisations are able to post open requests for an ad hoc translation workforce to assist with their translation needs (O'Hagan, 2017; Jiménez-Crespo, 2025). Those who are accepting such jobs appear to be motivated by their personal interests to provide for society, to promote a cause, or to translate simply for the fun of it (Liu, 2022). For instance, in Olohan's (2014) investigation of blog entries of volunteer TED translators, she found that they were highly motivated by altruistic reasons such as sharing the benefits offered by TED and effecting social change. Similarly, Dombek's (2014) case study into the motivations of Polish Facebook translators revealed that they engaged as volunteers because they consider it a good deed for their polish community.

In fact, it is Facebook's translation campaign that is an example of one of the most comprehensive crowdsourcing models in translation, where Facebook's user communities were asked to help translate its website (O'Hagan, 2017). Within two years of the initiative being launched in 2008, the website became available in 75 languages (Drugan, 2013), and then rising to 104 languages and dialects by the end of 2013 (Dombek, 2014). Similarly, there is the case of Wikipedia, an online wiki that can be edited and translated by any internet user (Jiménez-Crespo, 2011; McDonough Dolmaya, 2012; 2015). Additionally, MT systems are designed to permit anyone, professional translator or not, to provide their feedback on translated output (Gambier, 2016; Jiménez-Crespo, 2017). Aside from social media, wikis and MT, crowdsourcing also plays a pivotal role in natural disaster management (see Hester et al., 2010; Munro, 2010; Sutherlin, 2013). Collectively, these examples reveal how online collaborative initiatives assist with the demand for translation services, by providing for charity and by making the internet more multilingual (Drugan, 2013; Jiménez-Crespo, 2025).

Unsurprisingly, the initiatives outlined in the previous paragraph have caused discomfort amongst many professional translators who consider these initiatives as cost-cutting measures only (O'Hagan, 2017) and as potential disruptors to the status of professional translators (Sakamoto, 2018). Further consequences to crowdsourcing, as depicted by Flanagan's (2016) study on translators' blog posts, consist of aspects relating to free labour, de-professionalisation, demonetisation, ethics and quality. Certain social groups have even attempted to showcase that crowdsourcing is not as fruitful as it is purported to be. For example, a group, which goes by the name Translators for Ethical Business Practices, was formed in 2009 to put the case forward that translation crowdsourcing by Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) was unethical (O'Hagan, 2017). In fact, aside from translation for charitable purposes which is often pro bono work anyway, crowdsourcing for other purposes, such as for casual or low-priority jobs, social media, and websites, offers neither a minimum wage nor labour regulations and government jurisdiction (Rushkoff, 2016). Despite this lack of regulation, it is evident that multilinguals continue to partake in online translation, especially since it is one of the most basic pursuits amongst those who speak more than one language and there are hardly any measures that regulate who can or cannot practise translation (Pym et al., 2012). In fact, the findings from Katan's (2011) international survey reveal that 65% of respondents stated that their biggest competition was, at the time of the survey, amateur translators, and this includes subject specialists who are not translators by profession. From this perspective, free crowdsourcing and volunteerism problematise not only the re-conceptualisation of acceptable translation standards, but also the principles surrounding what it means to be a professional translator (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017).

However, in Zwischenberger's (2022) study on professional associations and their references to translation crowdsourcing, the largest number of references regarding the use of crowdsourcing methods for translation actually fell under the neutral category. Crowdsourcing was, indeed, acknowledged as a negative influence on the profession but was praised for how

some of its elements can be applied to professional practice and that translation crowdsourcing is appropriate for certain projects. That being said, the negative references regarding crowdsourcing were primarily put forward by the American Translators Association (ATA) and by the Fédération International des Traducteurs (FIT) who raised awareness of the socio-economic impact of the rise of crowdsourcing practices on translation as a profession (Jiménez-Crespo, 2021). To elaborate, FIT (2015) warn that such models disrupt the organisation of workflows and affect the professional status of the industry's practitioners. Likewise, ATA (2009) warned that such initiatives are detrimental to clients' own interests, given the likely issues relating to quality. So, if organisations continue to engage volunteers to translate their content for free or for lower rates, then this would intensify the ongoing struggle amongst translators to gain professional recognition and would also incite a downward spiral of rates for certain types of content (Jiménez-Crespo, 2021).

For many uncommon language pairs, the scarcity of expert translators makes it difficult and expensive to build trainable MT systems as they require vast amounts of parallel data. Therefore, only a small fraction of the world's languages has automatic translation systems (Ambati et al., 2012). However, it is possible to obtain high-quality translations for low-resource languages from crowdsourcing at considerably lower costs (Gao and Callison-Burch, 2015; Zaidan and Callison-Burch, 2011). In other words, people are hired through crowdsourcing to create sufficient volumes of translated texts in order to train MT systems (Ambati and Vogel, 2010; Gao and Callison-Burch, 2015). Although many non-expert translators may deliver low-quality translations, deliverable products are achievable by using machine-learning technology that identifies the best translations produced via crowdsourcing which are then edited further (Zaidan and Callison-Burch, 2011). Ambati et al.'s (2012, p.1194) study supports this proposition, finding that a "decent job of translation" can be achieved with a 20% cost saving when using a collaborative crowdsourcing model, and this was achieved when experimenting with the low resource language pairs of Telugu-English and Telugu-Hindi. On the back of this conclusion, crowdsourcing can be a cost-effective method to help with charity and by promoting language diversity and enforcing the rights of minority language speakers (Ambati et al., 2012; Piróth and Baker, 2020; Zaidan and Callison-Burch, 2011). However, as the nature of the translation task grows in complexity, then it should be understood that finding large numbers of users who are skilled enough to complete the task becomes increasingly difficult too (Ambati et al., 2012).

To sum up the impact of crowdsourcing, it can, indeed, assist with the demand for translation services, whether it's to provide for charity or to serve one's community, to make the internet more multilingual, or even to contribute to the creation of translation resources. Nevertheless, there are potential negative impacts on the professional world of translation that need to be reinforced, including the fall in rates, the struggle to gain recognition, as well as the repercussions on the professional image of translators and on the boundaries that separate the professionals from the non-professionals.

2.2.2 Platform Economy

Crowdsourcing in translation has expanded from the models that assume contributions without monetary gains to include approaches in which participants are now compensated (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017; 2025; Fırat and Şahin, 2025). Paid crowdsourced translation services emerged from around 2008 as a result of the communicative and technological affordances of Web 2.0 (Jiménez-Crespo, 2024), and they are generally able to deliver translations quicker and at a lower cost than the conventional translation agency (Garcia, 2015). These "agency-like platforms" follow the traditional TEP process (translating-editing-proofreading) but operate on flexible employment practices and employ technological tools, such as AI, to streamline the ordering process as well as the project management side of the workflow (Cukur, 2024, p.49). Fırat (2021) refers to this introduction of digital labour platforms as the Uberisation[5] of translation production. Work arrangements are, subsequently, experiencing reorganisation because the platform economy — economic and social activities or business models facilitated by digital platforms — is fundamentally directed at reducing human intervention and costs by eliminating the need for intermediary communications and by introducing AI-technology to automate processes (Fırat, 2021; Piróth and Baker, 2020; Fırat and Şahin, 2025).

The origin of paid crowdsourcing can be found in the attempts made by companies with a dedicated user base (e.g. Facebook and X) who have successfully implemented free crowdsourcing models and have managed to harness a great deal of publicity (Jiménez-Crespo, 2024). However, other attempts to implement similar models proved to be unsuccessful given the limits of free crowdsourcing in terms of the lack of interested and motivated users (Jiménez-Crespo, 2024; 2025). In an attempt to solve the issue of motivation, low payments for the micro-tasks completed are typically offered to the participants (Garcia, 2015). With this in mind, Garcia (2015) argues that the developers of paid crowdsourcing models did not have translators or their status in mind, describing crowdsourcing as an attempt to cut costs while using technological innovations to increase efficiency and profits that "unabashedly aims at serving not translators, but clients" (Garcia, 2015, p.24). Indeed, paid crowdsourcing models initially offered low rates. However, the workflows of some modern platforms involve participants ranging from 'non-professionals' and 'para-professionals' to 'professionals' and 'specialised professionals', offering higher (almost professional) rates to their higher-status participants (Jiménez-Crespo, 2025).

[5] The Uberisation of work stems from the business model developed by Uber, referring to the tech-powered and data driven businesses that use flexible types of employment relationships and contracts which are replacing forms of permanent employment (Fırat, 2021).

Online translation platforms (e.g., Translated, Gengo, Unbabel, Smartling, Smartcat), mediums that directly connect buyers with linguists and offer on-demand translation work, have grown exponentially over recent years (Fırat, 2021), with an ever-increasing number of translators creating profiles on such platforms (Fırat et al., 2024). In fact, a survey conducted by Pielmeier and O'Mara (2020) revealed that 85% of the 6925 respondents consider building strong profiles on digital marketplaces important to find translation jobs. These types of platforms promote flexibility and connectivity (Fırat and Şahin, 2025) and they can also enable seamless collaboration between translators and clients, provide real-time updates, streamline workflows, and offer secure data storage (Benmansour and Hdouch, 2023).

The prerequisites for joining translation platforms as a linguist are, however, often minimal and only seem to be merely knowledge of two languages, an internet connection, a device to work from, and an e-mail address (Fırat, 2021; Fırat et al., 2024). The low demand for specialised competences (Fırat, 2021), coupled with observations that these platforms are used by both professionals and non-professionals who speak at least two languages (Fırat, 2021; Flanagan, 2016; Jiménez-Crespo, 2021), blur the distinction between the professional translator and the amateur (Liu, 2022). The recruitment criteria of new entrants in paid crowdsourcing models have led Garcia (2015, p. 38) to describe translation as a "fuzzy profession" in the sense that it is not necessary to be a professional in order to have the agency to translate.

Moreover, the projects available on digital labour platforms are typically broken down into micro-tasks (Jiménez-Crespo, 2025) which are then often allocated to translators on a first-come-first-served basis or through automatic assignment where an algorithm considers aspects such as language pair, previous translation performance, availability and rates (Cukur, 2024). Furthermore, the "low-trust nature" of crowdsourcing platforms means that both participants and clients rely on reputational systems, with those boasting a high reputation and positive ratings more likely to receive work, whereas those with a lower reputation are more likely to be subjected to poor work volume and spending a lot of unpaid time searching for alternative jobs (Cukur, 2024). Therefore, not only do these work conditions create a sense of competition amongst the translator community, but they are also a potential source of stress (Cukur, 2024).

In light of this new type of work organisation, Fırat's (2021) survey investigated how digital labour platforms have impacted translators' working conditions in Turkey. The results suggested that the Uberisation of translation production is incompatible with sustainable work, exposing the profession to risks relating to employment status, income level, fierce competition, job security, poor work-life balance and even personal reputation. This aligns with the results from Gough et al.'s (2023) survey which revealed that some of the challenges of working on platforms include time constraints, competition, a lack of control over the workflow or final quality, translating out of context, insufficient remuneration, and a lack of

trust amongst collaborators. Nevertheless, such platforms have brought new work opportunities, flexibility and global connectivity to workers and businesses (Fırat and Şahin, 2025; Fırat et al., 2024; Gough et al., 2023), with some professional translators who engage with this work having blogged about their experiences and encouraged their colleagues to participate (Flanagan, 2016). Additionally, some professionals believe that traditional and platform-based models can coexist by catering towards different market niches and project specifications (Flanagan, 2016; Jiménez-Crespo, 2021). For example, at the time of writing this thesis, Unbabel, an AI-powered MT post-editing crowdsourcing platform, does not accept medical, legal, or marketing translations. While other platforms, such as Smartling, prefer those who are able to exhibit higher levels of competence (Jiménez-Crespo, 2021).

All things considered, crowdsourcing initiatives and digital labour platforms have created new opportunities for translators (Fırat et al., 2024). That being said, such methods have been criticised for framing translation as a simple linguistic transfer (Cukur, 2024; Zwischenberger, 2022) as well as obstructing the visibility of professional translators and enhancing the transparency, as a result, of the amateurs and non-professionals who engage with the cheaper and quicker translation solutions that platform economy offers (Flanagan, 2016). And if "platformisation" continues to rise in the translation industry, then "conventional LSPs" might become increasingly pressured to implement similar practices, meaning that this would encourage an emphasis on speed, low costs and availability rather than on experience and quality (Cukur, 2024, p.55).

2.2.3 Fan Translation

Books, movies, and video games are common cultural activities that people engage with across the globe. A considerable proportion of cultural products are, however, not selected for official translation as they are deemed commercially unviable (Drugan, 2013; Evans, 2019; Luong and Evans, 2021). In response, fan translation, popular culture translated voluntarily by fans for fans, became a popular activity to increase the accessibility of lesser exposed media in addition to filling the gaps and delays in official translations (Luong and Evans, 2021; O'Hagan, 2009; Vazquez-Calvo et al., 2019). In some cases, fan translation is the sole vehicle through which media can become accessible to communities of diverse cultures and languages (Evans, 2019).

Despite fan translators' competence with using technology and their management of online collaboration spaces to produce translations, they typically, but not always, lack formal translator training, translating content as they see fit (Evans; 2019; Luong and Evans, 2021; Vazquez-Calvo et al., 2019). Fan translators reflect their own styles in terms of language choices, delivery, and formatting (Wongseree et al., 2019), and when confronted with language-related problems, Google Translate is reportedly frequently consulted for reading

comprehension, translation, and even as a dictionary and a thesaurus (Vazquez-Calvo et al., 2019). To illustrate potential problems with fan translations, Inose's (2012) pilot studies, which consisted of a comparison between original Japanese manga, official translations, and fan translations, indicate that the fan translations tend to have errors and inaccuracies quite often. Although there were some inaccuracies in the official translations, there were no misinterpretations, unlike the fan translations which sometimes had segments that had nothing to with the original. Essentially, Inose (2012) points out the foreignising[6] attitude of fan translations and concludes that they did not meet the acceptable standards of professional translation.

The fan translation community is, however, generally more forgiving in terms of face-value quality. Viewers and users appreciate not only the sophisticated workflows, but they also recognise that providers are talented, hosting a deep understanding of media, and that their translation techniques, such as simple language and appropriate cultural references, serve the fandom's comprehension needs and their search for authentic text (O'Hagan, 2009; Wongseree et al., 2019; Vazquez-Calvo et al., 2019). As such, it can be argued that fan translators' domain-specific knowledge compensates for the lack of formal translator training, with fan translation spaces also situating as an authentic learning environment that nurtures the process of a volunteer fan translator becoming a recognised professional (O'Hagan, 2009; Inose, 2012). Despite any evidenced competences, non-fans (i.e. those who do not engage in the production or the reception of fan translation) still appear to question the quality of fan produced translations, revealing their suspicions of being misled by inaccuracies due to the lack of professional approval (Wongseree et al., 2019).

Furthermore, fan translation tends to operate without any authorisation from the copyright owner, and this can be deemed illegal (Evans, 2019). Although many countries tolerate fan translation because it tends to not compete with official translations and facilitates exposure for the original product, continuing to operate without permission can potentially instigate serious legal implications (Evans, 2019; O'Hagan, 2009). However, interviews with fansubbers reveal that they regard their activities and values as completely ethical, despite any copyright claims, as they insist that their endeavours are solely for serving fandom rather than for personal monetary gains (Evans, 2019; Wongseree et al., 2019). Yet, non-fans share negative attitudes towards this practice, labelling it as a violation of copyright regulations as well as a misconduct towards the copyright holder (Wongseree et al., 2019).

Essentially, fan translators are a network of volunteers who tackle a market demand that professional translators are allegedly unable to fulfil due to conflicting interests of priority and areas of expertise as well as because of the rights holders' budget restrictions (O'Hagan, 2009;

[6] Foreignisation is a concept within TS that refers to a translation strategy that aims to maintain the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the original source text. As a result, this risks the target text coming across as foreign or unfamiliar to the target readership (Paloposki, 2012).

Wongseree et al., 2019). Therefore, condoning fan translation as a legitimate translation model which is managed by experienced fan translators can be seen as a solution, albeit currently legally questionable, to the lack of official translations within this domain (Evans 2019; O'Hagan, 2009).

2.2.4 Section Summary

The rise of Web 2.0 technologies has affected the professional boundaries of translation work in terms of inviting users, whether professional or non-professional, to contribute to translation online. Online communities initiate their own translation projects (i.e. fan translation), or they may select jobs posted by businesses and organisations who use free and paid crowdsourcing methods to harness the knowledge and skills of the crowd (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017). Despite possible cost- and time-cutting benefits for the customer, professional translators may not reap such desirable benefits. To illustrate, despite harmful repercussions on translators' professional image (Angelelli, 2020; Jiménez-Crespo, 2021; Liu, 2022), the approaches discussed in this section are argued to be advantageous in certain translation scenarios, for instances, working with under-resourced languages, reducing costs, and tackling specific market niches. That being said, the ensuing debates surrounding crowdsourcing, platform economy, and fan translation suggest that amateurs and non-professionals are invading the professional sphere of translation (O'Hagan, 2017), challenging whether professional input is even necessary for all situations (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017).

The aforementioned studies focussed on the quality, the cost, and the ethics of online collaborative approaches and of non-professional translation practices, also demonstrating that the boundaries between professional and non-professional translation are seemingly overlapping. This thesis revisits the aforementioned theme but from the perspective of the sociology of professions, specifically from the perspective of the framework on (de-)professionalisation that was devised as part of this thesis (see Section 3.5), which sees professional monopoly and the establishment and maintenance of professional exclusivity as core attributes of a profession and thus central for successful professionalisation (see Section 3.1.4 for summary of professionalisation; see also Table 3.3 for professionalisation criteria). In this vein, this thesis contributes to existing literature pertaining to non-professional translation, seeking conclusions in relation to what exactly is currently expected from a professional translator in terms of their skills and dispositions (see results in Section 6.1) as well as the extent to which translation is exclusive and the impact that the rise of amateur and non-professional contributions has on how translation is perceived and purchased (see discussions in Sections 5.3.2 and 6.4.4). In turn, it becomes possible to assess whether and to what extent the professionalisation criteria, an original contribution to my framework on (de-)professionalisation, pertaining to professional monopoly and exclusivity have been fulfilled

in a translation context (see Table 3.3 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description).

2.3 Professional Organisation

To professionalise translation in the late 20th century, translation associations and ethical accreditation processes began to surface in countries where translation was becoming a commercial necessity, such as in UK, France, USA, and Australia (Bennett, 2021; Pym et al., 2012). Most professional associations, and translation agencies to a lesser extent, have developed a set of ethical codes and quality-control measures to support professionals when faced with practical or ethical issues, and to reflect the profession's commitment to uphold professional ideals (Lambert, 2018; Pym et al., 2012). In fact, The Optimale Survey (2011), which reports what employers value in translators, concluded that awareness of ethics and standards ranked higher than a university degree in translation (reported in Toudic, 2012). As such, the importance of professional standards and behaviours cannot be understated within the industry.

2.3.1 Ethical Values

Professional CoCs are essential for the professionalisation of any occupation (Lambert, 2023). A professional translator accepting and adhering to CoCs therefore increases trustworthiness and signals to potential clients that they intend to uphold the highest professional and ethical standards (Penet, 2024). Chesterman (2001) outlines four basic models of translation ethics, with each model having a different scope of applicability: ethics of representation denotes faithfulness to the source text and the original author's intention without adding, omitting or changing anything; ethics of service is based on translation as a commercial service, fulfilling the translation's aim as set by the client; ethics of communication focusses on the translator's role to make communicating across linguistic and cultural borders possible; and norm-based ethics involves conforming to socio-cultural conventions to avoid surprising the reader or client. Each of these models covers only part of the ethical field of translation and can be deemed inadequate when applied individually (Chesterman, 2001).

In turn, there is arguably a need for explicit and informative codes to ascertain what exactly is required from professional translators in terms of their behaviour and conduct (Chesterman, 2019; Lambert, 2018). Especially amid the evolution of MT and AI, which is influencing the way the world views translation and translators, it has become pertinent to re-evaluate ethics within the industry (Bennett, 2025). However, available guidelines have been described as, firstly, outdated because they have become insufficient in assisting translators with decision-making processes in modern translation contexts (Bennett, 2021); secondly, problematic because the regular calls for total accuracy and neutrality are not a holistic representation of

translation work (Lambert, 2018); thirdly, inconsistent because there is a sense of conflict between the different ethical systems available to translators (Abdallah, 2011; Chesterman, 2001); and fourthly, vague because of the lack of explicit standards (Sela-Sheffy, 2008).

In order to shed light on the ethical landscape of professional translation, McDonough Dolmaya (2011) and Lambert (2022) each studied codes of ethics to assess whether available codes actually assist professionals with issues that they are likely to encounter. A primary observation revealed inconsistency, whereby only confidentiality and competence are typically mentioned consistently, meanwhile the remaining ideals that make up the CoCs varied. Drugan (2011) agrees that professional codes can fail translators due to the lack of uniformity and little guidance as to which of the various codes to follow. Similarly, Abdallah (2011) suggests that translators are caught between business ethics (forging meaningful relationships with their clients to earn a profit) and deontological ethics (ethical codes of practice that deem certain actions morally correct or morally wrong), with Zwischenberger (2016) arguing that it is deontological ethics that dominate the fields of translation and interpreting. Such a deontological view is typically promoted by professional associations for the purpose of striving for greater recognition of translation as a profession, but it is also embraced by academia in hopes of establishing guidelines for their students (Cukur, 2024). Additionally, many principles, such as good behaviour and professional courtesy, can be applied to any service-providing profession and do not focus on contexts that are specific to translation, such as discussing rates, translation technologies, loyalties, stakeholders, and professional development (Bennett, 2021; Chesterman, 2019; Lambert, 2022). Meanwhile, there are isolated cases where the ethics of the profession are not considered at all. For example, in regard to the specific case of Israel, Sela-Sheffy (2008) reports at the time that there was no code of ethics.

Moreover, as we have seen in Section 2.2, non-professional translation communities are growing, and often implicitly, are creating their own codes of practice which differ from professional codes (Drugan, 2011). According to Drugan (2011), confidentiality and competence appear to hold greater importance amongst professionals than they apparently do for non-professionals, and quality of work and commitment to professional development are unique to professional codes only. Additionally, non-professional approaches typically place a community vision higher on the agenda than professionals do. These discrepancies reveal that professional codes emphasise an ethical commitment to quality, development, and professionalism, meanwhile there are no clear expectations amongst non-professionals other than a commitment towards community values (Drugan, 2011).

This brief review ultimately shows that CoCs within translation lack consistency. One attempt of organising ethical values that are relevant to translation is Chesterman's (2001) draft of a Hieronymic Oath that was influenced by the various ethical models applied within translation, by the notion of virtues (MacIntyre, 1981), and also by other professional oaths (e.g. The

Hippocratic Oath and proposal for The Archimedean Oath). Chesterman's (2001) nine-point oath addresses: commitment and the strive for excellence, loyalty to the profession, understanding, truthfulness, trustworthiness, clarity, and justice. The overall goals of The Hieronymic Oath are to promote ethical behaviour, formalise the international accreditation of translators, help to distinguish between professionals and amateurs, and also to promote professionalisation (Chesterman, 2001). Aside from standardising CoCs, Bennett (2025) calls for a need to reaffirm the importance of ethics, and in particular, to reconsider the role of translators in light of global and technological developments and to shape ethics around the translator in a modern and global context.

2.3.2 Translator Associations

Translator associations and networks are usually non-profit organisations and they exist in order to advance the general awareness and recognition of the translation profession as well as to enhance the importance and status of translators in society (Cornelius, 2025; McDonough, 2007; Robinson, 2019). There are many longstanding associations which were established more than a century ago. For example, the Danish Translatørforeningen (Association of Authorized Translators) was established in 1910; the Norwegian Statsautoriserte Translatørers Forening (Association of State Authorized Translators) was created in 1913; and the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario dates back to 1920. However, the age of an association does not always correlate with higher membership numbers, prestige, or guaranteed influence (Pym, 2014). In fact, today's largest and most familiar associations (e.g., ATA and CIOL) weren't founded until the 1950s or later, which was when the language industry started to internationalise (Pym, 2014). In other words, the age of the association and membership numbers are not reliable variables that can be used to judge the overall success of an association (Chan, 2013). Hypothetically, however, large membership numbers can increase the association's exposure, thus enabling the general public to become more aware of their existence (Chan, 2013). Although, this is yet to be the case for the language industry since professional associations within this field have a tendency of falling under the radar (Chan, 2013). To illustrate, a small-scale survey was distributed amongst language students in the UK, and it was found that at the time less than one-fifth had heard of the ITI (Leech, 2005). In another study of translator recruiters, one of the interviewees had the misconception that there were no requirements to becoming a member of CIOL apart from paying a membership fee (Chan, 2009). In response, it is argued that the signalling effect[7] of association memberships might not be as strong as one would hope as T&I associations are relatively unfamiliar to those outside of the network (Chan, 2013; see also Section 3.3.2.2 for an overview of the signals of status in translation).

[7] The concept of signals is based on Spence's (1973) theory of signalling. This theory is based on the premise that one party conveys some information about the status of its competence to another party, through what is known as signals or signalling devices.

Translator associations have become increasingly specialised in recent times, with separate associations and networks being established for different types of translators (Cornelius, 2025; Penet, 2024). Networks may establish a focus based on, for example, language pairs (e.g. The Spanish Network of the Institute of Translation and Interpreting) or subject fields (e.g. Literature, Law, Insurance and Finance etc) (McDonough, 2007; Penet, 2024), as well as networks being formed specifically for sworn or authorised translators, and more recently, for audiovisual translators and game localisers (Penet, 2024). This relatively recent tendency to specialise is attributed to the development of new market niches and a translator's need to specialise in a selected few domains (Pym, 2014). While the multiplicity of associations can be viewed as a strength in the sense that it indicates the will of translators to form tight-knit networks that represent their speciality and to work on the issues that personally affect them and their network, it also leads to repeated and duplicated efforts on issues that could be approached more coherently through a collective effort and shared initiatives (Griffin-Mason, 2018).

Additionally, many professional associations across the globe offer their own certifications as well as initiatives for CPD (Chan, 2013; McDonough, 2007). For example, Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL), the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters in Australia (NAATI), and the American Translators Association (ATA) offer opportunities to translators to obtain reputable certifications that they can use to demonstrate their competences (Hlavac, 2013). However, a broad issue is the lack of regulation between these certifications (Griffin-Mason, 2018; Hlavac, 2013). This is problematic for a cross-border market, such as translation, because not only would it be unlikely that all practitioners will have the same range of certifications and level of skills that back up their credentials, but also, discerning the professional standards and quality that is associated with each certification can become confusing, especially for translation buyers (Griffin-Mason, 2018).

Furthermore, it is often argued that professional associations have a duty of care when it comes down to supporting their members and providing them with guidance or solutions when navigating challenging situations (Griffin-Mason, 2018; Hubscher-Davidson, 2020; Penet, 2024; see also Section 6.4.3 for discussion on UK associations' response to AI). This is often achieved through the creation of support networks (Penet, 2024), or through CoCs (see Section 2.3.1 for literature pertaining to ethics) which should constitute a translator's primary point of contact when in need of defining ethical translation practices and making professional decisions (Lambert, 2018). It appears that the availability of a CoC has become an important business standard for translation associations (Lambert and Walker, 2022), and most professional associations now have a CoC that all members are expected to follow (Lambert, 2018). Examples of some translator associations' codes include the CIOL's, ITI's and BDÜ's

codes of professional conduct[8] that were published on their respective websites. Similarly, ATA has also publicly shared a seven-point code of ethics and of professional responsibility[9]. Although the aforementioned translator associations were established in different countries, some of the values defined in their codes overlap. For instance, undertaking CPD, performing all business and professional activities with honesty and integrity, accepting work within one's own competence, as well as protecting and not divulging in confidential information were some of the core principles that represent each of the aforementioned associations. However, ethical codes are likely to fail in the event of sector fragmentation and poor member engagement (Griffin-Mason, 2018).

Although becoming a member of a professional association may not be enough on its own in order for a practitioner to be considered as fully professionalised (Lambert, 2020), it is one of the clearest ways, nonetheless, through which a translator can signal elements of perceived professionalism (Pym et al., 2012). Professional associations have a lot to offer translators, and although the benefits may vary between associations (Penet, 2024), some of the most common benefits include access to CoCs, networking opportunities and conferences, designations and certifications (Cornelius, 2025), resources that point them in the right direction towards becoming a vendor of premium services. With the initiatives put forward by translator associations, university students in translation remain optimistic that professional associations can enhance the status of translators and their working conditions (Ruokonen, 2016). Their optimism is justified, because if a professional association hosts a good reputation, then this can potentially bring about economic benefits to its members (Chan, 2013). For example, both ATA and BDÜ memberships are reported to have a clear and strong market value, resulting in translators being able to attract better clients and negotiate better pay (Pym, 2014). Further evidence can be extracted from a survey that was issued by Inbox Translation (2023), which reports that members of professional associations charge, on average, 44% more than freelance translators who are not members of associations. Similarly, in a report exploring the value of ITI membership (written by Walker, Cincan and Lambert, 2023), it was revealed that ITI members not only charge between 13% and 25% more per word than non-members, but also that ITI members' minimum charges are between 20% and 42% higher than non-members'.

2.3.3 Section Summary

Professional organisation is pertinent to translators so that they can define themselves as an occupational group and affirm their professional identity and interests. Profession-orientated

[8] CIOL's professional CoC: https://www.ciol.org.uk/code; ITI's code of professional conduct: https://www.iti.org.uk/resource/iti-code-of-professional-conduct.html ; BDÜ's code of professional conduct (English version): https://bdue.de/fileadmin/files/PDF/Statuten/BDUe_BEO_en.pdf
[9] ATA's code of ethics and professional responsibility: https://www.atanet.org/about-us/code-of-ethics/

networks within translation do not necessarily focus on the act of translation itself, but rather on the events, problems and issues relating to language professionals, including defending their rights as well as promoting translation as a professional activity (McDonough, 2007). Similarly, CoCs are expected to be enforced to act as a further symbol of professionalism, providing guidelines on how a professional should act in terms of their behaviour towards their translations, clients, colleagues, and other professionals (Lambert, 2020; Schaffner, 2019). Although CoCs and ethical values tend to vary from network to network (McDonough Dolmaya, 2011), ethical and professional standards are, nevertheless, imperative for most professional translator associations as well as for individual translators (Lambert, 2018).

The successful enforcement of CoCs and the formation of professional associations, for the purposes of recognising competent and dedicated practitioners and promoting translation as a professional and specialised service, are prerequisites for successful professionalisation (see Section 3.1.4 for summary of professionalisation; see also Table 3.3 for professionalisation criteria). Indeed, the aforementioned studies provide a strong case of active attempts towards reinforcing and displaying professionalism (professional behaviours and attitudes), but they do not explicitly expand on whether the current state of professional and ethical organisation facilitates the wider process of professionalisation (the process of an occupation becoming a profession). My study addresses this as I seek to identify, for the purpose of comprehensively mapping out the professionalisation of translation, the extent of commitment to ethical professional conduct (see Sections 6.1.2 and 6.4.1 for results and discussion relating to conduct) and the role and contributions of selected professional associations (see Sections 6.1.3 and 6.4.3 for results and discussion on the proactivity of translator associations). This is achieved by operationalising this study's framework on (de-)professionalisation, specifically the professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3), as a conceptually original lens through which ethical commitment and the proactivity of professional associations are assessed for their contribution towards translation's overall professionalisation.

2.4 Translator Training

Translator training takes shape in different forms, with there being a range of various translation qualifications and certifications in addition to CPD initiatives available to aspiring and tenured translators. More specifically, not only does TS exist as a taught and research discipline where students can earn an undergraduate or a postgraduate degree in translation (see Section 2.4.3 for literature on tertiary education), but other qualifications such as a Certificate in Translation (CertTrans) or a Diploma in Translation (DipTrans) are also attainable through CIOL, and this is in addition to translator associations typically offering CPD and other professional certifications to their members. Indeed, a great deal about the translation process can be practically learnt on the job (Pym, 2009). However, successful completion of

translator training programmes demonstrates commitment as well as language and translation competences to translation buyers (Chan, 2013; Lommel, 2013).

With regard to competences (see Section 2.4.1), research into translator and translation competence is relatively young compared to other sub-disciplines within TS (Hurtado Albir and Taylor, 2015). Nevertheless, research up until this point indicates that the competence required to translate is not one single competence, rather there are, as indicated by the following sections, several linguistic, extralinguistic and professional sub-competences that impact each other (Hurtado Albir and Taylor, 2015; Kiraly, 2013).

2.4.1 Competences

2.4.1.1 Models of Translator Competence

In order to improve translator education, competence models and frameworks were established, of which a notable example is PACTE research group's contributions. The PACTE group was first established in 1997 to carry out research on the process of translation competence acquisition in translation, concluding that translation competence is the underlying system of knowledge, skills and attitudes required to translate (PACTE, 2020). At a more granular level, translation competence, as visualised by PACTE's translation competence model (see Figure 2.3), comprises five sub-competences: bilingual (procedural knowledge (i.e. knowing how) to communicate in two languages), extralinguistic (declarative knowledge (i.e. knowing what) about the world in general and specific areas), knowledge of translation (declarative knowledge about what translation is and aspects of the profession), instrumental (procedural knowledge related to the use of documentation resources and information and communication technologies) and strategic (procedural knowledge for guaranteeing the efficiency of the translation process and solving problems); in addition to psycho-physiological components (e.g. memory, perception, curiosity, creativity, and logical reasoning etc.) (PACTE, 2003; 2017).

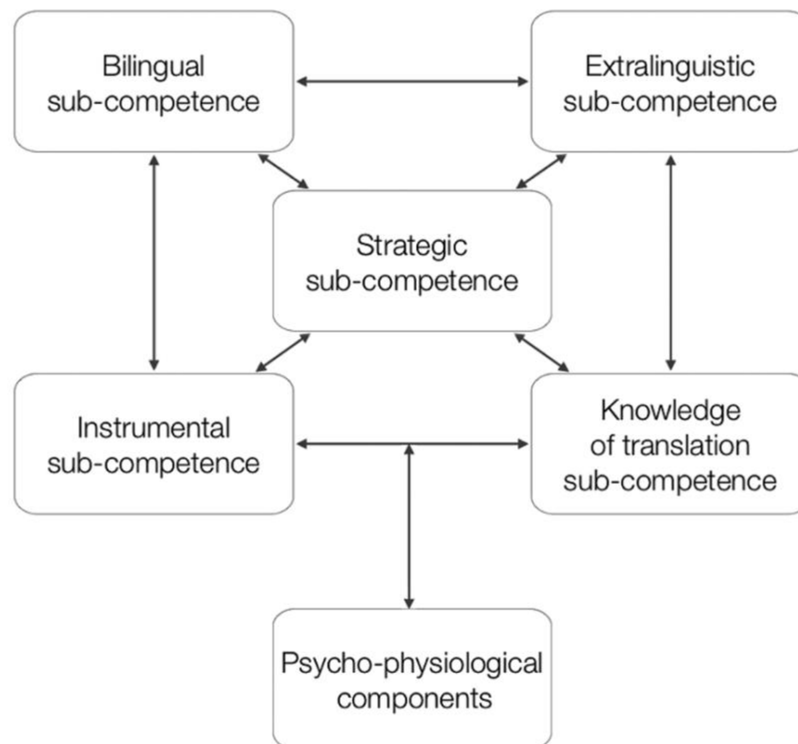

Figure 2.3: PACTE's (2003; 2017) translation competence model

An additional example is Göpferich’s (2009) translation competence model which was developed as part of her research study “TransComp” (see Figure 2.4). Although Göpferich’s (2009) model was based on PACTE’s model (see above), it was revised and expanded in particular areas (Penet, 2024; Esfandiari and Ebrahimi, 2025). For instance, strategic competence (the ability to draw on all the other sub-competences) is also the backbone of Göpferich’s (2009) model, and the communicative, domain in addition to tools and research competences broadly correspond to PACTE’s bilingual, extralinguistic and instrumental sub-competences (Penet, 2024). What sets Göpferich’s (2009) model apart from PACTE’s is the former’s use of translation routine activation (i.e. the ability to apply certain operations leading to acceptable translations in the target language) and psychomotor (i.e. abilities required for reading and writing) competences (Penet, 2024; Esfandiari and Ebrahimi, 2025).

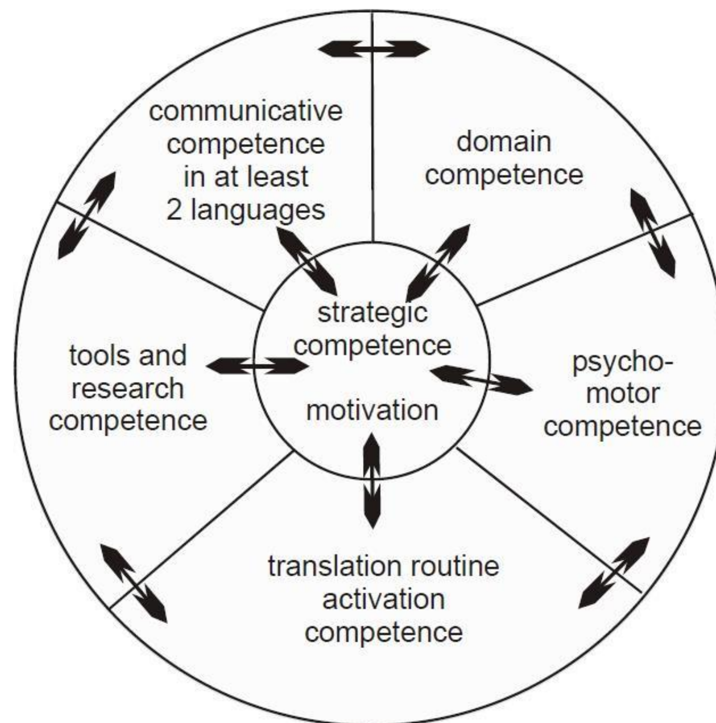

Figure 2.4: Göpferich's (2009) translation competence model

Furthermore, there is the EMT (European Masters in Translation) competence framework, a market- and technology-orientated model for tertiary level education which outlines the core assets that professional translators should master (Esfandiari et al., 2019) and was created for the purpose of establishing a label for translation degrees that meet certain standards in translation education (Budin et al., 2013; Chan, 2013; see Section 2.4.3 for additional literature relating to tertiary education). This framework was first introduced in 2009, followed by an update in 2017, and the most recent revision was published in 2022 which discusses five distinct areas of competences, namely language and culture (transcultural and sociolinguistic awareness and communicative skills); translation (strategic, methodological, and thematic competence); technology (tools and applications); personal and interpersonal; and service provision. These defined areas should be considered as complementary and as equally important in the provision of translation services which is in line with the highest professional and ethical standards (EMT, 2022; see also Section 6.1 for results relating to the ideal characteristics of a professional translator).

In relation to the aforementioned models, particularly PACTE's and EMT's models, Kiraly (2013) points out that neither suggests nor reveals anything about the learning process, rather they are more of a checklist of the ideal abilities and skills that professional translators can be expected to possess and be able to use when translating. In fact, Kiraly (2006) established his own model of translator competence made up of three bundles of sub-competences (social competences, personal competences, and translation competence) (see Figure 2.5), which not only resembles the PACTE and EMT models described above, but Kiraly (2013, p.202) later

proceeds to criticise his own model, labelling it as "flat and static from a pedagogical perspective".

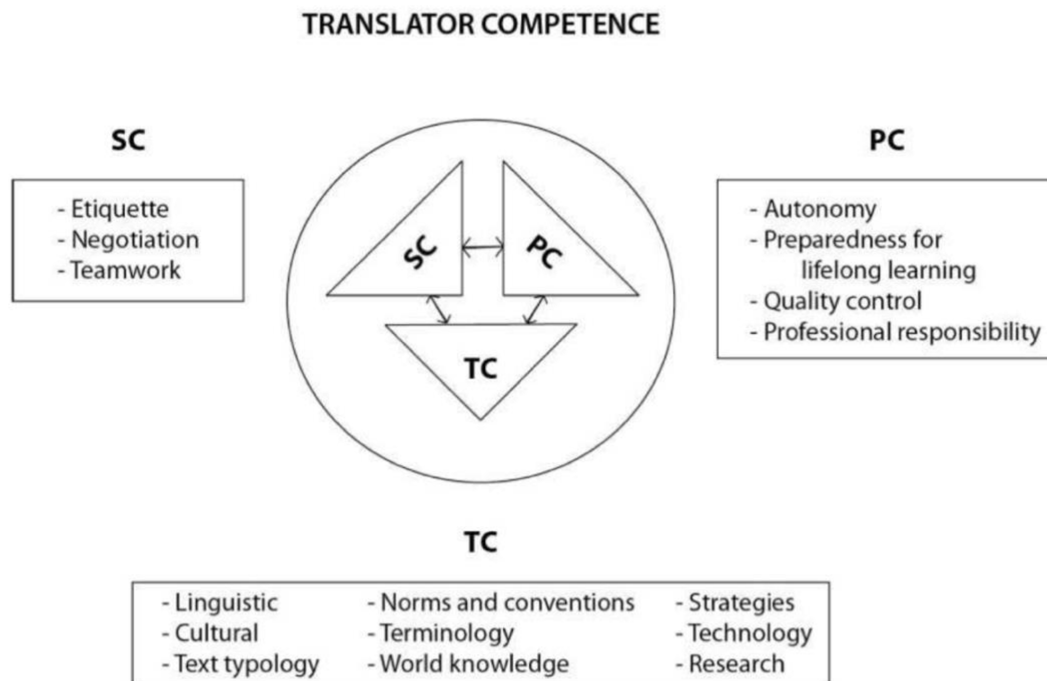

Figure 2.5: Kiraly's (2006) componential model of translator competence

In turn, Kiraly (2013) argues that developing translator competence is not built up through the gradual accumulation of knowledge, rather it is nurtured though the translator's involvement in actual translation experiences and that each translator's competence development is different. On this note, it is worth bringing up PACTE's (2000) translation competence acquisition model (see Figure 2.6) which postulates that translation competence acquisition is a dynamic, non-linear process during which novice knowledge (pre-translation competence) evolves into translation competence through the development of sub-competences and learning strategies (PACTE, 2000; 2020). Essentially, the process of translation competence acquisition is dependent on the learner's abilities and their learning context (PACTE, 2020; Kiraly, 2013).

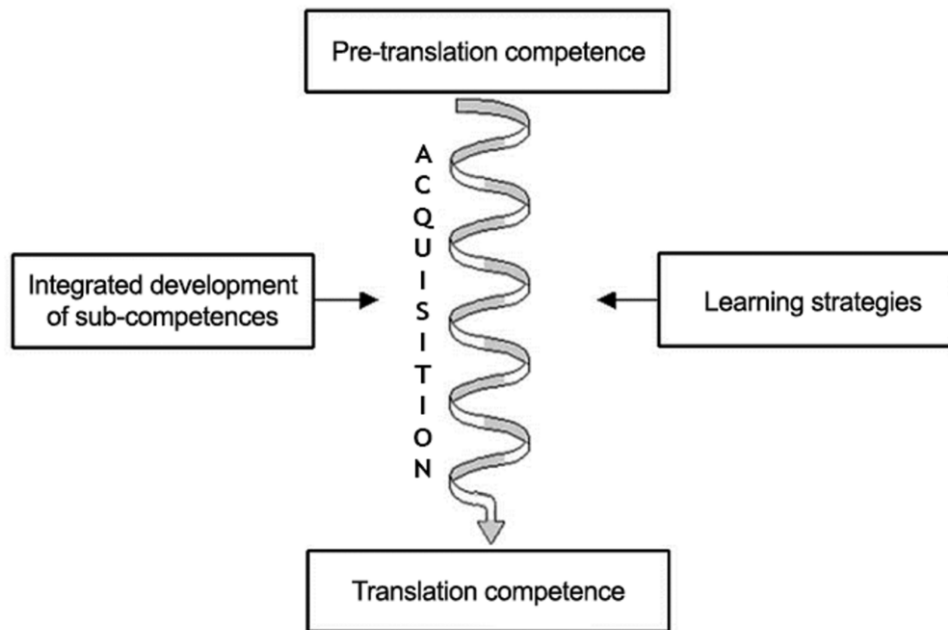

Figure 2.6: PACTE's (2000) translation competence acquisition model

2.4.1.2 Professional and Technical Competences

Nowadays, professional translators are accustomed to offering a variety of services and performing a range of different tasks. Besides the most common tasks such as translation and editing, they perform service-related tasks such as quoting and sales (Rodríguez-Castro, 2015) and so it is also essential for translators to have clear communication and marketing strategies (Penet, 2024). As such, commercial success as a freelancer is not only dependent on strong translation and language abilities, but also on the ability to be an entrepreneur (Penet, 2024) and to present oneself as a business in order to attract clients and to satisfy their demands (Chan, 2013; Galán-Mañas et al., 2020; Jenner and Jenner, 2010). In other words, if a qualified translator is able to produce high-quality translations, but is unable to efficiently find new clients and opportunities, manage projects, communicate effectively, or work with clients, then their translation skills and related credentials may lose value with their employer (Chan, 2013). That being said, many freelancers have previously complained about a lack of awareness regarding business and freelance activity (Henter, 2016). Similarly, sworn translators have reported a lack of knowledge regarding professional reality and managing all the elements that come along with running a business, such as handling clients and taxes (Vigier Moreno, 2010). These observations imply that translators are not always provided with the knowledge and skills required to succeed, particularly in the area of business management. In light of this, Walker and Lambert (2024) compiled a set of professionally-orientated recommendations that they believe would help to prepare students with transitioning into the translation profession. In addition to recommendations to make space to discuss money, rates and the value of translation, Walker and Lambert (2024) also

recommend better highlighting and teaching on translation specialisation and the diversity of market segments, focussing more on business skills and business mindedness, encouraging students to explore pricing models and to challenge their financial literacy, and encouraging creativity.

Furthermore, translating online content, audiovisual material, and software applications, in addition to using terminology management systems and localising, increase the pressure on translators to gain the technical skills needed to secure jobs involving these file types and activities (Al-Batineh and Tenaijy, 2024; Esfandiari and Ebrahimi, 2025). Amid this expansion of the demand for translation, Bulut (2019, p.1) argues that "the human translator is increasingly challenged by technology in unprecedented ways, which has serious repercussions for translator training as well as the translation profession". For instance, MT is an example of the type of technology that is consistently argued as challenging the sustainability of the translation profession and its training programmes (Hao and Pym, 2022; Zhu, 2023). However, there is a broad consensus that translator training must address technological competences because many agencies and clients seek the ability to use a wide variety of translation tools and technologies (Al-Batineh and Tenaijy, 2024; Chan, 2013). As illustrated by their study of job advertisements, Al-Batineh and Tenaijy, (2024) found that CAT tool proficiency, followed by localisation and MT, are the most sought skills in the Arab translation job market, however, the number of courses offering localisation and MT training does not meet the demand. Without the requisite understanding of and ability to use contemporary translation technologies, practitioners will neither be able to compete for work in a highly technologised market nor keep up with industry demands that necessitate translations to be completed at a speed and scale that cannot always be fulfilled without the assistance of translation technologies (Kenny, 2020). Fortunately, technology developers offer training in the use of their tools through online tutorials, demos, and webinars (Al-Batineh and Tenaijy, 2024; Kenny, 2020). And according to independent professionals, the training that they receive in technology is sufficient to be successful in their work, whereas academic representatives of training institutions see a need for improved training in this area (ELIS Survey, 2023).

That being said, traditional translation approaches are not always compatible in the age of AI and MT, and for this reason, transcreation, which is the creative process of adapting content to a new language and culture, is argued to have become a core skill that trainee translators are expected to acquire (Benetello, 2018; Katan, 2016; Zhu, 2023). The introduction of transcreation is, however, disputed outside academia on the premise that all good translation demands some degree of creativity and is, thus, an act of transcreation (Benetello, 2017). Nevertheless, TAUS also advocates that creative tasks are the key to strengthening the sustainability of the translation profession (Carreira, 2021; Nunes Vieira, 2020), and even International Standards, notably ISO:17100:2015, recognise transcreation as a value-added translation service. Transcreation has already been incorporated into translator training

programmes in Spain (see Carreira, 2021; Díaz-Millón et al., 2022; Morón, 2020), and University College London also offers a short online course that introduces transcreation and offers opportunities to practise this skill (Zhu, 2023). Essentially, humans differentiate from machines because of their unique human creativity (Zhu, 2023). And the reason why transcreation is being advocated as a core translation competence is because increasing amounts of translation work is adopted by MT and AI, and transcreation is a novel approach that responds to the creative shortcomings of technology (Zhu, 2023). The ELIS Survey (2023) supports these assertions, reporting that creative translation is seen as a positive trend. Educators and new translators are, therefore, advised to be open to adaptation and to remain informed of the latest translator competences as necessitated by the translation market (Li, 2021; Muñoz-Miquel et al., 2020; see also Section 6.4.2.1 for discussion on the scope of translator training).

2.4.2 Necessity of Qualifications

There are many university programmes and courses (e.g., ATA certification, CertTrans and DipTrans, RWS Certification) available around the world that are offered by translator associations, technology developers, and universities that provide vocational training and CPD (Budin et al., 2013; Koby and Melby, 2013). Offering recognised qualifications and certifications to translators allows them to present additional proof of their competences to potential employers and clients (Budin et al., 2013).

For the most part, there are no hard and fast rules regulating access to the translation profession (Penet, 2024), and so translation qualifications and certifications are not always essential if an individual would like to identify as a translator (Pym et al., 2012), or need to secure jobs with translation agencies or other types of clients (Chan, 2013). According to ISO 17100:2015[10], the international standard for the delivery of quality translation services, translators are not necessarily required to be qualified in translation and those without formal qualifications are permitted to practise translation professionally. In order to be compliant with this international standard, translators should be able to provide evidence of either a recognised degree in translation, or a recognised degree in another field plus two years of full-time professional translation experience, or five years of full-time professional translation experience. Nevertheless, being ISO 17100-certified is, indeed, a way for translators to demonstrate to potential employers and clients that they meet an internationally recognised quality standard (Penet, 2024).

[10] ISO 17100:2015 also sets out requirements for pre-production (handling enquiries and clarifying project specifications), production (translation, revision and proofreading) and post-production (delivery and client feedback) processes as well as for resource management (human and technical and technological).

Even though there is no obligation in many countries around the world for aspiring translators to go through prescribed training, qualifications and certifications can formalise, to a certain degree, the translation profession (Hlavac, 2013), and successful completion of these programmes can enhance vendors' employability (Chan, 2009). Although there are many translation agencies, and organisations working in a specialised domain, that administer their own test translations and view them alongside, for instance, demonstrable work experience as valid alternatives to certifications (Chan, 2013; Lommel, 2013), some translation agencies do require their translators to have certain academic (e.g., MAs and BAs) or professional qualifications (e.g., certifications provided by professional associations) (Lambert, 2020). Academic degrees and certifications are desirable as they correlate to perceived professionalism (Lambert, 2020), typically coexisting alongside other criteria (e.g., work experience and test translations) to facilitate the narrowing down of large pools of candidates (Lambert, 2020; Lommel, 2013).

Furthermore, there are certain tasks, notably the translation of official documents, that can only be performed by "authorised", "certified" or "sworn" translators, the title depending on the country and context (Hlavac, 2013; Pym et al., 2012). These are a mode of certification that grants the power to act on behalf of certifying institutions, meaning that these types of translators can attest that a translation is legally valid (Pym et al., 2012). Most countries do show noteworthy recognition in "authorised", "certified" or "sworn" translators (Griffin-Mason, 2018), but the status of these types of translators lacks regulation and varies across Europe, meaning that there is very little professional mobility and cross-border recognition (Griffin-Mason, 2018; Pym et al., 2012). To illustrate, in some European countries, sworn translators are tested and certified by a state institution of some kind, while sworn translators in other countries can be recognised based on their qualifications alone (Pym et al., 2012). Meanwhile, within the UK context, there is no sworn translator system. Rather, the UK government advises that if you are in need of a certified translation[11], all the translator or a representative of the translation company needs to do is provide a written declaration including the date the translation was produced, the full name and contact details of the translator or the representative, and a statement declaring that the translation is a "true and accurate translation of the of the original document".

2.4.3 Tertiary Education

Although translation is typically a vocational act that largely benefits from familiarising trainees with the reality of real-life work (Esfandiari et al., 2019) and despite Jemielity's (2018) argument that there is still a "great divide" that separates TS from professional practice, the academisation of translation has persisted, nonetheless, in recent decades, with the teaching of translation theories continuing especially in university translation courses (Sela-Sheffy,

[11] https://www.gov.uk/certifying-a-document

2023). In fact, Tennent (2005, xxi) sees translation "theory […] as a necessary tool for more effective training", however, a debate regarding the necessity and depth of teaching translation theory remains (Esfandiari et al., 2019). For instance, it has been argued that the implementation of theoretical knowledge is not necessarily mandatory in order to be able to succeed in the profession (Sela-Sheffy, 2023), and that translator training programmes have previously been described as "too theoretical" (Pym, 2011, p. 6). In fact, when translation students based in Hong Kong were asked about the desired ratio between translation theory and practice in translator training, 62.9% of respondents believed that training should incorporate practice only, with translation theory ranking near bottom of the list of the most helpful modules (Li, 2002). This aligns with a more recent study conducted by Gümüş (2017) which reveals that only 12.4% of 125 graduates from Turkish translator training programmes considered translation theory as extremely important for professional work (see also studies by Katan, 2009; Hanna, 2009; Ordóñez Lopez and Agost, 2022 etc.).

Despite the ongoing teaching of translation theory, modern translator education encompasses much more than traditional lectures focussing on theory and explaining how to translate. An increasing number of translator education institutions are now adopting Situated Learning approaches (González-Davies and Raído, 2018; Lambert and Walker, 2022), incorporating immersive classes that simulate real-world translation work and scenarios (Kiraly, 2015; see also Thelen, 2016; Salo et al., 2020; Buysschaert et al., 2018; van Egdom et al., 2020; Konttinen, 2022 for some additional studies on implementing Situating Learning in the translation classroom). This type of learning combines professional and academic learning (Konttinen and Salmi, 2025) and is a context-dependent approach to translator training under which students are exposed to simulated work environments and are expected to complete tasks as they would in the real world as a real professional. For example, students are typically instructed to create and run their own fictitious translation companies (Konttinen and Salmi, 2025; Penet, 2024), and in doing so they engage in project management and translation, interact with fictitious clients, as well as create a space to discuss rates, quotations and invoices with their peers (Walker and Lambert, 2024). In other words, simulated translation bureaus (STBs) offer a solution for students to enhance their industry knowledge and to gain practical and relevant experience in project management, service provision, translation, revision, post-editing and in using translation technologies (Konttinen and Salmi, 2025). As with any pedagogical approach, there are, however, also potential challenges in running STBs, such as establishing an appropriate balance between academic and vocational learning and the right amount of project authenticity, deciding on how to assess the STBs fairly, ensuring that students abide by the simulation guidelines, and that students actually "play the game" (Konttinen and Salmi, 2025). Although the intention of this type of learning is that it enhances the students' capacity to think and act like professionals (González-Davies and Raído. 2018), Lambert and Walker (2022) explain, however, that simulated learning in translator training is not as abundant as one might expect, at least in the UK.

Furthermore, the number of language pairs required by organisations has increased and the market has shifted away from traditionally dominant languages (e.g. English, French, and Spanish). However, current academic programmes, and other types of certification, fall short in their linguistic and geographic coverage (Chan, 2013; Lommel, 2013). In particular, the repertoire of languages that most European translation university programmes offer are simply not enough and do not supply the demand for global translation services (Hlavac, 2013; Lommel, 2013). Languages such as English, French, German, and Spanish are well represented in European university programmes that train aspiring translators for a rather western-European market, yet most languages from Scandinavia, East-Europe, the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as North and South-Asia, are much less represented (Hlavac, 2013). Lommel (2013) provides an example, illustrating that if an organisation requires a translation from Uyghur to German, the likelihood of finding language professionals with a translation degree specialising in this language combination or similar is slim. Another example is provided by Zheng (2020), who explains that supplying crisis translations during emergency situations is challenging due to insufficient language proficiency and inadequate technical knowledge amongst volunteers and students. In other words, for translators who wish to gain formal training or credentials in minority language pairs, there are almost no academic avenues for them to do so (Hlavac, 2013; Angelelli, 2020). As a result, the provision of translation services in low-resource languages is often characterised by unqualified or volunteer translators, who may rightfully have the potential to perform at professional standards, but do not have the means to acquire the credentials that demonstrate their abilities (Hlavac, 2013; see also Section 2.2.1 for literature relating to free crowdsourcing and volunteerism).

Moreover, Hao (2025) reports that there has been an increase in the number of profession-orientated questions raised by students, with students seeking information about, for instance, the current state of the market and salaries. Evidence implies that there is, however, a gap between the desired level of entrepreneurial skills and the business profiles of graduates upon completion of their training (Biel, 2011; Zheng, 2020). To illustrate, although university classes are considered to be interesting and useful, not only do they lack in discussing the setting of reasonable PEMT and translation rates (Walker and Lambert, 2024; Girletti and Lefer, 2024), but there appears to be difficulty for emerging and tenured translators to, for example, find and keep clients, earn a living, and more generally speaking, position themselves in what is a competitive (Henter, 2016) and fragmented (Durban, 2022) market. Moreover, in Do's (2020) examination of the experiences of Australian and Vietnamese translation graduates, she hypothesises that recent graduates are not fully equipped with the skills required to professionally cope with certain challenges that may arise as a self-employed translator, such as handling client relationships and project management. Essentially, there are indeed a growing number of institutions that implement employability and business skills in their curricula (e.g. STBs and internships) (Hao, 2025), but there are also a significant

number of programmes where students are not adequately equipped with the entrepreneurial assets to succeed in professional translation (Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2017).

Tracing where translation graduates end up after university is important in order to establish the relation between translator training and employability (Hao and Pym, 2022). It has been reported that most translation graduates, however, do not find employment as professional translators (see EMT, 2016; Torres-Hostench, 2012; Toudic, 2017a; 2017b) and that only a minority of graduates find jobs that exactly match their field of study (Hao, 2025). EMT (2016) carried out a survey to investigate the employment of graduates from EMT programmes, and out of 1,722 responses, only 374 graduates' job titles include the term 'translator', in addition to 106 translation project managers (PMs), 96 revisers or reviewers, and 53 localisers. Collectively, there are 629 translation professionals and graduates who use translation skills of some kind, which represents 36.5% of respondents (EMT, 2016). Nevertheless, translation graduates do find employment in language teaching, international business, journalism and human resources, reinforcing that language and translation skills serve not just the translation industry, but society as a whole (Hao, 2025). On the one hand, this may be as a result of not having the assets to succeed as a translator, yet on the other hand it may simply be that students finish their programme with the firm conviction that they do not wish to become translators and, therefore, pursue other language-related professions (Singer, 2022). This is supported by Li's (2002) study on what translation students have to say about their training, with only 17.2% of participants choosing to study in a translation programme for the purpose of becoming either a translator or interpreter (see also studies by Lung, 2005; Hubscher-Davidson, 2007; Jabu et al., 2021 etc.).

2.4.4 Section Summary

The translation profession requires skills that far exceed the sole ability to produce a text in the target language (Kiraly, 2003), also demanding the ability to use various translation technologies, in addition to developing business skills to secure clients and to negotiate with them in a competitive market (Esfandiari et al., 2019). As depicted by this review, there is also much discourse on the limitations of current translator training programmes and then finding ways to improve them so that they not only align with the expectations and demands of the everchanging translation market, but also so that they prepare aspiring translators as adequately as possible to fulfil the market's needs.

However, there are fewer studies that debated, in depth, the idea of whether formal translator training should be a prerequisite for all aspiring translators, irrespective of previously attained language, translation and sector-specific competences. This is important to address considering that, according to the professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3), the establishment of formal training and academic routes to the profession are essential for

professionalisation as they heighten the standards of a profession, ensure that only those who are committed to the profession enter the trade, and ensure that new entrants are equipped with the specialised skills and exclusive knowledge that are otherwise unfamiliar amongst the lay public (see Section 3.1.4 for summary of professionalisation). With this concept in mind, my study supplements the literature relating to translator training by identifying and critically assessing whether and to what extent the professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3), which were devised as part of this study's framework on (de-)professionalisation (see Section 3.5), pertaining to training and education have been fulfilled in a translation context (see Section 6.3 for results relating to the necessity of translator training; see Section 6.4.2 for discussion on the quality of translation education).

2.5 Summary of Reviewed Literature

The studies addressed in this chapter demonstrate how social and technological changes are influencing translators' socio-professional role and value in modern society in addition to the ways in which certain measures (i.e. the academisation of translation, the establishment of translator associations as well as the setting up and renewing of CoCs) are enforced to promote the notions of translation as a specialised activity and translators as professional experts. This present review of literature covered four main themes: the influence of technologies on the role and purpose of the professional human translator (Section 2.1); the expansion of online collaborative translation approaches and the accompanying rise of non-professional and amateur contributions (Section 2.2); the professional, social and ethical roles of codes of conduct and professional translator associations (Section 2.3); and finally, translator and translation competences in addition to the limitations and benefits of translator training in its present state (Section 2.4).

First mentioned in Section 1.2, this study also channels perspectives from the sociology of professions in order to develop a bespoke framework for analysing the (de-)professionalisation of translation. The following chapter presents an overview of the main theoretical and conceptual frameworks within the sociology of professions and within Translation and Interpreting Studies that formed the conceptual foundation from which this study's original (de-)professionalisation criteria derived. These sets of criteria thereby helped to analyse and make sense of the collected data reported in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Although the studies addressed throughout this chapter may not directly or holistically explore the professional status or the (de-)professionalisation of translation, they provide, nonetheless, the context required to complement newly generated empirical data on the perceptions of the contemporary translation industry (see Chapter 4 for methodology) as well as the (de-)professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3 and Table 3.4) to be able to determine the extent to which translation is professionalised and thus a profession, and also whether there is a potential risk of de-professionalisation. The following chapter reinforces the original

contribution of this thesis, namely the development and operationalisation of a bespoke framework which offers a sociologically grounded lens through which the (de-)professionalisation of translation can be systematically examined.

3 Conceptual and Theoretical Orientations

Professionalisation is the central concept that underpins this study. The sections that follow present an overview of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks within the sociology of professions and within Translation and Interpreting Studies that contributed towards the development of this study's framework on (de-)professionalisation and, thus, helped with analysing and making sense of the collected data reported in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

This chapter commences with a brief definition of what 'profession' means in sociology before exploring the main theorisations of professionalisation, namely the trait theory (Section 3.1.1), the power approach (Section 3.1.2) and some key examples of temporal and sequential models of professionalisation (Section 3.1.3), which is then followed by a recap of the professionalisation approaches (Section 3.1.4). The anti-thesis of professionalisation, namely de-professionalisation, is defined in Section 3.2, exploring the democratisation of knowledge (Section 3.2.2) in addition to the social, economic, political and technological roots of de-professionalisation (Sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.3), all of which is then summarised in Section 3.2.4. This is followed by an exploration of what 'professionalisation' means within TIS, outlining, firstly, the models of professionalisation catered for the translation and interpreting professions (Section 3.3.1); and secondly, translator status (Section 3.3.2) in terms of perceptions of translation (Section 3.3.2.1) and efficient and inefficient signals of status (Section 3.3.2.2). This chapter closes with an overview of previous evaluations of translation's status as a profession (Section 3.4) before summarising all of the approaches covered in this chapter and explaining how they contributed to the development of my novel framework on (de-)professionalisation, encompassing original criteria for (de-)professionalisation that were applied to data collection and to help make sense of the collected data (Section 3.5; see also Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description).

The terms profession and occupation are often used synonymously when discussing careers and work. However, from the perspective of the sociology of professions, there are distinct traits that distinguish one from the other (see Section 1.1 for dictionary definitions of profession and occupation).

A profession, from a sociological standpoint, refers to a specialised field of work and is often characterised by formal training or commitment to higher education, obtaining credentials or licences, specialised knowledge and the pursuit of expertise, authority over clients and subordinate groups, adherence to standards and ethical values, and profound knowledge that is inaccessible or not easily understood by lay persons. Professions are also typically governed by professional bodies or associations (Anteby et al., 2016; Brante, 2011; Svensson, 2015).

Meanwhile, occupation is a hypernym for profession. It is a broader term that encompasses one's engagement in any type of job or work activity in order to earn a living, which may or

may not require licensing, memberships, specialised training, higher education, or ongoing professional or educational development (Anteby et al., 2016; Brante, 2011; Svensson, 2015).

Essentially, a profession is a specific type of occupation. The key differences are that professions usually involve the application of advanced knowledge and skills, while occupations can range from basic manual labour to high-skilled roles; professions entail authority, yet certain occupations may be subjected to supervision or subordination; and professions often require formal education, licensing and memberships of professional bodies, whereas occupations may or may not necessitate professional or educational credentials. With this logic, being a doctor, engineer, or lawyer are all professions, but it is also correct to describe them as occupations. However, being a cashier or an influencer, for example, are indeed occupations, but they may not necessarily be deemed professions from a sociological viewpoint.

It is important, however, to broaden the scope of what occupations entail because newer and marginal roles may not fulfil all of the criteria to be considered a profession, but are working towards full professionalisation nonetheless (Anteby et al., 2016; Brante, 2011). Furthermore, occupations can be distributed along a professional continuum, with well-recognised professions, such as medicine and law, fostering the maximum degree of professional conventions on one end of the continuum, and lesser-developed professions with moderate levels of professional conventions positioned further down the continuum (Carter et al., 1990). So-called emerging professions sit, therefore, somewhere along the profession-occupation continuum, exhibiting evidence of having acquired some professional characteristics yet still aspiring for full professionalisation (Anteby et al., 2016; Brante, 2011; Carter et al., 1990).

3.1 Professionalisation

Although related, professionalism and professionalisation are not interchangeable (see Section 3.3 for the distinction between professionalism and professionalism within TS). Professionalism[12] refers to one's attitude towards their work in terms of their occupational behaviours and practices (Noordegraaf and Schinkel, 2011). Whereas professionalisation is the process of an occupation or a service becoming a profession, and it is within this context that translation will be evaluated.

Attempts to define professionalisation appeared from as early as the 1920s (Anteby et al., 2016; Brante, 2011; Svensson, 2015), with Carr-Saunders (1928) proposing one of the first definitions as "specialised skill and training, minimum fees or salaries, formation of

[12] Hall (1968) developed a model of professionalism that can be understood in terms of five core dimensions: autonomy; a sense of calling; a belief in public service; a belief in self-regulation; and a community orientation.

professional organisations, and code of ethics governing professional practices" (1928, p.8). From thereon, numerous attempts have been made to develop theoretical frameworks and models of professionalisation (see Section 3.1.3) in order to be able to distinguish professions from non-professions, to map out the professionalisation process, and to determine the factors that influence the development of occupations (Frost, 2001). Although the literature pertaining to professionalisation is quite rich, there is still very little consensus on what the professionalisation process actually entails (Tyulenev, 2015).

Two competing approaches have, however, emerged, namely the trait (attribute) approach (see Section 3.1.1) and the power (control) approach (see Section 3.1.2). These approaches differ not only in their definitions of what a "profession" is, but also in their methods of analysis, their explanations as to why some occupations have professionalised while others have not, and their rationales as to why some occupations have professionalised more than others (Frost, 2001).

3.1.1 Trait Theory

Professionalisation from the perspective of trait theory is based on occupations seeking to upgrade their occupational status by accumulating specific attributes (e.g. establishing formal training, academising disciplines, forming professional networks, acquiring and implementing a body of exclusive knowledge, adhering to ethical professional conduct etc.) in order to become fully professionalised (Wenocur and Reisch, 1983; Frost, 2001). In this regard, 'profession' comprises a list of identifying markers that distinguish fully-fledged professions from semi- or non-professions.

Ernest Greenwood (1957), a pioneer of this approach, specified five groups of attributes:

- a systematic body of knowledge acquired through formal education such as in an academic setting (i.e. university) for theoretical professions; or apprenticeships, schools or institutes for freelance professional pursuits and/or non-theoretical professions (e.g. acting and painting etc.);
- clients' subordination to and recognition of the professionals' authority. This can be showcased by immunity from societal commentary on technical matters, control over admission processes, recognition that no-one should bear a professional title if it was not granted by an accredited institution, a licensing system, and exams to be passed before a board of professionals;
- regulatory, explicit, systematic and binding formal (written) and informal (unspoken) code of ethics; and
- a professional culture sustained by formal professional associations, research groups and devotion to one's chosen career.

Until the mid-1970s, the trait approach was the primary method that was adopted by a range of disciplines to classify societal roles as either occupations or professions (Grbić and Kujamäki, 2019), or as semi-professions (Etzioni, 1969). Abbott (1988) argues, however, that professions cannot be defined and that professionalisation shouldn't be seen as a set process that entails the acquisition of specific criteria. The primary limitation of the trait approach is, therefore, the assumption that having a certain set of qualities is the crux of professionalisation. This is why the trait approach is argued to be arbitrary because it's approach is descriptive in nature and lacks a theoretical base (Johnson, 1972). Furthermore, while the trait approach offers a consistent and common-sense approach to the understanding of professions (Frost, 2001), there is not only little consensus with regard to which attributes are essential (Winter, 1983), but it is also difficult for sociologists to agree on when the criteria for a certain trait has been met (Wenocur and Reisch, 1983). One solution saw the systemisation of traits and placing occupations on a professionalisation continuum; their places depending on the number of acquired traits and the extent to which they are enforced or implemented (Wenocur and Reisch, 1983). In turn, this has contributed towards the development of sociological models of professionalisation (see Section 3.1.3) that depict the process of acquiring traits through continuums or overlapping stages.

3.1.2 The Power Approach

Unlike trait models which describe pre-determined traits, power models (see Freidson, 1988; Johnson, 1972; Larson, 1977; Abbott, 1988) go beyond internal characteristics. Instead, they refer to the acquisition and maintenance of power, authority and control over clients and other occupational or societal groups (i.e. paraprofessionals, amateurs, volunteers, lay public etc.) (Grbić and Kujamäki, 2019; Frost, 2001; Macdonald, 1995). The basic assumption is that occupational groups campaign for an exclusive right to perform certain types of work while resisting conflict from their clients, subordinates and the wider community.

Professional power does not necessarily refer to the power of an occupation's structure, rather it is directed at the collective power held by the practitioners themselves (Forsyth and Danisiewicz, 1985). In other words, professional power is relational to the amount of internal and external autonomy that is held by practitioners in their exchanges with society and their clients (Forsyth and Danisiewicz, 1985; Johnson, 1972). In order to be able to examine professional power, it is important to understand the concept of autonomy within the context of professionalisation, which can be defined as involving "the feeling that the practitioner ought to be allowed to make decisions without external pressures from clients, from others who are not members of his profession, or from his employing organisation" (Hall, 1968, p.82).

A profession is, thus, an occupation that has achieved control and maintains a dominant position of power over clients, subordinates, society and various aspects of its operations

(Freidson, 1988; Hall, 1968; Johnson, 1972). In other words, control is not only exerted over internal traits, such as body of knowledge, education and training, and code of ethics, but also over external conditions, such as working conditions, market standards, and relations with clients (Sulaiman et al., 2024). The more control that practitioners as a collective group wield over their work and the market in which they operate, the more professionalised they become (Sulaiman et al, 2024).

3.1.3 Models of Professionalisation

From the 1960s onwards, sociologists began to compile and systemise professional characteristics to form sets of criteria and models of professionalisation that serve as goals or checkpoints for occupations wishing to professionalise.

One of the most important empirical contributions on the subject is Wilensky's (1964) pioneering example of systemising traits. Through the examination of the history of eighteen American professions, he uncovered what he considered to be the typical process through which professions developed. It is important to note that internal and external power struggles exist in relation to any occupation, and these struggles help to explain any deviations from the professionalisation sequence that may occur. Wilensky's (1964) five-step temporal process can be associated with the analysis of almost any occupation and can be summarised as:

- Step one: performing tasks on a full-time basis.
- Step two: establishing training schools and developing study courses, academic degrees, and research programmes to expand the knowledge base. If these training schools did not begin within universities, then professionals should eventually seek contact with universities.
- Step three: forming professional associations and working towards (re)defining the professional tasks and areas of competence, raising the quality of recruits by restricting entry to the profession to those who are willing to train, and separating the competent from the incompetent. At this stage, the name of occupations may change. To illustrate this, Wilensky (1964) gave the examples of hospital superintendents becoming hospital administrators and newspaper reporters becoming journalists. The change in label functions to disassociate with the previous, less prestigious occupation.
- Step four: winning legal protection of the occupation and its sustaining code of ethics. If the area of competence is not clearly defined, acquiring legal protection of titles should be the goal. In the event of a clearly defined area of competence, then the mere act by a non-qualified person could be declared a crime. Establishing licensing and certification may be used in the campaign for professional authority.

- Step five: enforcing a formal code of ethics and establishing rules to reduce internal competition, to eliminate the unqualified and the unprofessional, and to protect clients.

Wilensky's (1964) model was well received and considered influential, which came to be used across domains to assess the professionalisation of occupations that aspired to become fully professionalised[13] (Neal and Morgan, 2000).

Moreover, Carter et al. (1990) suggested that the attributes ascribed to emerging professions are: theoretical knowledge, autonomy, service mission, ethical codes, public sanction, professional associations, formal training, credentialing, sense of community, and singular occupational choice. Carter et al. (1990) also systemised their traits and developed a sequence that is comparable to Wilensky's (1964) process in the sense that both models specify five key stages to the process of professionalisation and incorporate a similar set of attributes. However, Carter et al. (1990) introduced the concept of emerging professions. They explain that there needs to be a classification for cases where professionalisation is in progress but has not yet been fully achieved. Essentially, occupations and professions can be placed anywhere on the occupation-profession continuum depending on which attributes have been achieved and the extent to which they are enforced or implemented. The occupation-profession continuum that is described by Carter et al. (1990) comprises the following steps:

- Step one: delineating job roles which are performed full-time in particular settings for particular consumer groups (e.g. teachers supporting children in a school).
- Step two: establishing professional and public recognition in the sense that autonomy is given to the practitioner from both the employing agency and the consumer. Practitioners also form professional associations to help with the campaign for professional and public recognition.
- Step three: formalising training and identifying competences. Curricula and degree requirements are also established and practitioners are expected to display a mastery of the field's theories that underpin their job roles.
- Step four: gaining official recognition in the name of law and politics in addition to developing credentialing procedures. Essentially, practitioners are required to demonstrate their competence through formal procedures such as certification and/or licensure. Evaluative criteria are drawn up to assure competence upon entry into the

[13] For example, Carpenter et al. (1980) used this pioneering model to assess the professionalisation of student affairs practitioners, concluding at the time that this field has made significant progress in the first three steps, but identified that the field is still in the preliminary stages for steps four and five. Similarly, Heidelberg (2019), a more recent example, applied Wilensky's (1964) model to map out the professionalisation of non-profit arts management in the United States. A third example is the study by Mieg and Oevermann (2021), who applied the model in order to understand and to find explanations for the patterns identified in statistical data on architects in Europe.

profession and those who are unable to display their competencies are to be excluded from practising the trade. Professional associations hire qualified personnel only.

- Step five: adopting and enforcing ethical codes. Violating codes results in the loss of professional privileges.

Carter et al. (1990) used their interpretation of the professionalisation sequence to design a self-assessment form so that occupations represented by the AAHPERD (American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance) could appraise their progress towards becoming a profession as well as identify factors that might pose problems for this process.

An additional example relevant to the context of this study is Neal and Morgan's (2000) comparative historical study of the development of professions. They examined nineteen UK occupations and their German counterparts, and then they drew up temporal sequences that depict the professionalisation process for each of the aforementioned countries. Below is the proposed route to professionalisation within the UK:

- Step one: performing on a full-time basis as a prerequisite for the professionalisation process.
- Step two: professional training and learning through observing and copying the practices, procedures, and techniques of established practitioners. This type of training must abide by the terms of a formal written contract.
- Step three: forming professional associations to obtain greater status and to be better able to compete against less competent practitioners. Membership is limited to the better-qualified or the more prestigious practitioners and a membership of a recognised professional association should give higher status, which usually results in higher fee-earning possibilities. During this phase, there are usually several competing professional associations, but in due course only one will usually emerge as the leading association.
- Step four: calling professional associations to introduce qualifying examinations in order to stress high levels of competence.
- Step five: encouraging professional associations to begin campaigning for legal protection of their profession. If not, then associations should at least campaign for recognition by a Royal Charter after establishing high level of competence and professional ideals. A Royal Charter is seen as giving sufficiently high status to protect members of the professional association from competition from non-chartered practitioners. Full legal protection and regulation is usually only introduced for professionals unable to regulate themselves and if it is in the interest of the public. In such cases, regulations concerning professional education, admittance to the profession, professional practice, and discipline are to be delegated by the leading professional body or bodies.

- Step six: establishing academic routes to the profession in co-operation with higher education institutions to increase standards and status. These academic routes are usually developed in combination with some form of prescribed vocational training which is carried out after the academic stage, and this route is often given partial or complete exemption from professional associations' own qualifying examinations. University training followed by vocational training should gradually replace the system as depicted in stage two.
- Step seven: introducing continuous professional development (CPD) in order to update skills regularly and to remain professionally competent. CPD is typically voluntary at the beginning, but in due course should become mandatory and monitored by professional bodies.

In addition to these temporal stages, Neal and Morgan (2000) specified two additional characteristics which are also key to professionalisation in the UK:

- Professional associations may retain responsibility for professional education.
- Professions are largely self-regulated.

The overall purpose of models of professionalisation is to analyse newer and marginal occupations (Wilensky, 1964). The models outlined in this section so far offer an overview of the core attributes that professionalisation typically calls for in Anglo-American environments (see Section 3.1.4 for summary of approaches). Western professions or occupations tend to be characterised based on their constellation of professional traits (Bureau and Suquet, 2009), in that the more traits that an occupation has acquired, the more professionalised it is (Sulaiman et al., 2024). For this reason, models of professionalisation that are based on the accumulation of professional attributes are considered limiting because they may not be relevant to the parts of the world that operate according to a different work culture[14] (Bureau and Suquet, 2009; Johnson, 1972). With this in mind, it is worth elaborating on an alternative process to professionalisation, namely professionalisation from the power perspective, which measures the amount of professional autonomy that a particular occupational group wields. Forsyth and Danisiewicz's (1985) phase-based model, described below (see Figure 3.1), differs to those illustrated above in the sense that the focus is not necessarily on the acquisition of traits over time, but rather winning societal recognition which ultimately grants professional autonomy. Similar to the case of Wilensky's (1964) model, elements from the below power-based model have been applied for the understanding of various professions[15], and this process is depicted by three distinct phases (Forsyth and Danisiewicz, 1985):

[14] Professionalisation under Anglo-American circumstances follows a from within approach, whereby practitioners develop their associations and seek to establish and defend their position in society (McClelland, 1990). In contrast, professionalisation under European circumstances, for example, experiences a from above approach, with the state being responsible for regulation (McClelland, 1990).

[15] In order to define teacher professionalism, Demirkasımoğlu (2010) refers to various elements of Forsyth and Danisiewicz's (1985) model, such as the notions that a profession is essential, complex and exclusive and that practitioners should have the agency to make decisions free from external pressure. Dowling et al., (2014) utilised a similar method and applied it for the case of sport management, referring to professional associations,

- Phase one: addressing, firstly, the potential of a particular client-serving occupation by identifying their service-tasks and evaluating whether they are essential (of serious importance to society), exclusive (practitioners have a monopoly over the service-tasks), and complex (the service-tasks are not routine and typically call for the application of a specialised body of knowledge). Secondly, engaging with image building which refers to efforts to display the service-task as essential, exclusive, and complex to the public. During this phase, the responsibility of image building should belong to professional associations rather than individual practitioners.
- Phase two: permitting the public to evaluate the occupation's claim to professional status. Successful public recognition, which is greater than legal recognition or licensure, is likely to grant autonomy and includes the different groups and members of society to collectively form a set of beliefs that an occupation is essential, exclusive, and complex, deferring to the expert skill and knowledge of the individuals performing that service-task. If the public remains unconvinced, autonomy will not be granted. Many occupations whose members lack autonomy are referred to as mimic professions (e.g. personal administrators and funeral directors), where some professional attributes may have been gained (e.g. enforcing ethical codes), but the practitioners have no power at all. The likelihood of successful image building is increased if the service-task is actually essential, exclusive and complex.
- Phase three: stabilising and maintaining autonomy, whereby occupations that have acquired power may use that power to further enhance their image. At this stage, occupational groups that exhibit autonomy from both clients and employing organisations are designated as true professions. Semi-professions (e.g. nursing and teaching) are occupations that are, indeed, highly autonomous but only across one power dimension (i.e. clients or employing organisations), in which case, this phase provides an additional opportunity for image-building. Seeking legalisation and the development of ethical codes are typical image-building efforts.

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ethical codes, and the complexity and exclusivity of the skillset. Similarly, Balthazard (2015) also took inspiration from this model, applying it to illustrate the professional landscape of the HR field.

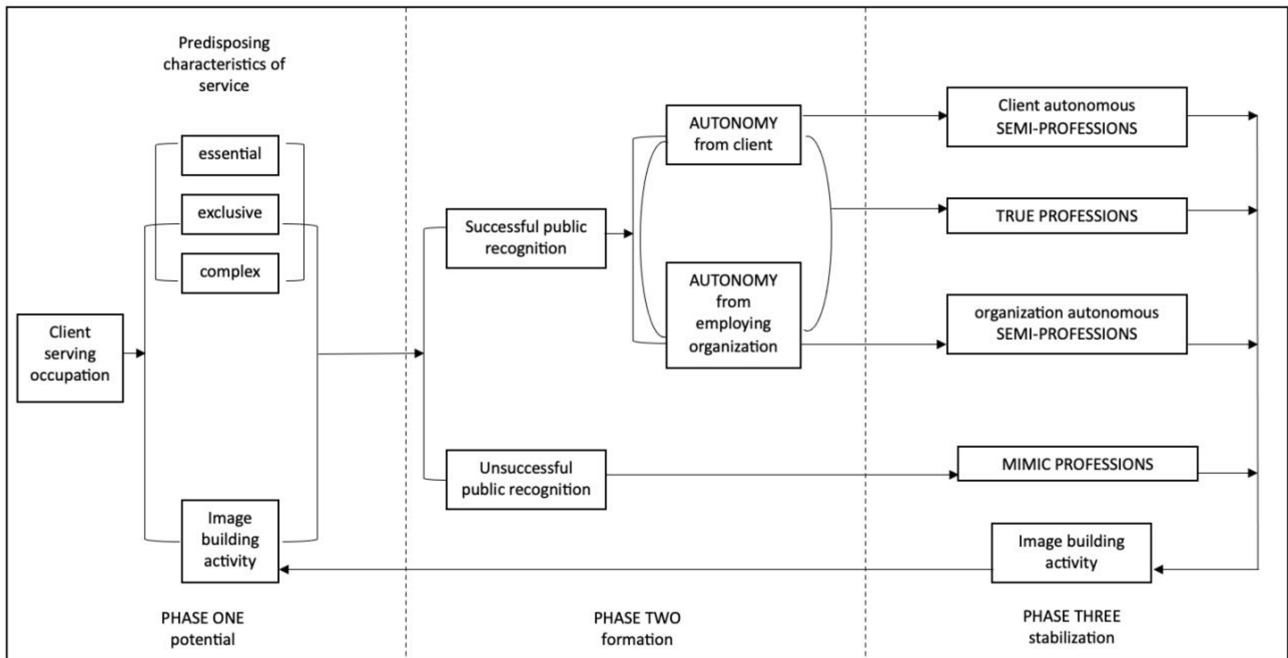

Figure 3.1: Model of professionalisation (Forsyth and Danisiewicz, 1985, p.63)

3.1.4 Summary of Professionalisation

From Greenwood (1957) to Neal and Morgan (2000), there are a series of diverse, and often overlapping, sociological frameworks that interpret professionalisation and the ways in which sociologists can use them to evaluate professions and occupations accordingly. Although there is little consensus regarding the definitions of profession and professionalisation, attempts to define these concepts should not be abandoned because a continuation of the research into occupations on a case-by-case basis will allow generalisations to eventually be made (Tyulenev, 2015).

In order to comprehensively grasp what the main components that make up the process of professionalisation are, each of the models and approaches to professionalisation that have been discussed throughout this chapter were deconstructed in order to reveal the individual professional attributes (see Table 3.1 for the list of attributes that make up the general approaches to professionalisation and Table 3.2 for the list of attributes that make up the approaches to professionalisation for the T&I sector). This deconstruction contributed, in part, to the development of this study's framework as outlined in Section 3.5, and directly shaped the professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3)

According to Table 3.1, forming professional associations and shared networks, working towards professional exclusivity and controlling admission to the profession, and campaigning for legal protection and setting up licensure procedures are the three groups of professional traits that were referenced or discussed across all the general approaches to

professionalisation covered in this section. There are also a number of professional attributes that contribute to four out of the five general approaches, and these are: establishing formal training and academic routes to the profession, establishing and enforcing ethical codes, winning public and official recognition of the profession, and possessing a body of theoretical or exclusive or complex knowledge.

	Greenwood (1957)	Wilensky (1964)	Carter et al. (1990)	Neal and Morgan (2000)	Forsyth and Danisiewicz (1985)
Defining (a) necessary and professional service-area / service tasks		✓	✓		✓
Performing on a full-time basis		✓	✓	✓	
Formal training (i.e. schools, apprenticeships, institutes etc.)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Academic routes to the profession (i.e. university degree)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Professional associations / shared networks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Qualifying exams	✓			✓	
Enforcing ethical codes	✓	✓	✓		✓
Professional authority in client-practitioner relationships	✓		✓		✓
Public / official recognition	✓		✓	✓	✓
Professional exclusivity / controlled admission to the profession	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Legal protection / licensure procedures	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Certifications / professional credentials		✓	✓		
Body of theoretical / exclusive / complex knowledge	✓	✓	✓		✓
(Continuous) professional development				✓	
Monopoly over operations (i.e. admission processes, training, policies and accreditation processes)	✓			✓	
Existence of research groups / research programmes	✓	✓			
Singular occupational choice	✓		✓		

Table 3.1: Summary of professional attributes that make up the general approaches to professionalisation covered in Section 3.1.

It is important to note that additional professionalisation models exist. However, they were designed for different contexts. For example, Fleischmann (1970) developed five-stages of

intervention which is specific to high-status professions in Germany only. A further example is Zierer's (2015) concept of mind frames that stands as a model of professionalisation for teaching.

For the development of this study's framework, only the models which are pioneering in their approach and/or can be applied for the analysis of any occupation were considered. Greenwood's (1957) set of core attributes was integrated into my framework because he is considered a pioneer of the trait approach. Likewise, although Wilensky's (1964) model is six decades old, it is still frequently utilised today as a framework for current investigations into workplace sociology, in particular, to articulate how a field is professionalising (Heidelberg, 2019). I included Carter et al.'s (1990) occupation-profession continuum because it was inspired by Wilensky's (1964) pioneering model and it is a more recent example of a developmental sequence that not only considers the concept of emerging professions, but can also be applied for the analysis of any occupation. Furthermore, considering that 59.1% of the practitioner survey population identified as UK-based translators (see demographic results in Section 4.1.1.4.1), Neal and Morgan's (2000) temporal sequence of the development of professions in the UK is relevant. Finally, Forsyth and Danisiewicz's (1985) pioneering phased-based model offers a clear depiction of what professionalisation entails from the power perspective, and this model can also be applied for the examination of any occupation (see also Section 3.5 for (de-)professionalisation criteria; see also Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description).

As Abbott (1988; 1991) explained, the development of occupations and professions is not unidirectional. This is because the workplace can witness the weakening of professions alongside the strengthening of others. The following section will, therefore, explore the concept of de-professionalisation and the main circumstances under which it can emerge.

3.2 De-Professionalisation

The realities of professions and professionalisation have intrigued sociologists for decades, with discussions over definitions, lists, criteria and characteristics having engaged the attention of many within and outside the discipline. However, professionals experience an ongoing struggle for professional legitimacy because not all occupations aspiring for professional status will become fully professionalised (Carter et al., 1990; Frost, 2001; Wilensky, 1964), and if an occupation has reached the status of a profession, then focus would need to be shifted to maintaining that professional status especially when in contention with threats of de-professionalisation (Randall and Kindiak, 2008). The threat of de-professionalisation is perhaps more rife than ever, particularly in modern societies that promote equal opportunities and education and are also dominated by capitalism, globalisation, democratisation and technological progress (Malin, 2017).

De-professionalisation was first theorised prior to the turn of the century in response to social, economic, political, and primarily technological changes leading to the weakening and/or the automation of certain professional roles, particularly those relating to manufacturing and assembly line work (Haug, 1972; 1975; Toren, 1975). In particular, the democratisation of knowledge, the normalisation of higher education for all, changes to the nature of professional-client relationships, and the widespread adoption of machines and technology in the industry can affect certain properties of a profession, such as those relation to monopoly, autonomy and authority (Haug, 1972; 1975; Toren, 1975; see also Section 3.2.3).

More recently, Malin (2017) developed an analytical framework for understanding the contexts in which the process of de-professionalisation manifests itself, highlighting on the one hand, four ideological reference points (neoliberalism, Taylorism and Post-Fordism, lifelong learning, and equality) where de-professionalisation can take shape (see Section 3.2.1), and on the other hand, the multi-faceted definition of de-professionalisation (see Section 3.2.4). Although Malin's (2017) framework was applied for the specific case of the health, social care, and education sectors in the UK, the proposed framework can be used, nevertheless, to understand the exact factors that drive "the anti-thesis of professionalisation" (Malin, 2017, p.69).

Academic literature across a range of disciplines shows that many professions, such as journalism (see Castilho, 2020; Wang and Meng, 2023; Olsen, 2018), teaching and education (see Frostenson, 2015; Zhang and Liu, 2024; Crawford, 2025), librarianship (see Litwin, 2009; Nilsson, 2020; Mason, 2015), and social work (see Trappenburg and Van Beek, 2019; Hugman, 2020; Randall and Kindiak, 2008), are already commenting on the threat of de-professionalisation. As indicated in Section 1.2, this present study seeks to explore whether de-professionalisation is on the horizon for the specific case of translation.

3.2.1 Social, Economic and Political Roots of De-Professionalisation

According to Malin (2017), highlighting the social, economic and political roots of de-professionalisation is the starting point to understanding where this process emerges from. In his analytical framework, four ideological reference points (neoliberalism, Taylorism and Post-Fordism, lifelong learning, and equality) were identified and critiqued to showcase how such ideologies can set up an environment for de-professionalisation to manifest.

Firstly, neo-liberalism, a political and economic policy model that has grown in popularity over the last quarter century (Jalalian Daghigh and Shuttleworth, 2024), favours privatisation rather than public ownership, emphasises the value of free market capitalism, and seeks to transfer the control of economic factors from the government to the private sector, all in the belief

that these policies will deliver efficiency, growth and widespread prosperity. However, the success of neoliberal policies is debateable (Jalalian Daghigh and Shuttleworth, 2024), with reports of ramifications for many societies and workforces in the form of an increase in employee turnover, the widening of the income gap, the concentration of wealth, a corrosion of wellbeing, as well as reductions in informal peer training, effort and overall job quality (see Hyde, 2024; Crowley and Hodson, 2014; Telford and Briggs, 2022; Card and Hepburn, 2023). Furthermore, despite the neoliberal beliefs of personal responsibility and of self-reliance, Malin (2018) asserts that the impacts of neoliberal policies, such as the reduced role of and reduced funding from the government in addition to the shift towards outsourcing work to external parties, have led to fragmentation in the workplace and patterns of de-professionalisation. Considering that some of the driving forces of professionalisation include professional exclusivity and professional authority, both of which can be endorsed by government-issued funding, licensing or policies and supported by a controlled market (see Section 3.1.4 for summary of professionalisation), it is fair to assume that struggles pertaining to maintaining exclusivity and authority may emerge if certain professional tasks are performed on a freelance and free market basis and/or as a result of a reduction in government intervention (Malin, 2018).

In accordance with neoliberal trends, translation work is typically available on a freelance basis (Jalalian Daghigh and Shuttleworth, 2024), an approach that is flexible for the practitioner yet cost-effective for the purchaser who would not need to consider regular salaries, annual and sick leave, or even office space (Campbell et al., 2004). The neoliberal era also enabled globalisation, through which the prevalence of international communication led to an increased demand for translation services (Jalalian Daghigh and Shuttleworth, 2024). In order to keep up with the demand for translation services, post-editing became the fastest growing sector of the translation market which is typically used in cases where employers and clients would like to cut translation costs but could not necessarily rely on raw MT (Lommel and DePalma, 2016) and/or would not like to budget for permanent staff capable of professional translation. Additionally, the number of translation companies that are reliant on outsourcing work to freelance translators also continued to grow. For some translators, this type of work organisation has given them more control over their working lives, whereas for others it has been disempowering as they struggle with speed and productivity demands (Wang and Jalalian Daghigh, 2023), the imposition of technologies and the constant downward pressure of price (Moorkens, 2020c) and low professional visibility (Dam and Zethsen, 2011).

Secondly, Taylorism and Post-Fordism represent methods of management designed to increase efficiency and productivity by revolutionising traditional or industrial work processes. The primary goal of Taylorism seeks to optimise work processes by auditing workers and then having the tasks of a workflow arranged in a way to reduce costs and to improve overall productivity, meanwhile Fordism tends to focus more on replacing labour by machinery and

recruiting unskilled workers to attend to the machines. Taylorism has seen a resurgence in modern times with new technologies and devices enabling more varied and invasive monitoring of workers to ensure that their role is carried out as efficiently as possible (Baumgarten and Bourgadel, 2024; Moorkens, 2020a). It can be argued that these ideologies fuel de-professionalisation because the changes that are likely to follow Taylorism and Post-Fordism policies include, for example, automation, the breaking down and simplification of tasks, and the reduction of human labour workforces, all of which are likely to weaken or diminish the role of specific professionals (Malin, 2017; see also Section 3.2.3 for technological roots of de-professionalisation).

In fact, (Digital and Neo-) Taylorism has already begun to be discussed within the context of the translation industry (e.g. Baumgarten and Bourgadel, 2024; Garcia, 2017; Moorkens, 2020a). With the advent of NMT and online translation spaces, translation professionals have come to be exposed to new ways of management, organisation, and work processes (e.g. automation, post-editing workflows, platform economy / cloud-based tools and platforms, micro-tasks, crowdsourcing etc.) to boost productivity and efficiency (Baumgarten and Bourgadel, 2024; Moorkens, 2020a). With translation workflows becoming increasingly fragmented, automated and transferred to the cloud, this type of work organisation not only attempts to reduce translators' role to editing like tasks, but it also permits companies to monitor translators' work in real-time and has also led to translators being rated according to, for example, their turnaround times (Moorkens, 2020a; Garcia, 2017). As discussed in the review of literature in Section 2.1.1, many translation agencies are also increasingly keen to limit translators' role to post-editing only (Sakamoto, 2019) on the back of the assumption that NMT coupled with post-editing is perceived as the ideal method to enhance efficiency yet maintain quality. In turn, adopting and mastering post-editing is considered a valuable asset that complements a translator's skills, allowing them to hypothetically work more efficiently (Al-Hemyari, 2023; Benmansour and Hdouch, 2023) and to remain competitive. Despite the supposed benefits of productivity and efficiency, the transition to post-editing adds pressure for the translator to remain competitive and efficient (do Carmo and Moorkens, 2020) and has also been reported to significantly cut translation prices (Moorkens et al., 2016; Sakamoto et al., 2017; 2019; Nunes Vieira, 2020) and requiring more effort than translating from scratch under certain circumstances (Moorkens, 2018; Castilho et al., 2017a; Ragni and Nunes Vieira, 2022;Nunes Vieira, 2019; Koponen, 2016). Moreover, working via an online platform has become rather commonplace for many freelance translators, with 89% of 6925 survey respondents saying that they use them (Pielmeier and O'Mara, 2020). That being said, 56% of the same group of respondents indicated that client relationships are less personal when collaborating via platforms (Pielmeier and O'Mara, 2020). The lack of meaningful relationships can be explained by the facts that collaborations on platforms tend to rely on reputation scores instead of building interpersonal trust (Moorkens, 2020a) and that project management is also becoming automated too (Sakamoto, 2018). Additionally, Garcia (2017) discusses that platform- or crowdworkers would need to maintain a near perfect reputation

score and accept most of the work offered to them in order to get paid an average wage. All things considered, the phenomenon of (Digital and Neo-) Taylorism within translation is leading to an unsustainable working environment that not only limits translators' abilities to exercise the full scope of their translation abilities and lessens their sense of achievement, but it is also characterised by a lack of interpersonal relationships, poor and unstable working conditions, struggle over status, and a lack of job security (Moorkens, 2020a).

Thirdly, Malin (2017) introduces lifelong learning as an ideology, an idea that seeks to enforce policies that bring about economic efficiency by developing a more productive and efficient workforce through post-compulsory education. These policies are important for economic growth as well as for the well-being of society, however, it is the economic objectives which are generally prioritised. To illustrate this, Malin (2017) explains that the UK Labour Government (1997-2010) tried to increase the supply of skilled workers by expanding the opportunities of post-compulsory education and encouraging greater participation in such training. However, Malin (2017) asserts that de-professionalisation would arise in cases of financial cuts being made to post-compulsory education. For instance, the institution of the UK Coalition (2010-2015) saw reduced funding from the government and then costs being shifted to learners and employers instead (Callender, 2012).

Finally, Malin (2017) also introduces equality as an ideology. On the one hand, foundational equality is the idea that human beings are born as equal in the sense that each life has the same moral value. On the other hand, formal equality refers to their rights and entitlements. In enforcing equality in recruitment and in the workplace, this risks failing to reward people in line with their actual talents and capacities. As such, the de-professionalisation argument comes into play where policies in the workplace may fail to acknowledge any differences between those possessing and those not possessing relevant qualifications and/or acquired skills (Malin, 2017).

The notion of equality is also pertinent to the case of translation. As previously discussed, the repercussions of free crowdsourcing (see Section 2.2.1), platform economy (see Section 2.2.2), and fan translation (Section 2.2.3) have led to a state where individuals, who may not be members of professional associations or be formally trained, are providing translation services, whether professionally or casually, alongside those of trained and credentialled professionals. If the idea of emphasising speed, availability and low costs rather than experience and quality becomes normalised in the professional or premium translation market, then the boundary separating professionals from amateurs is at risk of becoming even more blurred than it currently is.

The aforementioned ideological reference points highlighted the social, economic and political movements through which de-professionalisation can manifest. To summarise, neoliberalism is characterised by a free market, lack of regulations, and reduced government

intervention; Taylorism and Post-Fordism risk automation, the breaking down and simplification of professional tasks, and the reduction of professional human workforces; funding cuts to lifelong learning initiatives may lead to financial pressures for learners; and equality risks the skilled and the unskilled or the qualified and the unqualified to be seen as equal in the workplace.

3.2.2 Democratisation of Knowledge

One of the strongest foundations on which professions base their claim to authority is that professional work is non-routine and complex, and thus cannot always be performed by the lay public (Forsyth and Danisiewicz, 1985). For this reason, traditional professional-client relationships (e.g. health care professional and patient, solicitor and client) are typically governed by the practitioners' claim to authority which stems from their acquired credentials, their prolonged training to acquire exclusive knowledge and their dedication to serve the client's best interests (Vanishree et al., 2013). However, it is argued that as the knowledge of a profession becomes more common and accessible, then professional tasks are at risk of losing their "impenetrable mystery" (Toren, 1975, p.329).

In many developed countries, there are books, self-help guides, magazines, news broadcasting, television programmes and, perhaps most importantly, the internet, all of which, in one way or another, provide avenues for individuals to search for and share general and specialised information (e.g. information on taxes, health, etc.) (see also Section 3.2.3 for technological roots of de-professionalisation). Obviously, acquiring knowledge from such sources has their limits and cannot substitute for academic and professional training, but the phenomena of media and the digitisation of knowledge make certain elements of previously specialised and exclusive knowledge accessible (Haug, 1975; Vanishree et al., 2013). For example, today's most popular digital assistants (e.g. Siri at Apple, Google, Alexa at Amazon, Cortana at Microsoft), in addition to other forms of generative AI chatbots (e.g. ChatGPT), continue to be retrained so that each time a question is put to these systems, no matter how complex, the systems are designed to provide an answer on the fly (Susskind and Susskind, 2018). In other words, such a democratisation of knowledge makes certain specialised activities and knowledge more comprehensible and accessible to outsiders, and consequently, subject to their evaluation and control (Toren, 1975). In fact, a trend that modern society is witnessing concerns a significant increase in the number of paraprofessionals who have acquired some professional knowledge and use it to compete against established professionals and to challenge their monopoly over knowledge and service-tasks (Castilho, 2020).

Furthermore, the democratisation of knowledge also correlates with rising levels of youths and adults completing general and higher education (Haug, 1975). In fact, Susskind and

Susskind (2018) state that more people signed up for Harvard's online courses in a single year than had attended the actual university in its entire existence up until that point. Essentially, society is not only becoming increasingly well-informed as a result of general access to information (e.g. via the internet, media or books), but is also becoming increasingly well-educated and sophisticated as a result of increasing opportunities to obtain academic and professional credentials to expand and validate expertise (Dressel et al, 1988). In these ways, society is becoming increasingly knowledgeable and skilled. A repercussion of the democratisation of knowledge through accessible education is that clients and members of the lay public have become more demanding and critical and may no longer be content with leaving their problems solely in the hands of professionals (Wilensky, 1964). In fact, Toren (1975) states that the rise of general and higher education is likely to correlate with clients and the lay public demanding a greater share in the decisions made regarding their needs, the aims of professional help, and the conditions under which these services are provided. At a greater scale, governments may impose their authority by reconsidering their policies and establishing government-led bodies as a means to supervise professional workforces (Toren, 1975).

3.2.3 Technological Roots of De-Professionalisation

A significant difference between the inception of digitisation and the use of technology in modern society is that current technological progress is expected to have a greater impact on the nature and structure of professional and knowledge-based work (Lester, 2020), and potentially on the wellbeing of professionals too (Spencer, 2023; 2025). Building on the ideologies of Taylorism and Post-Fordism (see Section 3.2.1), technological developments have already provoked the digitisation of many everyday activities in recent times, altering the ways in which certain professions are performed and perceived.

The main intentions of digitising professional jobs were to enhance what practitioners do by making them more efficient and well-informed, to enable new ways of working, and to create new fields of work associated with technology (Lester, 2020). If society adapts and learns to manage new technologies, such as AI, effectively, then society will still be able to support productivity growth as new skills and jobs grow in demand (Acemoglu and Restrepo, 2019) as well as enrich work processes and enjoy the advantages of skilled workforces (Spencer, 2025). Indeed, new occupations were carved out (e.g. data scientists, computer programming and software engineering etc.) and innovative methods for applying knowledge and skills were established to further society (e.g. the creation of new devices and research into health and illnesses). However, the end result of integrating technology into the workplace has actually showcased an equal number of consequences on the structure of certain professions as well as on job quality and on the wellbeing and the wages of certain professionals (Spencer 2023; 2025; Berg et al., 2023). To illustrate, Susskind and Susskind (2018) analysed a collection of

case studies of professions (e.g. those relating to education, tax handlers, journalism, law, architecture, and divinity etc.) that are already undergoing transformations because of technology and identified five notable trends, namely: certain institutions and individuals are required to deliver more with fewer resources available; competition between professionals and paraprofessionals is intensifying; there is a growing recognition that certain professional work does not have to be handled in a bespoke way; certain professional work is being divided into sub-activities which can either be completed by non-professionals or be easily automated; and finally, certain professional tasks are becoming increasingly routinised, transpiring that many professional tasks are not complex. Certain professionals are, therefore, finding themselves needing to convince others that they know what is best for a recipient of their services and why their professional judgement should be trusted (Haug, 1975). On the one hand, clients want professional judgement, yet on the other hand, many may no longer accept it unquestioningly (Toren, 1975; Wilensky, 1964).

Employment, particularly in manufacturing and in basic administrative work, is where technology is believed to have had the most impact, and technology is now predicted to encroach significantly on knowledge-based work too (Lester, 2020). In fact, Frey and Osborne (2017) examined 702 occupations from the United States occupational database O*NET and reported that 47% of US occupations are at risk of automation over the next couple of decades provided that there are further developments in technology. Meanwhile, Bonin et al. (2015) applied the same methodology for a case study in relation to Germany, and Arntz et al. (2016) in relation to OECD countries. Lester (2020) pointed out that both studies concluded that while many jobs include automatable activities, the proportion of occupations that are likely to disappear is only at around 9%, and perhaps up to 12% in countries with a large manufacturing industry such as Germany. Meanwhile, Bughin et al. (2017) suggest that 60% of occupations have at least a third of their tasks capable of some automation, but only 5% of tasks can actually be fully automated.

It is important to note that the above statistics do not wholly account for the possibilities of new areas of work emerging or jobs being transformed through reskilling (Lester, 2020). In other words, there is an underestimation of the opportunities created by technology through reskilling and through optimising jobs (Frey and Osborne, 2017; Lester, 2020). In fact, many emerging roles require skills and capabilities (e.g. coding, programming, prompt engineering) that previous students and professionals may not have been trained to perform (Berg et al., 2023; Susskind and Susskind, 2018). A study on the impact of AI on work indicates that AI systems are, at least in their current state, creating and expected to create more opportunities for work than they are replacing or rendering redundant (Gifford and Houghton, 2019). As argued by Spencer (2023), any job losses linked to automation are offset by new jobs being created that involve using advanced skills to handle technology efficiently. Additionally, certain roles, such as those relating to the development, maintenance and operation of

advanced technologies, are highly sought after, and as such, are also likely to enjoy higher pay (Berg et al., 2023).

Susskind and Susskind (2015; 2018) also argue that some professional tasks will be done more effectively and consistently if performed by machines rather than by humans. While routine manual work (e.g. picking, sorting, rule-based tasks) is most susceptible to automation or substitution (an alternative means of achieving the same outcome) (Autor et al., 2003), recent technological developments, most notably AI, machine learning, optics, and mobile robotics, are making automation or substitution of non-routine tasks (e.g. filing and abstract thinking) increasingly possible (Lester, 2020). To illustrate, medical diagnosis (Blease et al., 2019; Esteva et al., 2017), legal drafting (Susskind and Susskind, 2015), routine research and data analysis (Pandit, 2019), and auditing financial accounts (Conway, 2018) are examples of complex tasks that follow operational logic yet are susceptible to automation (Lester, 2020). Furthermore, Nokelainen et al. (2018) argue that tasks where there is a social value through human interaction are expected to receive economic pressures for automation, resulting in humans becoming displaced. Displacement may not necessarily result in a loss of employment or dismissal from the field of work, however, and may indeed lead to becoming involved with new activities that incorporate technology-based skills which are equally as meaningful and complex (Nokelainen et al., 2018). In short, some jobs will be lost while new ones will be formed, and some professional work will experience deskilling while others experience reskilling (Lester, 2020).

While the likelihood of job losses due to automation remains low (Acemoglu and Restrepo, 2019), society is, nevertheless, progressing through a period in which the nature of professional work is undergoing significant transformation. This transformation involves more than just adapting existing jobs to integrate AI or requiring professionals to acquire advanced skills. It also presents opportunities to improve professionals' wellbeing by leveraging AI to create high paying roles focussed on handling new technologies (Berg et al., 2023), reducing working hours to allow for more leisure time, relieving heavy workloads, and reducing the amount of unappealing work or of work of low meaning (Spencer, 2023; Spencer, 2025).

Despite the ongoing enhancements, technology still has its limitations which become present when, for example, emulating human activity as well as for social reasons relating to acceptance and ethical concerns (Arntz et al., 2016; Collins, 2018; Frey and Osborne, 2013). Exercising judgement in social situations (e.g. healthcare professionals and patients, students and teachers) is an area where professionals will often argue that cannot be performed even by the most capable of machines (Susskind and Susskind, 2018). That being said, one dimension of improving machines' capabilities is dedicated to designing systems that can detect and respond to human emotions, with systems currently in development that can distinguish between, for example, a genuine smile and a smile of social conformity or between fake pain and genuine pain (Khatchadourian, 2015). So, professionals, whose interpersonal

skills are a distinctive and valuable asset to what they do, are likely to raise concerns. On the back of this observation, Spencer (2025) asserts that it is important to not only protect jobs from disruptions caused by AI, but to create conditions under which people's needs for meaningful work are still respected.

Above all, it has to be accentuated that entire jobs will not disappear in an instant and technological change will not lead to mass unemployment. If society wishes to prevent such a predicament and enjoy highly skilled workforces across all domains, then it will have to find ways to manage and work with AI effectively (Spencer, 2025). Nevertheless, some occupations will begin to disappear gradually, some will undergo transformation through reskilling, while new occupations will emerge (Greenleaf, 2017; Lester, 2020; Susskind and Susskind, 2018). Unfortunately, Acemoglu and Restrepo (2019) argue that the balance between automating professional tasks and creating new roles or optimising current roles is tilting in favour of automation, therefore posing implications for job availability and productivity. As a result, they stress the importance of the need to revise relevant policies in order to redress this imbalance (Acemoglu and Restrepo, 2019).

In response to the integration of technology into professional working environments, Susskind and Susskind (2018) suggest two opposing outcomes for the future of professions: a more efficient version of what we have today where different types of technology are integrated into the workplace for the purpose of streamlining and optimising traditional ways of working; or, increasingly capable systems and machines gradually taking on more and more of the tasks that we associate with traditional professions, acting as substitutes for professionals (Susskind and Susskind, 2018).

Meanwhile, Lester (2020) outlines a spectrum of four possible scenarios that could emerge which can be summarised as:

- There will be minimal change to the structure of professional environments because the profession is not susceptible to automation or substitution.
- The transition to incorporate technology will be relatively straightforward because the profession hosts enough work that is either not susceptible to automation or can be substituted so that it can accommodate the practitioners who are at risk of being displaced from their original line of work.
- There will be considerable disruption, resulting in both a transforming workplace and job losses.
- There is no longer a continuing purpose for the profession's skills and expertise in their current form.

De-professionalisation as a result of digitisation and automation is worth considering within the scope of translation because technological advances have already brought about an

unprecedented remodelling of the translation industry. As discussed in the review of literature relating to technology and automation (see Section 2.1), many elements of the translation workflow are already experiencing automation, for example the deployment of NMT, the imposition of post-editing in certain segments of the market, and the integration of AI to automate project management and other admin processes. This is in addition to the emergence of online translation marketplaces and the expansion of online translator communities. Given this technologisation of the industry, exploring de-professionalisation is relevant and will help to determine if technology is actively disrupting the survival of translation as a reputable yet satisfying profession.

3.2.4 Summarising and Defining De-Professionalisation

Unlike the various approaches to professionalisation, there are not necessarily set traits or temporal or sequential models that depict the process of de-professionalisation. However, by determining the contexts under which de-professionalisation can emerge (certain ideological reference points (neoliberalism, Taylorism and Post-Fordism, funding cuts, equality) (Section 3.2.1), the democratisation of knowledge (Section 3.2.2), and incorporating technology into the workplace (Section 3.2.3)), we can now turn our attention to comprehensively defining the concept of de-professionalisation and what this process entails. However, Demailly and de la Broise (2009) state that the concept of de-professionalisation is difficult for sociologists to employ since it has multiple dimensions. Fortunately, Malin's (2017) multi-faceted definition summarises the factors that can help us to identify if de-professionalisation is occurring. His definition can be summarised as:

- An inversion of the process of professionalisation characterised by an overall destabilisation of the profession and by a reduction of professional control, influence and manipulation. This is typically evidenced by a sharp decline in autonomy at work and a collective powerlessness to re-obtain any lost professional status.
- The discrediting or the breaking down of professional status which can cause professional workers to not be regarded as a professional. The weakening of professional status and the decline in respect can be associated with the reduced need and demand for esoteric knowledge as well as with being subjected to supervision and monitoring.
- Certain jobs begin to be outsourced or delegated to subordinates.
- Changes to the mode of bureaucratic professional regulation, such as those relating to standardisation, policies and sanctions, which is particularly characteristic of European societies. Demailly and de la Broise (2009) denoted this process the de-professionalisation of society through which the state and the market sharply reduce the role of occupational groups in the regulation of policies.

- The notion of deskilling, evolved from Taylorism, referring to the process of lowering the level of skill required to perform certain tasks. Implicit to deskilling is the transfer of knowledge from workers to managers, which can lead to managers gaining a monopoly over knowledge to control each step of the workflow. Tasks are simplified and the tools are standardised, resulting in workers being instructed to undertake a deskilled task typically within a designated timeframe.

However, it is important to note that it is disruption caused by technology that is perhaps seen as the greatest challenge for many professions in modern times because current technological progress is expected to have a greater impact than previous iterations of technology on the nature of professional and knowledge-based work and on the organisation of professions themselves (Lester, 2020). As discussed in Section 3.2.3, the main intentions of digitising professional jobs were to enhance what practitioners do by making them more efficient and well-informed, to enable new ways of working, and to create new fields of work associated with technology. Despite these intentions, the end result of integrating technology into the workplace has actually showcased a series of harmful consequences on the structure of certain professions (e.g. democratisation of knowledge, automation of work tasks, power struggles in practitioner-client relationships etc.) (Toren, 1975; Haug, 1975) and has also prompted discussions on how to maintain productive and satisfying working conditions (see also Section 3.2.3).

In summary, Sections 3.2.1, 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 outline the societal, ideological and technological trends that are challenging many professional groups. The inverse of professionalisation, namely de-professionalisation, represents the dismantling of an established professional service of their necessity and professionals of their authority, exclusivity and control (Malin, 2017). In particular, de-professionalisation refers to the loss of professional attributes which were previously gained, especially those relating to monopoly, authority, and control over work conditions (Frostenson, 2015; Castilho, 2020; Demailly and de la Broise, 2009; Haug, 1975; Toren, 1975). In relation to the specific contribution to this study's framework (see Section 3.5), there were no existing explicit approaches that could be deconstructed, as was the case for the professionalisation criteria (see Section 3.1.4; see also Table 3.3). Rather, it was the above understandings that were synthesised to form a comprehensive overview of de-professionalisation and thus a second set of criteria, namely the de-professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.4). This set of criteria serves as an original tool for assessing the extent to which translation is at risk of losing professional attributes.

3.3 Professionalisation of Translation and Interpreting

Empirical research on translator professionalism and professionalisation has gained traction since the turn of the millennium. Similar to the definitions drawn from the sociology of

professions as outlined in Section 3.1, professionalism and professionalisation are also related yet distinct concepts in TS. Liu (2025) conceptualises translator professionalism as a multidimensional term covering the translator's ability to produce acceptable target texts, their professional status, their conduct within and beyond their work, and a strong sense of ethical commitment, professional identify and pride. In contrast, professionalisation is typically viewed as the pursuit of attainting status and ensuring occupational autonomy (Sela-Sheffy, 2022), often achieved by "adopting organizational and occupational attributes and traits" (Pym et al., 2012, p.16). As clarified throughout this thesis thus far, this study focusses on the professionalisation of translation.

Whether explicitly or implicitly, references are often made to the trait and power approaches when discussing the professionalisation of the translation and interpreting professions (Sulaiman et al., 2024). The most relevant applications, as outlined in Section 3.3.1, are a set of traits based on interpreters in the United States (Witter-Merithew and Johnson, 2004); studies from the greater China region (Tseng, 1992; Ju, 2009); and a professionalisation model that caters to the literary translation market (Rondziková, 2020). Additionally, as discussed in Section 3.3.2, understanding the professionalisation of translation encompasses more than just the drawing up of a set of professional traits or of models of professionalisation, also referencing the concept of status to better contextualise the social and professional standings of translators.

3.3.1 Models of Professionalisation for Translation and Interpreting

Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2004) suggested a set of attributes for sign-language interpreters, and when interpreted broadly, these traits are applicable to translators too (Pym et al., 2012). Their attributes can be summarised as an established body of systematic theory; influence enjoyed by practitioners over the policy-making that affects their work; acquiring academic and professional credentials that satisfy the government's standards; training new practitioners through mentorship, supervision and direct guidance; offering a salary and a range of benefits; enforcing ethical codes that reflect the profession's commitment to uphold professional ideals and standards; promoting continuous professional development; winning public recognition; and the existence of a culture and a formal network of practitioners (typically in the form of professional associations) designed to promote a shared mission (Witter-Merithew and Johnson, 2004).

Furthermore, Tseng's (1992) model is a pioneering example that draws upon elements from both the trait and power approaches (see Sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2) to conceptualise the professionalisation of conference interpreters (Ngarambe and Habarurema, 2023), advocating that professionalisation is defined by the amount of power that a profession is able to obtain, in addition to the acquisition of a body of knowledge and circumstances under which

consumers know how to locate qualified practitioners. According to Tseng (1992), a highly professionalised group exerts both internal control over the body of expert knowledge, the professional training required to enter the field, and the code of ethics for existing practitioners, and external control over the working conditions and relationships with clients. Although this model was originally developed for the professionalisation of interpreting, it has also been adapted and then used in studies that focus on the professionalisation of translation (see Rondziková, 2020).

As outlined by Pym et al. (2012) and Ngarambe and Habarurema (2023), Tseng's (1992) model of professionalisation is based on four distinct phases:

- Phase one: market disorder as a result of competition amongst practitioners and the unskilled who are not easily excluded from the labour market. The service that is being offered is not well understood by consumers or potential clients and purchase decisions may be based on price only. As a result, there may be little incentive for practitioners to enhance their skillset and knowledge base. There is also little consistency in regard to training standards, and so unprofessional and unskilled behaviour may still be rife.
- Phase two: consensus and commitment through which training and professional development are more clearly defined, and educational programmes are better suited to the needs of the labour market. The notion of forming professional organisations is also better supported.
- Phase three: formation of formal networks which enables better collaboration amongst practitioners in further delineating their job descriptions, regulating their conduct and behaviour, controlling admission to the profession, and enhancing the recognition of the profession.
- Phase four: professional autonomy as a result of the establishment of clear and formal ethical standards and an appropriate level of control over who is admitted to the profession. Professional organisations also work closely with stakeholders to achieve market control and to influence legislation and certification.

However, in their analysis, Pym et al. (2012) highlighted the lack of importance that Tseng's (1992) model assigns to the necessity of professional credentials, citing Ju's (2009) expansion of the model to reflect this development (see Figure 3.2).

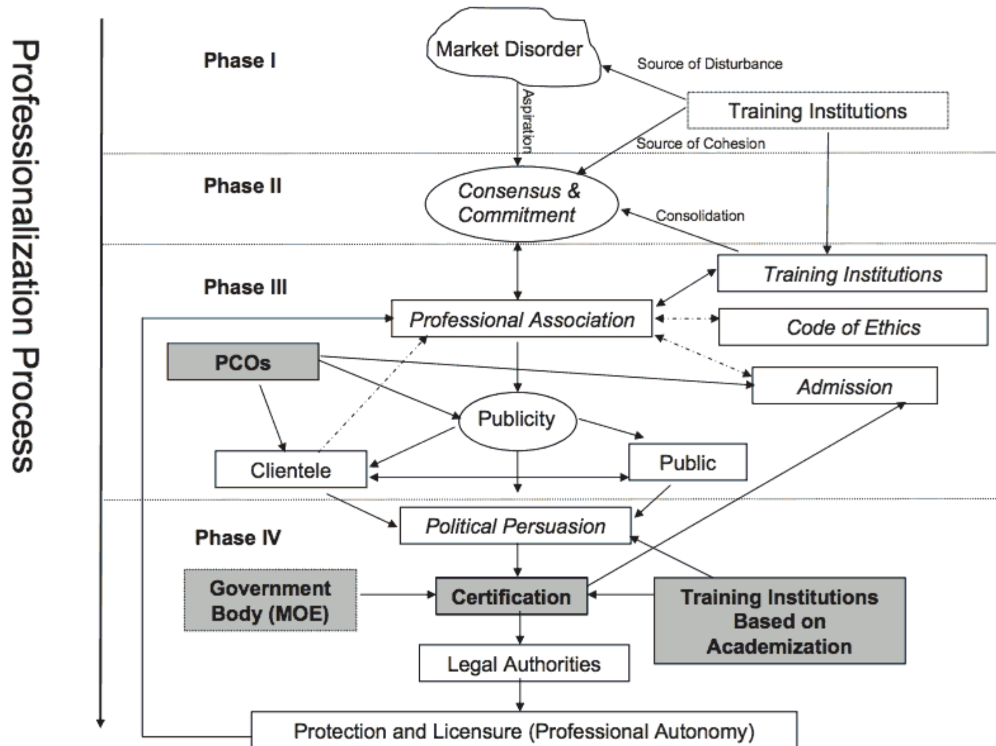

Figure 3.2: Ju's (2009) extension of Tseng's (1992) model of professionalisation for conference interpreters.

From the perspective of the translation profession, Rondziková (2020) adapts Tseng's (1992) model so that it better adheres to the circumstances of the literary translation market in Slovakia. The proposed model is successive and phase-based and aims to describe literary translation's gradual development towards professionalisation (Rondziková, 2020; see also Figure 3.3). The model can be summarised as follows:

- Phase one: The market is unregulated, market disorder exists, and the overall quality of translation services is low. Clients lack awareness of what translation involves and often base their purchasing decisions on price rather than quality. In response, translators should begin adopting professional practices to elevate the status of their emerging profession and to improve their working conditions. The emergence of translator training signals the transition to the next phase.
- Phase two: training programmes and institutions (including universities) might be supplying more professionals than the market demands, reigniting competition. Despite this, training programmes and institutions contribute towards dividing the market into qualified, inadequately qualified, and unqualified translators. Training programmes are also monitoring the market and are adapting their courses to better prepare aspiring professionals. Meanwhile, ongoing issues such as poor working conditions and fluctuating prices contribute towards market disorder which drive translators to leaving the profession entirely. Therefore, further steps should be taken by translators to unite and form professional associations to improve working conditions, set standards for new professionals entering the market, and build

recognition for the profession amongst clients and members of the public. At this stage, public recognition and a professional code of conduct may not yet be present.

- Phase three: training institutions begin to collaborate with professional associations. Associations begin to develop codes of conduct, aiming to prevent price dumping and malpractice. Associations may also start to regulate their admission policies to enhance the status of aspiring translators as well as control any unfair competition and/or malpractice that is still present. Associations also begin to take measures to increase public awareness of the profession and its purpose in addition to influencing potential clients and legal authorities to take up their recommendations regarding translation solutions.
- Phase four: professional associations become politically active to further protect the interests of the profession. With recognition at hand, this gives the profession enough leverage to campaign for legal protection and licensure for the translation profession.

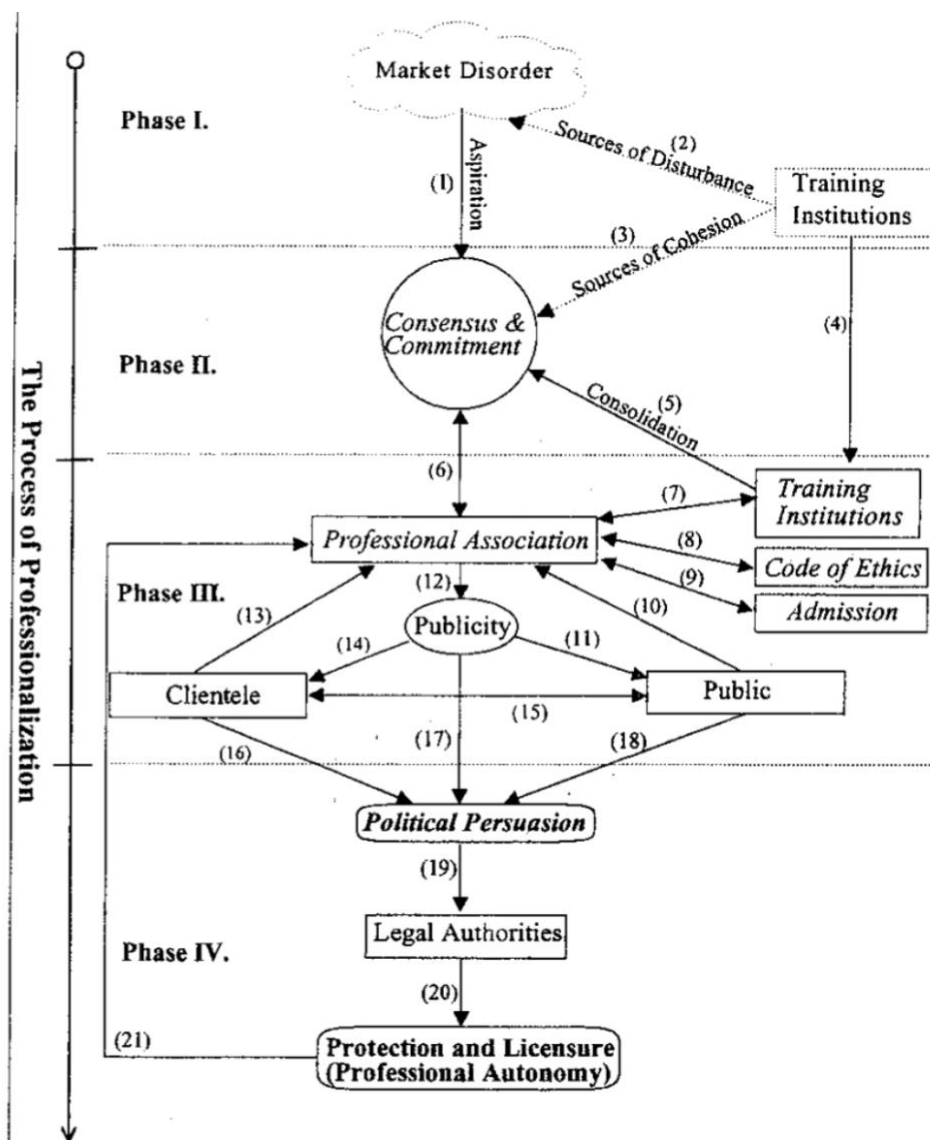

Figure 3.3: Rondziková's (2020) phased-based model of professionalisation of literary translators.

Tseng's (1992) professionalisation model for conference interpreting and Rondziková's (2020) professionalisation model for the literary translation market are, as expected, largely comparable given that the latter is an adaptation of the former. However, there are a few minor differences between the two models. For example, Rondziková (2020) suggests in phase one that practitioners should begin to make efforts to implement professional practices, meanwhile Tseng (1992) states that there may be little incentive for such a development at this stage. Moreover, Rondziková (2020) continues to address the ongoing existence of market disorder in phase two in addition to introducing the need to start building recognition amongst clients and the public. Also, professional associations have a more significant role in the sense that associations are recommended to start making efforts towards setting standards and improving working conditions, an expectation that is not depicted in Tseng's (1992) phase two. Similarly, Rondziková (2020) expands on Tseng's (1992) phase three by extending the responsibility of training institutions, encouraging them to also collaborate with associations to further enhance the sense of commitment. In other words, given that the models cater to different contexts, it would be expected that Rondziková's (2020) model for literary translators in Slovakia would differ slightly to Tseng's (1992) model for conference interpreters in China.

By the drawing on and comparing the different available professionalisation models that are relevant to translation to some degree, it becomes possible to develop a more all-rounded perspective of what the professionalisation of translation is likely to entail (see Table 3.2 for the list of attributes that make up the approaches to professionalisation for the T&I sector; see also Section 3.5 for (de-)professionalisation criteria that make up this study's framework).

3.3.2 Translator Status

The concept of status plays a critical role in the professionalisation of occupations, particularly for the case of translation (Sulaiman et al., 2024). This concept has two distinct yet related applications within TS. On the one hand, status refers to the public's perception of the value and prestige of translation, concerning what the general public thinks translators can do, and how well or poorly they execute their services (Ruokonen and Mäkisalo, 2018). Meanwhile, Lambert and Walker (2022) distinguish between internal perceptions and external perceptions, with internal perceptions relating to how individual translators, and to an extent academic institutions and industry associations too, view translators' professional status, and external perceptions relating to how clients and other non-translators view it. On the other hand, status also refers to the degree of professionalisation of translation and its development towards the attainment of the status of a profession (Ruokonen, 2013; Sela-Sheffy, 2022). Based on these interpretations and also on previous research on translator status (see Liu, 2025; Dam and Zethsen, 2011; 2013; 2016; Ruokonen, 2013; Svahn, 2020; Ruokonen and

Mäkisalo, 2018; Ruokonen and Svahn, 2022), status can be summarised as the following: translators' perception of the value of themselves and their occupation; the public's perception of the value of translators and their service; and the degree of professionalisation of translation (Sulaiman et al., 2024).

3.3.2.1 Perceptions of Translation

Importance can be found in the work that translators do as mediators of communication and understanding. Despite this, translators mostly agree that they remain relatively invisible in society, believing that professional visibility, fame and societal recognition may not be in reach for them (Dam, 2013).

While the endeavours of translators are undoubtedly necessary to keep globalisation and cross-border communications going, translators often find their skills and capacities undervalued by those who require them (Griffin-Mason, 2018; Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2017). To illustrate, Dam (2013) and Liu (2022) explain how non-translators' attributes towards translation were consistently negative with an overall attitude that "anyone can do it" if you are competent in a foreign language and with language-related tools, such as MT and online dictionaries. Similarly, Sela-Sheffy (2008) outlines additional assumptions, namely that translator competence apparently does not encompass anything more than knowledge of the source language and that anyone is allowed to translate. Perhaps for these reasons, it is also speculated that potential clients do not financially valorise translation and so they are not willing to pay or budget for it (Robinson, 2019). Furthermore, in Dam's (2013) qualitative analysis of translator blogs, significant discourse pertained to the supposed lack of acknowledgement, amongst non-translators, of the skills and expertise required to translate. Even translation students' opinions resonate with the consensus that non-practitioners fail to appreciate the expertise required to succeed within the industry (Ruokonen, 2016). These types of views amongst the public and amongst translators themselves can inherently damage the professional reputation of translation and impact its appeal for future entrants (Moorkens and Lewis, 2019).

In general, translator status is considered lower than that of interpreters and is often likened to that of secretaries, copyeditors, journalists, librarians and even teachers (Katan, 2009; Ruokonen, 2013; Sela-Sheffy, 2008). Interestingly, these comparisons are made even by translators and interpreters themselves (Katan, 2009). More specifically, conference interpreters, and to a certain degree translators working for international organisations, are often perceived as having a high status (Dam and Zethsen, 2013; Ruokonen and Mäkisalo, 2018) because of the assumption that such language experts enjoy prestigious working conditions and high salaries (Dam and Zethsen, 2013). Meanwhile, freelance translators, as well as community interpreters, are considered to have a much lower status due to poorer working conditions and low pay (Dam and Zethsen, 2013). In the specific case of Israel,

commercial translation and community interpreting are often performed by ad hoc practitioners who neither see themselves nor are seen by others as professional translators and do not seek such a status, and those who do consider themselves professional feel unrecognised, under-appreciated, and undervalued (Sela-Sheffy, 2008). Additionally, Dam and Zethsen (2011) found, on average, however, that Danish company translators ranked their overall status higher than agency translators, freelance translators, and surprisingly, even in-house EU translators.

Evidence indicates that (freelance) translator status ranges, therefore, from middling to rather low (Ruokonen and Mäkisalo, 2018; Gümüş, 2024), and this is the case for various countries (see also Dam and Zethsen, 2011; 2013; Katan, 2009; Liu, 2022; Svahn, 2016). Not only are societal recognition and acknowledgement of translator skills seemingly out of reach, but translators also experience poor visibility and low degrees of influence. That being said, there are indications that translator status can be improved on the basis of increased visibility in addition to better cooperation between translators and the other agents of the translation workflow (Ruokonen, 2013).

3.3.2.2 Signals of Status

An individual or group with high (professional) status is likely to display certain signals of status (Pym et al., 2012). The signals of status can be summarised as: attested work experience; academic and professional certifications and/or qualifications; trustworthiness which can be acquired from educational or judicial institutions; degree of professional exclusivity in the sense that some translators are to be considered professional while others are not; rates of pay that correlate with the services rendered; official recognition of the translation profession (e.g. appearances in official documents such as census records and taxation systems) as the first step towards prestige; individual or collective authority accrued from experience, state authorisation, and/or academic qualifications; and evidence of reliability which is often in the form of word-of-mouth recommendations (Pym et al., 2012; Pym et al., 2016; Sulaiman et al., 2024).

However, when the "signals of status are weak or confusing, those values are low, market disorder results, and good translators may leave the market" (Pym et al., 2012, p. 3). In this vein, "the process of professionalisation can then be seen as the production of efficient signals of status such that good translators stay in the market" (Pym et al., 2012, p. 3). The concept of signals is based on Spence's (1973) theory of signalling. This theory is based on the premise that one party conveys some information about their competence to another party, through what is known as signals or signalling devices. This is important in translation because the professional status of translators depends on reliable signalling devices as a means to showcase their competences and to assist clients, employers and the lay public, who are often

incapable of recognising the value of translators and their work, when deciding which translation service provider to invest in (Chan, 2017; Sulaiman et al., 2024).

There are, however, additional signals that impact translation's perceived professionalism and provoke market disorder. These include a general lack of efficient signalling with regard to translation services in low-resource languages; little testing of language competence; little cross-border recognition; lack of verification regarding qualifications; lack of professional mobility; declining prices; fragmentation; and trust in recruitment tests and length of experience rather than in qualifications or association memberships (Pym et al., 2012). It is also worth mentioning that signals can, in fact, be faked in translation. For example, given that bilingualism or second-language competence is common across the globe, one could easily claim to have native or near-native proficiency in their working languages without much interrogation. Other examples of faking signals include falsifying work history and credentials, or even using MT or AI and then presenting the output as their translation. With this in mind, there is reason to also speculate that translators faking signals may also capitalise on potential client's lack of awareness as to what a good translation entails and what a good translator looks like. Unfortunately, inefficient signalling and the fact that signals can be faked have the potential to result in professional and high-ability translators being driven out of the market by lower-paid and non-professional or amateur translators, a situation which is known as 'adverse selection' (Chan, 2013; Pym et al., 2016).

In other words, the signals of status offer a route to professionalisation for individuals. This is, however, deemed voluntary because translators choose for themselves whether they wish to professionalise by accumulating various signals of status. Moreover, in such a free market setting, it is up to the client or employer to choose whether they want to commission a professional who is able to exhibit signals of status or an amateur or non-professional translator who may not be able to display as many signals. However, for professionalisation to function, at least three key prerequisites must be fulfilled (Sulaiman et al., 2024):

- Creating awareness amongst the public, particularly potential clients and employers, on the differences between certified professional and non-professional translators in terms of role, function, competence, risk, cost, etc. This is important to establish given that signals can be faked and that some non-professionals may capitalise on potential clients' lack of awareness of what professional translation entails. In turn, this awareness of what good translation services and a good translator look like would allow potential clients and employers to make informed decisions regarding the quality of translation they require, the cost they are willing to bear and the risk they are willing to take[16].

[16] An example of this is the different types of certified and sworn translation systems that exist on the continent. Although there is no sworn or state- or court-authorised translator system in the UK, in various other European countries (e.g. Austria, Spain, Italy, Finland etc.), sworn translators are state- and/or court-authorised on the

- Creating awareness amongst the translation community on what being professional actually entails and the value of being professional.
- Securing mass participation in professionalisation is needed to justify the costs incurred (e.g., costs of certification examinations). Not having a sufficient number of aspiring professionals could result in the failure of the professionalisation process (Chan, 2009). Fulfilling this prerequisite is very much dependent on the fulfilment of the previous two prerequisites.

Above all, the signalling approach argues that the professionalisation of translation, unlike other well-recognised practices such as medicine and law, should not be about restricting the activity and controlling who can or cannot be paid for a service (Sulaiman et al., 2024). Rather, it should be about the development of efficient and effective competence-signalling mechanisms (Pym et al., 2012). Unlike the power approach, which advocates the concept of a controlled market, the signalling approach favours the concept of a free market, arguing that the nature of translation, namely freelancing and that translation is one of the basic things that multilinguals do, makes it unreasonable to restrict and regulate translation activity (Sulaiman et al., 2024).

3.3.3 Summary of Professionalisation Approaches for Translation and Interpreting

When conceptualising professionalisation in a translation context, the trait and power approaches often go hand-in-hand (see Table 3.2 for a summary of professionalisation approaches for the T&I sector). As previously discussed, not only were specific traits or signals of status established (see Witter-Merithew and Johnson, 2004; Pym et al., 2012; 2016), but also phase-based models of professionalisation were defined that build on and combine both the trait and power approaches (see Rondziková, 2020; Tseng, 1992; Ju, 2009).

basis of their educational qualifications, or they are authorised on the basis of fulfilling conditions or successfully completing a test administered by the state (Pym et al., 2012). Meanwhile, certifying translations is the approach adopted by other countries (e.g. UK). Certified translations have to include a statement of truth which is typically produced by the translator or by the translation company that they work for. This signed, stamped and dated statement is attached to the translation, attesting that the translation(s) is/are an accurate and reliable depiction of the original document(s).

	Tseng (1992) / Ju (2009)	Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2004)	Rondziková (2020)	Signals of Status (Pym et al., 2012 / Pym et al., 2016)
Reliability / word of mouth recommendation				✓
Attested work experience				✓
Formal training (i.e. schools, apprenticeships, institutes etc.)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Academic routes to the profession (i.e. university degree)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Professional associations / shared networks	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enforcing ethical codes	✓	✓	✓	
Professional authority in client-practitioner relationships	✓		✓	✓
Public / official recognition	✓	✓	✓	✓
Professional exclusivity / controlled admission to the profession	✓		✓	✓
Legal protection / licensure procedures	✓		✓	✓
Certifications / professional credentials	✓	✓		✓
Body of theoretical / exclusive / complex knowledge	✓	✓		
(Continuous) professional development	✓	✓		
Monopoly over operations (i.e. admission processes, training, policies and accreditation processes)	✓	✓	✓	
Salary and benefits		✓		✓
Prestige				✓

Table 3.2: Summary of the approaches to professionalisation of T&I sector that were addressed in Section 3.3.

According to Table 3.2 (see above), establishing formal training and academic routes to the profession, forming professional associations and shared networks, and winning public and official recognition of the profession are the groups of professional traits that constitute as a component of each of the approaches to professionalisation for the T&I sector. The attributes which contribute to three out of the four approaches are: establishing and enforcing ethical codes, upholding professional authority in client-practitioner relationships, achieving professional exclusivity and controlling admission to the profession, campaigning for legal protection and licensure procedures, establishing certifications and/or professional credentials, and being granted monopoly over the profession's operations (i.e. admission processes, training, policies and accreditation processes).

Similar to the case with the deconstruction of the general approaches to professionalisation (see Section 3.1.4), the identified professional attributes for the T&I sector also directly contributed to the development of the professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3). By systematically synthesising the identified professional attributes for the T&I sector with those identified after deconstructing the general approaches, this study was able to translate a span of theoretical constructs into concrete, measurable criteria that could be applied to the evaluation of translation as a profession.

This section has summarised the main theories and concepts that underpin professionalisation within the translation and interpreting context which have also been taken into consideration when developing the professionalisation criteria (see Section 3.5). The following section briefly touches on some previous evaluations of translation's status as a profession before clarifying how the (de-)professionalisation criteria were established and how they were applied to this study.

3.4 Translation's Status as a Profession

Translation professionals have reported preliminary concerns about the possibility of de-professionalisation (Katan, 2009), while other reports categorise translation as a semi-profession (Sela-Sheffy, 2008; Gümüş, 2024), as under-professionalised (Sela-Sheffy, 2023), as a practice rather than a true profession (Chesterman, 2001), or as a profession whose professionalisation has already been suspended (Dam and Zethsen, 2016; Pym et al., 2012; see also Section 6.4.5 for discussion on translation's status from the trait and power perspectives and Section 7.3.5 for discussion on whether translation is de-professionalising).

3.4.1 Theorising Translation as an Occupation

An attempt to theorise translation as an occupation was made a decade ago by Tyulenev (2015) who applied Flexner's (1915) definition of profession to the field of translation. Flexner (1915, p.10) defines professions as involving "intellectual operations with large individual responsibility; they derive their material from science and learning, they use their material to work towards a practical and definite end; they possess an educationally communicable technique; they tend to self-organisation; they are becoming increasingly altruistic in motivation".

Based on Tyulenev's (2015) application of Flexner's six criteria, translation is, indeed, professionalising, but it is not yet at the stage to claim the status of a fully-fledged profession. On the one hand, Tyulenev (2015) explains that translation not only involves highly intellectual

operations, but that it is also becoming increasingly crucial for practitioners and professional bodies to remain ethical in their actions. In fact, ethics is becoming a standard component of translator training programmes, equipping new translators with the ethical issues associated with their profession. Additionally, the translation practice is typically seen as a largely altruistic social activity because of its goal to build bridges between cultures and nations, and translation bodies, in particular, work towards presenting their services as altruistic. It is also the translator's responsibility to mine for resources and to expand their knowledge base.

On the other hand, Tyulenev (2015) argues that translation is still practised very actively by amateurs or by those without special training, despite the frequent setting up and renewing of translator training programmes. Therefore, translation remains largely unregulated and the restrictions on who is permitted to translate vary greatly across the globe. Not only that, but translators' contributions are considered supplementary rather than final, and while they are responsible for their part of the translation process, they may not necessarily be held accountable for the actions of, for example, proofreaders, PMs and editors. Finally, although professions should be largely altruistic endeavours, this does not mean that they can be performed on a volunteer or underpaid basis (Flexner, 1915). This scenario is, however, all too familiar to many practising translators who are frustrated about feeling undervalued and believe that they are underpaid for what they do (Katan, 2011).

Based on the application of Flexner's (1915) six criteria for defining a profession, Tyulenev (2015) concludes that translation cannot yet claim the status of a fully-fledged profession. That being said, translation is on its way to claiming professional status because it exhibits features of a profession such as necessitating specialised knowledge to complete tasks, mining for your own resources and remaining ethical, yet it falls short on the remaining criteria.

It is important to also bear in mind that Tyulenev's (2015) arguments are now a decade old and so his conclusions may no longer be relevant to the circumstances of the contemporary translation industry. Fortunately, this thesis revisits questions relating to the professionalisation of translation, exploring how the translation industry has changed since 2015 and whether translation's professionalisation has been affected by the changes that have taken place over the last decade. In particular, this thesis builds on Tyulenev's (2015) study by retaining the concern with translation's professional status, while extending the analytical scope beyond the application of Flexner's (1915) criteria alone. While Tyulenev (2015) evaluates translation's professionalisation primarily through a definition of profession, this thesis operationalises a broader and more flexible framework that integrates multiple sociological approaches to professionalisation, including both the trait and power approaches, sequential and temporal models of professionalisation, and understandings of professionalisation from the perspective of TIS. This allows professionalisation to be examined not only in terms of professional attributes, but also in relation to professional control and authority. In addition, this thesis also incorporates discussions on the potential of de-

professionalisation alongside those relating to just professionalisation, enabling a holistic evaluation of how emerging industry dynamics – such as automation, cost-cutting business practices, and the proliferation of roles and tasks – may undermine translation's professionalisation efforts. With this original comprehensive framework that deconstructs (de-)professionalisation, this thesis offers a novel account of translation's professional standing (see also Section 3.5. for (de-)professionalisation criteria; see Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description).

3.4.2 The Professional Project

A professional project is "a series of steps taken by an occupational group collectively to turn their occupation into a profession" (Tyulenev, 2014; p.69). Furthermore, the main goal of any professional project is to create professional closure, which means that a particular type of activity is practised by a selected group of people only (Gümüş, 2024). In relation to the specific case of translation, Gümüş (2024) explains that translation as a professional project revolves around the steps taken to become institutionalised[17] and how the current social landscape impacts the occupation's current status.

Based on Gümüş' (2024) application of the concept of professional project in relation to translation, translation has, indeed, come a long way from being considered a mere occupation performed by any bilingual to making significant strides in their institutionalisation efforts (see also Dunne (2012) for the industrialisation of translation). This institutionalisation is evidenced by the establishment of dedicated educational institutions and translator training programmes, certification processes, professional associations and CoCs (Gümüş, 2024). Each of these types of institutions or instruments not only provide a means of validating a translator's skills, professionalism and expertise (Chan, 2009), but they also contribute towards translation's professional closure by implicitly drawing boundaries that distinguish the skilled, committed and qualified from those who practise translation on a hobby or amateur basis.

Despite these efforts, translation is not yet a fully-fledged profession because challenges to the institutionalisation process exist. More specifically, translation's institutionalisation lacks primarily in the areas relating to regulation, standardisation, societal recognition, and professional closure (Gümüş, 2024).

[17] Institutionalisation is the process through which a particular occupation or group of professionals solidifies its status and standards and regulates its practices within society. The process involves the development of formal structures, rules, and good practices that define the profession's identity and boundaries. Besides possessing certain skills, members of professional groups need some formal qualifications typically obtained through specialised education and examinations in order to enter the market or to provide evidence for credibility in the market (Tyulenev, 2014). Additional steps towards institutionalisation include licensing and certification, standardisation of education, public recognition, professional associations, and occupational closure (Gümüş, 2024).

In particular, non-professional translation, or the “amateurisation” of translation, is on the rise, with practices such as volunteering, fan translation and fan subbing, and crowdsourcing currently flourishing (see Section 2.2 for literature on collaborative and community translation approaches). As a result of general and translation technologies becoming more accessible than ever before, and coupling this reality with the inherent lack of regulation regarding qualifications, entry requirements and quality standards, it is possible for non-professional translators, who may also lack specialised training in translation and in languages, to enter the translation market which, in turn, blurs the boundary around professional closure (Gümüş, 2024).

Moreover, a professional project is traditionally focussed on human social agency, however, modern life is becoming increasingly intertwined with technologies (Gümüş, 2024). The other main threat to the institutionalisation of translation concerns, therefore, the rapid and ongoing enhancements of AI, a modern technology that is eliciting more radical hypotheses about the replacement of human translators. Although the intention of translation technologies was understood as assisting the work of human translators in aspects relating to productivity and has also encouraged human translators to specialise in certain domains, the relationship between humans and technology has proven to be complicated, nonetheless (see Section 2.1 for literature relating to the influences of technology in the translation industry). In the contemporary translation market, the rejection of technology is no longer an option for translators on the basis that collaborating with technology is requisite to handle translation demands at a speed and at a cost that is unimaginable without the assistance from translation technologies (Kenny, 2020). In this way, translation as a professional project is no longer about human agents alone, as embracing technology is inevitably the future of the industry (Gümüş, 2024; see also Section 7.3.3 for discussion on the predicted impact of technology on the future of the industry).

Based on the application of the concept of professional project in relation to translation, Gümüş (2024) categorises translation, therefore, as a semi-profession. On the one hand, significant progress has, indeed, been made towards the institutionalisation of translation (i.e. the establishment of translator training programmes, professional associations and CoCs etc.) which has contributed favourably towards professional closure. On the other hand, complete professional closure and further institutionalisation are hindered, nevertheless, primarily as a result of the rise of non-professional practices and by the rapid improvement of AI.

3.5 (De-)Professionalisation Criteria

This thesis’ approach to evaluating the professionalisation of translation differs to Tyulenev’s (2015) application of Flexner’s (1915) definition of profession and to Gümüş’ (2024)

application of the concept of professional project (see Section 3.4). Rather than applying existing theoretical models or approaches applied in previous studies, this thesis operationalises a new (de-)professionalisation framework that was developed specifically for this study. Specifically, this thesis deconstructs the concepts and models discussed throughout this chapter, being used specifically to establish a novel framework on (de-)professionalisation that encompasses original (de-)professionalisation criteria (see below) that can be used to explore the extent to which translation is professionalised and is potentially being de-professionalised.

By taking a closer look at both Table 3.1 and Table 3.2, it can be observed that the constellation of professional attributes that make up the general approaches to professionalisation differs slightly from the constellation of professional attributes that make up the approaches to professionalisation for the T&I sector. Figure 3.4 (see below) illustrates the professional attributes that are unique to either the general approaches or to the approaches catered for the T&I sector, in addition to those which are shared by both groups of approaches. For instance, defining a necessary and/or professional service-area, performing on a full-time basis, introducing qualifying exams, establishing research groups and programmes, and committing to a singular occupational choice are the professional characteristics that were explicitly referenced or discussed only in some of the general approaches to professionalisation. In contrast, showcasing reliability, providing evidence of work experience, enjoying salary and benefits, and working towards professional prestige were explicitly referenced or discussed only in some of the approaches to professionalisation for the T&I sector. That being said, there are, nevertheless, a number of professional attributes that are central to both the general approaches to professionalisation as well as to the approaches to professionalisation for the T&I sector (see Figure 3.4 below).

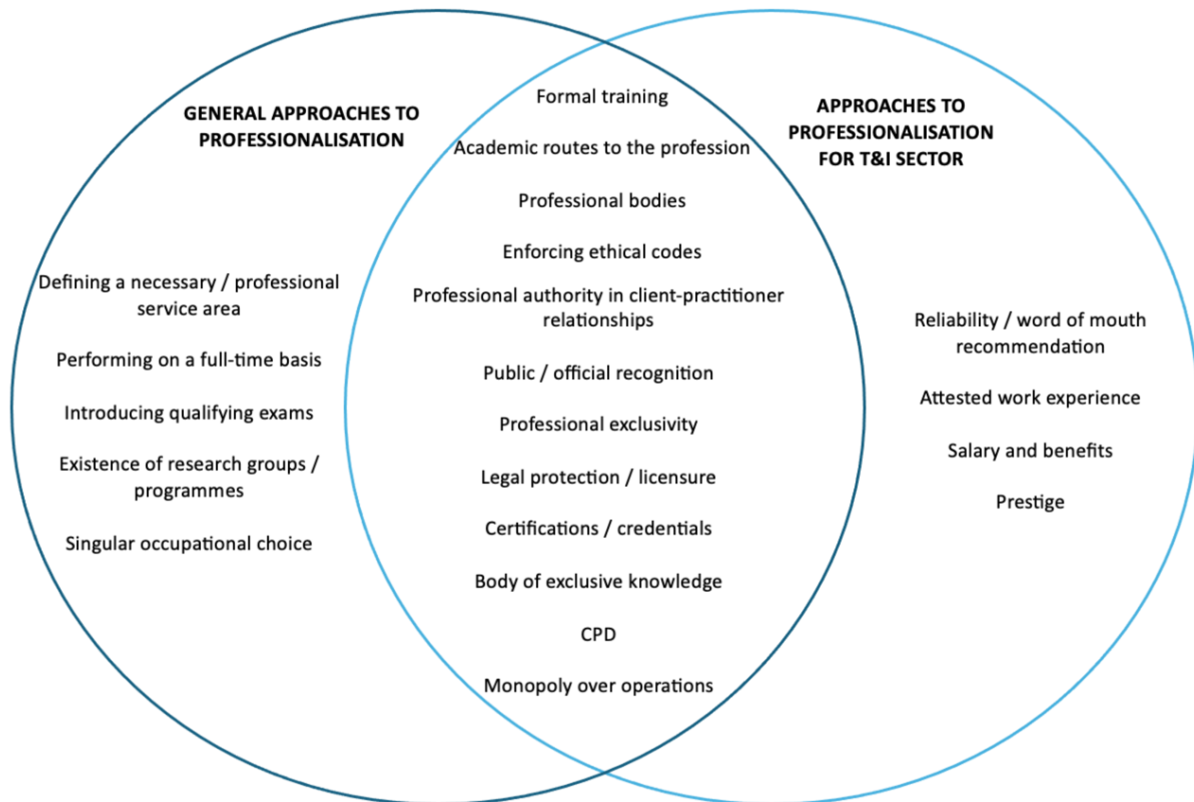

Figure 3.4: Summary of shared professional attributes and those particular to either general approaches to professionalisation or to approaches to professionalisation for the T&I sector.

At the heart of all the approaches to professionalisation covered in this chapter (both general and T&I specific), the formation of professional associations and shared networks was the only professional attribute consistently cited in every general approach to professionalisation in addition to every approach catered for the T&I sector.

The next most frequently cited attributes (cited by at least four out of the five general approaches and by at least three out of the four T&I approaches) are:

- establishing formal training and academic routes to the profession,
- establishing and enforcing ethical codes,
- winning public and official recognition of the profession,
- achieving professional exclusivity and controlling admission to the profession,
- campaigning for legal protection and licensure procedures.

On the back of the recurrence of these professional attributes across both the general and T&I specific approaches, these professional traits are, for the purpose of this study, considered the core markers of professionalisation, making up my professionalisation criteria that will be used to navigate the forthcoming discussion of the extent to which translation is professionalised (see Section 6.4.5 for discussion of translation's constellation of professional traits). Furthermore, the less frequently cited professional traits, such as promoting and engaging with CPD and upholding professional authority in client-practitioner relationships,

were not discarded. Rather, they will, wherever possible, be considered as a secondary set of criteria, or they will be evaluated individually to assess whether they can be added to translation's wider constellation of professional traits. To illustrate, the notion of CPD is relevant when speaking about formal training and education. Likewise, professional authority can be discussed in tandem with securing recognition. By also considering the less frequently cited professional traits, this will allow me to approach the evaluation of translation's professionalisation as comprehensively as possible.

Therefore, the professionalisation criteria include:

Professionalisation criteria	**Description**
Sustaining a professional culture	Ethical professional behaviour and the existence of professional translator communities
Pursuing translator training and professional development	Certifications and professional training, university degrees, CPD
Campaigning for professional and official recognition	Societal recognition, professional authority in practitioner-client relationships, and licensing
Maintaining professional exclusivity	Monopoly over all aspects of the service, existence of body of exclusive knowledge and controlled entry to the profession

Table 3.3: Professionalisation criteria.

This thesis also evaluates the professionalisation of translation at the individual levels of the trait approach and the power approach. To elaborate, with reference to the trait approach, translation's constellation of professional attributes was mapped out (see Section 6.4.5); and with reference to the power approach, the amount of professional power that practitioners wield over the public, their clients, subordinate groups and their profession as a whole was evaluated (see Section 6.4.4). By evaluating translation's professionalisation through different lenses, this will enable me to compare conclusions and gain a more comprehensive outlook of the factors that influence the professionalisation of translation and to ascertain the extent to which translation is a fully-fledged profession.

Meanwhile, for the de-professionalisation criteria, all of the factors that denote this process were taken into consideration. Based on the summary and the multi-faceted definition of de-professionalisation (see Section 3.2.4), the de-professionalisation criteria consist of:

De-Professionalisation criteria	**Description**
Automation of work practices	Professionals and workflows substituted by technology or machines
Loss of professional control	Reduced influence over the decisions made regarding the practical and financial conditions of work

Deskilling	Lowering the level of skill required to complete work, whereby the tasks are simplified and the tools are standardised
Democratisation of knowledge	Greater access to specialised knowledge and information
Delegation or subordination	Work is being automated or being assigned to to individuals with fewer or irrelevant qualifications and/or to external parties
Weakening professional recognition and reducing demand for professional judgement	Reduced reliance on professionals and an erosion of recognition and validation particularly from the general public, consumers or clients and organisations
Redefinition of professional roles and relationships	Changes in the responsibilities, scope and boundaries of professional work

Table 3.4: De-professionalisation criteria.

When speaking specifically within the scope of the technological roots of de-professionalisation, Lester's (2020) spectrum of four possible scenarios is particularly useful to hypothesise what the future of translation could look like based on the current and projected levels of technology deployed in the industry.

With my new framework on (de-)professionalisation at hand, the (de-)professionalisation of translation can be comprehensively explored. By identifying the extent to which translation is professionalised in accordance with the professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3) and is potentially being de-professionalised according to the de-professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.4), I will be able to categorise and explain why, from a sociological point of view, whether translation is a profession, emerging or semi-profession, occupation, or one that is de-professionalising to some degree.

This study utilises survey and focus group methods to gather practitioners' and non-practitioners' perceptions of the contemporary translation industry. The following chapter breaks down my data collection (Section 4.1) and data analysis (Section 4.3) methods, discussing each step of the process in-depth in addition to addressing the main ethical concerns underlying my methods (Section 4.2).

4 Methodology

This PhD engages in participant-orientated research which typically involves gathering empirical data through interviews, focus groups and surveys (McDonough Dolmaya, 2024). A mixed-methods approach was adopted which entailed gathering both quantitative and qualitative data (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014). An online survey was the primary method that was employed to gather practitioners' and non-practitioners' perceptions of the contemporary translation industry (see Section 4.1.1 for an overview of my surveys). Initially, this research set out to collect the perspectives of UK-based participants only. However, there was a concern that restricting the survey to this geographical scope would not be representative of the broader global translation industry. Thus, the scope was broadened during the survey design process to include practitioners from any location and to also investigate the opinions of non-practitioners (see Section 4.1.1.4 for details on the survey population). In addition to practitioner perspectives, which provided discourse on the first-hand experiences of what it is currently like being a professional translator, a separate, second survey was also distributed amongst non-practitioners in order to seek a potentially different point of view in regard to the value and role of translators and translation services in modern society.

Additionally, the practitioners who participated in the survey were invited to take part in a follow-up focus group, allowing them to expand on the themes introduced in the survey if they wished to do so. The focus groups thus provided a platform for the practitioners to discuss the survey topics with others and to allow me, as the moderator, to witness and to document these interactions (see Section 4.1.2 for more information about the organisation of the focus groups)[18].

Once data collection was completed, I carried out both statistical (quantitative) and thematic (qualitative) analyses on my data. My closed-ended questions' results were quantified as descriptive statistics and charts, and I inductively coded the responses to the open-ended discussions in order to elicit the themes and patterns that best represent the data (see Section 4.3 for data analysis approaches). The originality of this research lies not only in the contribution of new empirical data, but also in the (de-)professionalisation framework, composed of newly devised (de-)professionalisation criteria, that was created specifically for this study and through which the data was interpreted (see Section 3.5 for overview of framework, see also Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description). In turn, this allows for a structured and theoretically grounded interpretation.

[18] Ethical clearance was granted on 05.05.2023 and the amendments were approved on 12.12.23 (application number: LTSLCS-160).

This chapter covers my data collection (Section 4.1) and data analysis (Section 4.3) processes as well as the main ethical issues that had to be navigated (Section 4.2). The data collection portion of this chapter outlines the survey design (Section 4.1.1.1), the outcomes to the pilot survey (Section 4.1.1.2), how the surveys were distributed (Section 4.1.1.3), the survey demographic results (Sections 4.1.1.4.1 and 4.1.1.4.2), in addition to how the focus group participants were recruited (Section 4.1.2.1), how the sessions were organised (Section 4.1.2.2), and finally the transcription method that I employed (Section 4.1.2.3). The data analysis portion of this chapter covers what I did for my statistical (Section 4.3.1) and thematic (Section 4.3.2) analyses before closing this chapter with how my methodology aligns with warrantability criteria (Section 4.3.3).

4.1 Data Collection

4.1.1 Surveys

Surveys are described as a fragile data collection method because they can easily fail in terms of completion rates and response relevance (Kuznik et al., 2010). However, this method was chosen because it is one of the most widely used techniques across the social sciences to reach large populations and to collect an extensive amount of data (Kuznik et al., 2010; Sun, 2016). Additionally, the structured nature of survey data arguably makes it easier to approach data analysis in a structured and systematic manner, especially when compared with unstructured interview data (Saldanha and O’Brien, 2014).

Surveys have been used extensively in sociological research within Translation and Interpreting Studies (Saldanha and O’Brien, 2014) as a means to gather data on the values, knowledge, habits, and the needs of the different socio-professional groups (e.gs., freelance translators, in-house translators, interpreters, post-editors etc.) within the language industry. In the field of Translation Studies specifically, many surveys have focussed on investigating translators’ attitudes of the field (e.g., Katan, 2011; Courtney and Phelan, 2019; Dam and Zethsen, 2016; Moorkens, 2020b etc.), an area that my project further interrogates by probing current practitioners on what they think about the contemporary translation industry and the state of their profession (see Appendices for the practitioner and non-practitioner survey questions).

A number of issues can, however, arise in the collection and analysis of survey data. One drawback of online surveys is the lack of control over unanswered questions and erroneous, illogical, and incomprehensible responses that may nullify that particular entry (Krosnick and Presser, 2010). Another issue is social desirability due to the fear of being judged, or because respondents are aware that they are being studied and may have felt inclined to provide desirable responses (Saldanha and O’Brien, 2014). To elaborate, the practitioner survey

explored the purpose and value of the translation profession which may have resulted in some participants feeling inclined to defend their profession instead of providing an objective, all-rounded point of view. To minimise social desirability bias, the survey participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity during recruitment with the aim of reducing the potential fear of judgement. During the design stage, relevant survey questions were formulated in as neutral a manner as possible, Likert-scale items were used to allow participants to consider a range of responses rather than feel pressured towards a *correct* answer, or the same question was re-phrased as a separate question to prompt the participants to reflect on their views from different angles. Essentially, the intention of designing the surveys in this way was to encourage participants to provide reflective responses. Similarly, self-selection bias was also considered as participants with stronger views or a greater interest in translation-related issues may have been more likely to take part, potentially limiting the representativeness of the sample. While it is difficult to completely eliminate self-selection bias, particularly in voluntary studies, care was taken during the analysis stage to not generalise the results beyond the study's sample. A further potential drawback concerns the possibility that some of the themes or topics covered in a survey may not be familiar amongst the entire survey population. This drawback is particularly applicable to the non-practitioner survey because it is possible that some non-practitioners were, at the time of the survey, unfamiliar with professional translation services in terms of what they entail and what translators actually do as a result of never needing to acquire these services. As such, it can be speculated that some non-practitioners were not always able to offer a true reflection of the value of these services and their responses may have been based on their assumptions. Additionally, some may simply get bored and provide any answer or drop out entirely (Krosnick and Presser, 2010). To address these and other potential issues, I conducted a pilot study for my practitioner survey and asked my non-practitioner peers to sense-check my non-practitioner survey. This process helped to identify the types of questions respondents were most likely to answer appropriately in addition to identifying whether there were any leading and unclear questions. Through this sense-check of my surveys, I was able to make the necessary adjustments, such as clarifying questions and fixing biased or leading wording, prior to the planned survey period (see Section 4.1.1.2 for the outcome of my pilot survey). I also tried to keep the surveys as brief as possible to avoid non-completion and to encourage as many volunteers as possible to participate, minimised the number of open-ended questions, and emphasised that providing additional comments was optional. Therefore, when implemented effectively, surveys allow researchers to obtain a firmer grasp of the issues and social commentary circulating within the field (Sun, 2016).

4.1.1.1 Survey Design

The survey design stage is arguably the most important stage since an ineffective survey may jeopardise the entire research project (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014).

Regarding the design platform, each of my surveys were built using Online Surveys by Jisc. My decision to use this platform as opposed to popular alternatives is based on various reasons. Firstly, Online Surveys was made specifically for education and research institutions, so based on this alone, it seemed like a logical choice. The platform was easily accessible since I was able to quickly obtain credentials through the university, and thus, any troubleshooting could have been easily resolved.

Secondly, I found that Online Surveys provided me with a simple solution to easily build my surveys as well as to launch and distribute them swiftly. The platform's features that I frequently utilised include the ability to integrate various question types and formats (e.g. multiple choice, scale items, free text etc.), as well as the option to incorporate piping and routing. Additionally, considering that I was building more than one survey, issuing pilot surveys, and using certain questions across surveys, the feature to use questions and even entire surveys as templates, copying and pasting items, was also beneficial for my purposes.

Thirdly, Online Surveys also supports collaboration, enabling users to invite colleagues to view draft surveys before they are launched. Although I did not use this feature, I acknowledged that I could have benefitted from this if I needed it as it facilitates collaborative research projects.

And, with live updates and the auto-generation of simple frequency tables and bar charts, it was easy to monitor the incoming responses and to accumulate provisional quantitative results.

4.1.1.1.1 Survey Questions

In relation to my practitioner survey (see Appendix V: Practitioner Survey Questions), each section pertained to a particular criterion or criteria from the (de-)professionalisation framework that was created specifically for this study (see Section 3.5 for (de-)professionalisation criteria; see also Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description), probing different facets of the (de-)professionalisation criteria within a translation context. In this way, not only does the survey design operationalise the original (de-)professionalisation criteria, but the framework also functions as an analytical bridge between the sociological theories of (de-)professionalisation and the empirical data collected for this thesis (see Section 4.3 for data analysis). For example, in response to the incorporation of technology into the workplace potentially triggering automation and thus a de-professionalising effect (see Section 3.2.3 for technological roots of de-professionalisation), a series of questions relating to translation and general technologies (including machine translation, artificial intelligence, and online or cloud-based platforms) were asked to elicit responses about how they are influencing the translation workflow and translator agency as well as the demand for professional judgement and for human translation

services. Likewise, attributes of professionalisation (see Section 3.1.4 for a summary of professionalisation) include, for example, the existence of a body of theoretical, complex or exclusive knowledge, and also the establishment of formal and academic training. As such, my series of questions relating to translator training probed the practitioners regarding the practicalities of translation theory, the extent to which they consider translation a specialised activity, in addition to the necessity, professional benefits and limitations of formal training. As depicted by these two examples, the overall aim of my thematic questions was to be able to assess the extent to which the identified professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3) are acquired or implemented in a translation context in addition to whether there are any factors that are inducing de-professionalisation. Apart from the profiling questions, questions were grouped according to the following categories: experiences as a translator; translation technologies; admission to the profession; codes of conduct; training and qualifications; and finally, societal recognition, job security and freelance translation as a profession. The survey closed with an offer to opt in or opt out of receiving a post-survey report by e-mail[19].

Furthermore, acquiring positive societal recognition is the crux of the power approach to professionalisation (see Figure 3.1) and is also a key component of my professionalisation criteria (see Section 3.5 for (de-)professionalisation criteria; see also Table 3.3 and Table 3.4). In response, the non-practitioner survey (see Appendix VI: Non-Practitioner Survey Questions) focussed on addressing how human translation services are perceived by the general public in terms of their value, prestige and complexity in addition to whether translation is considered an automatable task. For this survey, questions were grouped according to the following topics: purchasing translation services; perception of the skills required to translate; and finally, the importance and sustainability of translation services. The overall aim of the non-practitioner survey was not only to clarify whether the general public is familiar with what professional translation entails, but also to compare how they value human and automated translation services respectively with how practitioners value them. Furthermore, as I am probing the non-practitioners about a field with which they may not be familiar, it was imperative that I implement certain design features to mitigate misunderstandings (Krosnick and Presser, 2010). I avoided the use of technical and industry-specific terms and I aimed to use familiar words and syntax. For example, instead of using the term “Machine Translation” or “MT”, I referred to such technology as “Google Translate, Microsoft Translator, and similar”.

For each of these surveys, additional text boxes were also available at the end of each section, and this is considered good practice because it offers the opportunity for respondents to provide supplementary comments and communicate any frustrations if they wished to do so (Saldanha and O’Brien, 2014). Additionally, the majority of my questions for both of the surveys were closed-ended, so by providing free text spaces, respondents were able to

[19] Out of the 171 practitioners, 113 requested this report. The report was distributed on 22nd December 2023 to all the interested respondents (see Appendix VIII: Post-Survey Report).

elaborate on and justify their responses or provide information that was not offered by the pre-populated choices.

Many surveys within TS begin with demographic questions (e.g. Katan, 2009; 2011; McDonough Dolmaya, 2012; Moorkens, 2020b; Courtney and Phelan, 2019; Ruokonen, 2016 etc.), allowing the researcher to define the survey sample and to build their study's contextual foundations (Connelly, 2013). To illustrate, Moorkens (2020b) used his demographic results to explore correlations between variables. For example, respondents' ages and achieved qualifications were considered, proposing that younger respondents were more likely to possess an undergraduate or a postgraduate translation qualification (Moorkens, 2020b). Additionally, McDonough Dolmaya (2012) collected demographic information to identify the characteristics of those participating in Wikipedia translations. As such, demographic information should not be overlooked as it can be used to explore correlations, to define the study's sample, as well as to better understand the context behind the extracted insights (Connelly, 2013). For these reasons, a set of profiling questions was included at the beginning of each survey (see Table 4.1). This decision was made in order to identify the types of respondents that were drawn to the survey and also to find relationships, if any, between variables, by examining whether certain attitudes vary in accordance with, for instance, respondents' location, age or employment background.

Practitioner	**Non-Practitioner**
Age bracket	Age bracket
Type of translator	Employment status
Country	Country
Qualifications	Purchased translation services
Language pairs	
Specialisations	
Full-time vs. Part-time	
Length of experience as a translator	
Member of a professional association	
Sources of work	

Table 4.1: List of demographic attributes that were collected from the practitioner and non-practitioner surveys.

To reiterate, the survey questions were systematically framed around the study's (de-)professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description), ensuring conceptual alignment through the collection of relevant data that would contribute towards addressing the RQs. In addition to ensuring conceptual relevance, care was taken during the survey question design stage to minimise leading questions and to reduce response bias. Neutral and non-evaluative wording was used wherever possible, especially in questions addressing potentially contested issues. For instance, rather than presenting claims as facts, many questions were framed as perceptions (e.g. "do you think…", "how would you rate…", "to what extent do you agree…"), allowing

respondents to reject or support these positions and gives them space to articulate their own viewpoints without being steered towards a particular position. This approach was consistently applied across both the practitioner and non-practitioner surveys. Furthermore, many attitudinal questions were framed using Likert-scale items (e.g. statements regarding technology, training and professional boundaries). These scales enabled respondents to freely indicate their degrees of agreement and disagreement, thereby reducing pressure to provide socially desirable responses. Importantly, a “not sure” option was routinely included to avoid forcing opinions in cases where respondents may have felt uncertain or have no information to offer. Finally, a pilot study was conducted for the practitioner survey and the non-practitioner survey was sense-checked by peers. Feedback from these processes informed potential refinements to question wording, structure and clarity, helping to identify and mitigate any potentially leading, ambiguous, or confusing questions prior to data collection. Taken together, these design strategies helped to ensure that the surveys elicited informed, reflective and respondent-driven data.

4.1.1.1.2 Question Format

In relation to the structure of the questions more specifically, they were formulated in both closed- and open-ended formats, of which the former format was more frequently implemented (see Appendices for survey questions). This decision was made in light of the fact that open-ended questions are more likely to elicit “don’t know” responses, especially from general population surveys (Krosnick and Presser, 2010), as well as the fact that they generally take more time to answer (Saldanha and O’Brien, 2014). That being said, structured open-ended questions were still incorporated because they encourage respondents to provide important information when prompted, ultimately adding richness to the end results which would not be achievable through closed-ended questions only (Krosnick and Presser, 2010).

For both surveys, I used a range of free text, multiple choice, and statement-based questions arranged in the Likert Scale format. I chose this rating scale because it is the most common tool used to measure attitudes (Sun, 2016), a method which appears appropriate in light of my research goals. When designing a rating scale, the researcher must ascertain the scale length and options that would be most appropriate for their survey (Saldanha and O’Brien, 2014). For both surveys, each of the statement items offered four opinion categories including “Strongly Disagree”, “Disagree”, “Agree”, “Strongly Agree” and an additional “Not Sure” option in the event that the respondent does not have an answer. I included “Not Sure” into the scale because it is recommended to routinely include this option to cater for those who have no information to offer (Krosnick and Presser, 2010). As such, I was able to assess whether there were any particular topics or questions that the respondents were not familiar with or had no relevant information to share.

Furthermore, I discarded the midpoint from the rating scale because unless it is used for its intended purpose, which is genuine neutrality, then it is likely that this option may be exploited to save time or used as a diversion when responding to difficult, unfamiliar, ambiguous, or socially undesirable items (Chyung et al., 2017). The tendency for respondents to select the mid-point is quite problematic for researchers because it limits answers to the research question (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014). Omitting a midpoint is, therefore, recommended when respondents are familiar with the subject matter and are under circumstances that are likely to elicit structured opinions (Johns, 2005). Additionally, Chyung et al. (2017) and Kulas and Stachowski (2009) explain that respondents may select the midpoint even if their true opinion is not neutral. To illustrate, Garland (1991) designed two versions of a survey, one with a four-point scale and a second with a five-point scale, and found that respondents who selected the midpoint on the five-point scale chose a negative option on the four-point scale. This suggests that respondents tend to select the midpoint in order to avoid negative choices (Garland, 1991). In short, whether to include a midpoint or not depends primarily on the survey sample as well as the researcher's preferences (Johns, 2005). For the reasons discussed, I chose to omit a midpoint, not only since I predict that my survey sample will be familiar with the themes of the survey (see Section 4.1.1.2 for outcome to pilot survey), but also to mitigate respondents' potential misuse of this option.

It is also important for the researcher to consider whether they want to set their survey questions as either required or optional to answer. On the one hand, my profile questions were set as required because they are basic questions that are embedded into almost every survey anyway (Krosnick and Presser, 2010), and I wanted to ensure that I had demographic information that I could use to explore correlations. On the other hand, the remaining questions across both of my surveys were set as optional, permitting the respondents to skip to the next question if they wished to do so. Indeed, this risks respondents bypassing questions, particularly the open-ended items, in order to avoid certain questions or to complete the survey as quickly as possible (Krosnick and Presser, 2010). However, in light of this drawback and despite the fact that marking questions as required does guarantee data, setting questions as required may not only risk respondents dropping out of the survey if they happen to confront a question that they are unable or would not like to answer, but may also risk the submission of erroneous or incomprehensible answers because respondents may provide any details just so they can proceed to the next question (Krosnick and Presser, 2010). This decision was made to allow the respondents to choose whether they wish to respond to particular questions or not as well as to maximise survey completion rates and, therefore, reduce drop-out rates.

4.1.1.2 Pilot Survey

It is highly recommended to pre-test surveys (Krosnick and Presser, 2010). A pilot survey should assess numerous aspects such as the time required to fill the survey, its usability, and

its clarity (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014). Although I did not run a formal pilot for my shorter small-scale non-practitioner survey, I ran a full pilot of my main practitioner survey in order to evaluate whether the survey questions were understood and to estimate the survey's completion time. Regarding my non-practitioner survey, non-practitioner peers were informally requested to sense-check the proposed questions before I launched it online.

The pilot survey was shared with trusted colleagues who have experience in freelance translation. Based on the three completed surveys, the completion time averaged at 12.7 minutes. However, the decision was made to specify the estimated completion time at "no longer than 20 minutes" in the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix I: Practitioner Survey Information Sheet). The reasoning behind this is twofold: firstly, the completion time for one of the respondents was closer to the 20-minute mark; and secondly, I wanted to accommodate to those who may take the time to provide detailed responses and/or respond to the optional requests of providing additional comments.

With regard to the comprehension of questions, they were generally well understood. Some of the feedback did recommend minor changes to the choice and spelling of some words and phrases. For example, it was suggested to change "overstuffed" to "oversaturated" and change "audio-visual" to "audiovisual". Furthermore, it was also commented that it was not always clear as to what the optional "additional comments" sections were referring to. In response, the headings were modified to "additional comments relating to…", for example, "…your experiences as a translator", "…admission to the profession" and "…training and qualifications" accordingly in order to clarify the types of comments that respondents were encouraged to leave.

Additional feedback concerned the general structure and ordering of questions. Suggestions included: numbering or lettering each of the Likert scale items so that respondents can refer back to specific questions in their comments if they wish to do so; having separate follow-up questions depending on the previous answer to simplify data analysis as opposed to one generic follow-up question; and to consider whether my question regarding "where are you based" can be used to filter out those who are not based in the UK. In relation to the lattermost suggestion, my target audience was initially UK-based translators only, however, I wanted to broaden the scope of my survey population and so this question acted as a profiling question rather than a filter.

4.1.1.3 Survey Distribution

Once my survey was amended on the basis of the pilot survey feedback, it was launched online on Monday 13 November 2023, and the survey remained open for three weeks until Friday 1 December 2023.

It is important to note that it is usually impossible to reach the entire target population, and so the researcher has to locate a representative sample of the population instead (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014). Before taking any other measures, a link to the practitioner survey was posted on my social media platforms (LinkedIn and Facebook) in order to raise awareness of the study and to invite volunteers to participate. Snowball sampling was applied as a secondary method in an attempt to expand my survey population, and this was implemented by including a request to share the survey with others in the social media posts. My main avenues of distribution were, however, through professional associations, CIOL and ITI, as well as through professional contacts. Snowball sampling was applied for these instances by reaching out to geographical, language and subject network coordinators at both CIOL and ITI and requesting them to email my survey to their colleagues and to their networks of translators. It would have been difficult to collect a large number of primary data sources unless coordinators of translator associations agree to share the details of the survey with their members. The network coordinators who agreed to share my survey distributed it via their network mailing lists, newsletters, and social media pages. Similarly, snowball sampling was also achieved by requesting contacts within the university's translation department to distribute my survey amongst the alumni and on relevant social media pages in order to reach both early-career and experienced translators. In a final attempt to raise awareness of my survey and to obtain additional responses when I was approaching the end of the survey period, the survey was re-shared on my LinkedIn and Facebook profiles. By the end of the survey period, I had received a total of 171 responses.

The non-practitioner survey was not launched at the same time as the practitioner survey. Rather, it was launched on Wednesday 20 December 2023 and the survey period lasted for three weeks until Wednesday 10 January 2024. It was distributed primarily through my social media platforms (LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook) in order to reach my desired audience, which is non-practitioners. On this occasion, the decision was made to distribute the non-practitioner survey via Instagram in addition to LinkedIn and Facebook because it has a vast and active community making it ideal for potentially reaching a large and diverse audience for a general population survey. Unlike LinkedIn and Facebook, Instagram was not designed for and does not have features that accommodate professional networking and professionally-orientated discussions. As a result, it may have been challenging to locate and target practising translators. For these reasons, Instagram was chosen to be a distribution channel for the non-practitioner survey but not for the practitioner survey. In a similar manner to my practitioner survey, snowball sampling was also implemented as a secondary method by including a request to share the survey with others in the social media posts. At the end of the survey period, I had received a total of 85 responses.

4.1.1.4 Survey Populations

As previously mentioned, this study engages with two distinct groups (practitioners and non-practitioners), and tailored surveys were distributed amongst these two groups (see Section 4.1.1.3 for survey distribution).

As this project evaluates the translation profession, professional translators were the best-placed group to approach in order to bring current translation trends to light, to become aware of how translation practices are currently being performed, to understand how the translation industry is transforming as a whole, but also to assess whether practitioners currently feel satisfied and secure in their profession. In other words, by engaging with professional translators and asking them questions on their experiences as translators, on what makes translation a profession and on their attitudes towards the contemporary translation industry, it became possible to map out the landscape of the contemporary translation industry in terms of practices and attitudes in addition to what it is currently like being a professional translator. In turn, the empirical data gathered from practitioners coupled with this study's framework on (de-)professionalisation (see Section 3.5; see also Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description) set the foundations to comprehensively explore the professionalisation and the potential de-professionalisation of translation through a conceptually original analytical lens.

Moreover, considering that acquiring societal recognition is the crux of the power approach to professionalisation (see Figure 3.1) and that it is also a key component of the professionalisation criteria (see Section 3.1.4 for summary of professionalisation; see also Table 3.3 for a breakdown of the professionalisation criteria), it seemed pertinent to also probe non-practitioners regarding their perceptions of translation technologies and of the value, prestige, and speciality of translators and translation services instead of just relying on what the practitioners assume about non-practitioner perceptions. With data gathered from non-practitioners, it became possible to assess, firstly, the extent to which non-practitioners understand what the role and tasks of a translator entail; secondly, whether they believe that human translation services are vital for society both on a short-term and long-term basis; thirdly, the extent to which they trust and rely on automated translation solutions; and fourthly, their views on whether second language competence is enough to translate professionally. This data contributed towards estimating the level of societal recognition by revealing how a sample of the general public actually perceives translators and translation services. As previously mentioned, gathering such data was essential in order to holistically address questions relating to the professionalisation of translation.

4.1.1.4.1 Practitioner Survey Demographic Results

A total of 171 participants took part in the practitioner survey (with n=x representing the number of responses).

At the time of the survey, 95.9% (n=164) identified as a freelance translator, meanwhile the remainder identified as an in-house translator or retired. Moreover, a wide range of ages were represented in the sample, from 25 and under to 65 and over. Nevertheless, the most populous age group was 45-54 (26.9%, n=46). Regarding location, 31 countries of residence covering all continents were represented. In terms of country frequency, 59.9% (n=101) of practitioners selected the UK as the country that they were based in, and this was followed by France (5.8%, n=10), and then by Germany and Italy (each with a representation of 4.1%, n=7). Many other countries were represented by just one or by up to five practitioners. Furthermore, at the time of the survey, 80.7% (n=138) stated to be a member of at least one professional translator association, 66.7% (n=114) worked full-time as a translator, and 47.4% (n=81) had more than 15 years of experience working as a translator.

With respect to qualifications (see Figure 4.1), the educational backgrounds of the practitioners that participated in this research were somewhat varied. On the one hand, 11.7% (n=20) held no higher-education qualifications at all. On the other hand, the most commonly held qualification was a postgraduate degree in translation or its equivalent (46.8%, n=80), which was followed by an undergraduate degree in translation or its equivalent (28.1%, n=48), and then by DipTrans (21.6%, n=37). Many practitioners also held (additional) qualifications in subjects other than translation (20.5%, n=35). These practitioners were required to specify what these other qualifications entailed, however they mainly consisted of various translator associations' exams, language-related qualifications or other specialised translation certifications. Those not pertaining to translation or languages at all included, for instance, Art History, Biological Sciences, Philology, and Zoology. In total, there were ten (5.8%) practitioners who have a degree, just not specifically in translation. In other words, the large majority of practitioners do possess some form of translation and/or language qualification or certification.

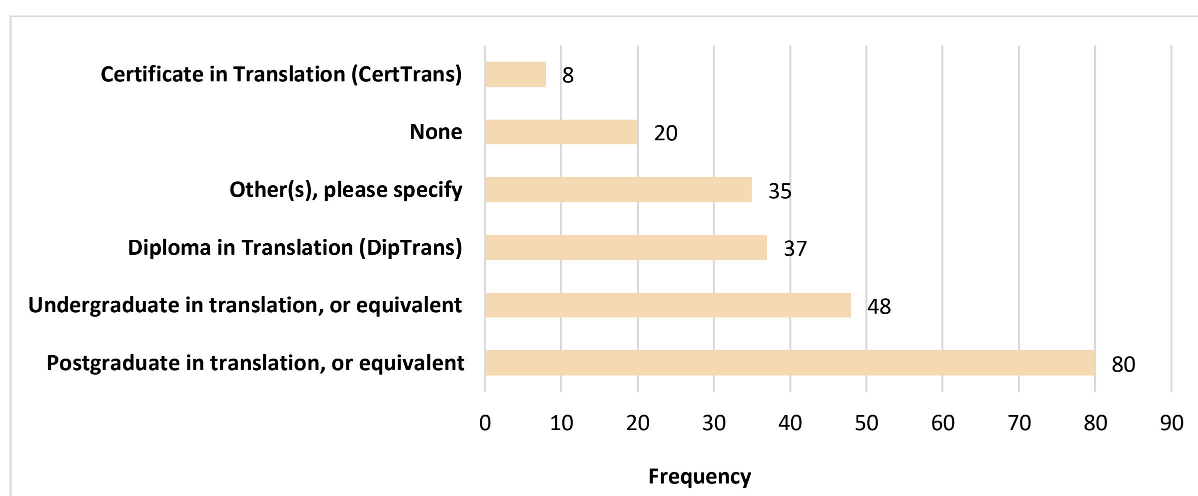

Figure 4.1: Qualifications

The practitioners were also asked to select their main specialisations (see Figure 4.2), of which the most frequently selected specialisation out of a list of ten options was General (42.7%, n=73), which was followed by Marketing (41.5%, n=71), Business (40.4%, n=69) and Technical (32.2%, n=55). Other cited specialisations included Tourism, Beauty, Art and Education. As it will be elaborated on in the upcoming chapters, a recurring theme inductively drawn from the practitioner survey commentary was the need for specialisation in order to remain competitive in the current translation market. For this reason, it was interesting to find that amongst all of the possible specialisations, General was the most popular. Nevertheless, it could simply be that many practitioners take up general translations as additional work.

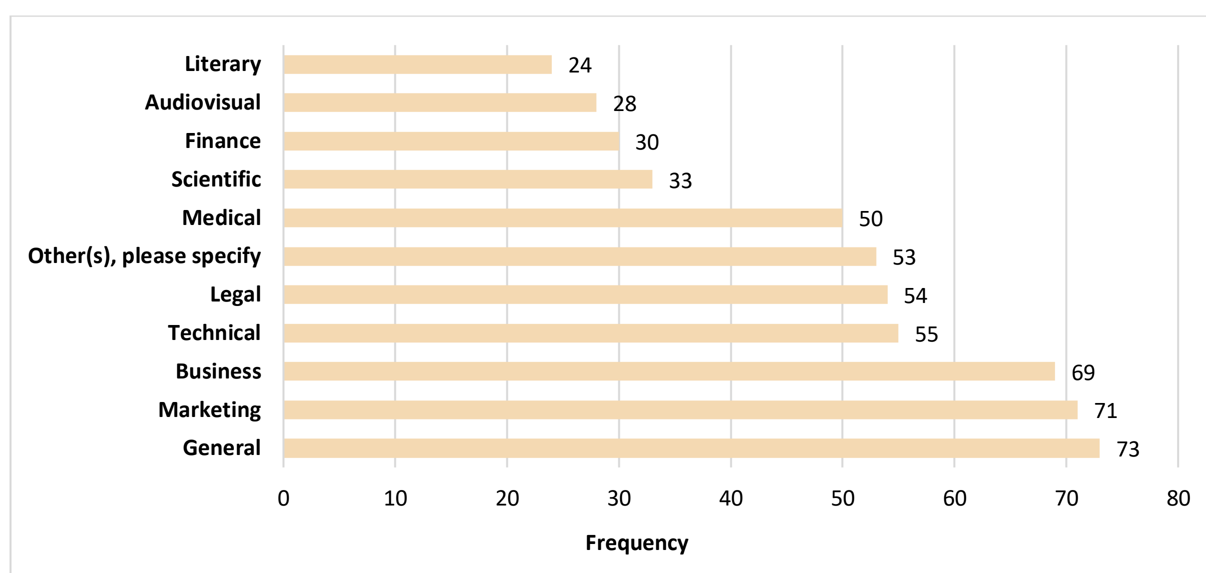

Figure 4.2: Specialisations

Regarding language coverage, the most prominent language pairs were French-English (33.3%, n=57), German-English (21.6%, n=37) and Spanish-English (21.6%, n=37), followed by Italian-English (8.8%, n=15) English-Spanish (8.8%, n=15) and English-German (5.8%, n=10). Meanwhile, the most uncommon language pairs include, amongst others, Greek-French (0.6%, n=1), Estonian-English (0.6%, n=1), Russian-German (0.6%, n=1) and Spanish-Romanian (0.6%, n=1). This distribution appears to reflect a rather Western European and UK market, in which English often functions as the target language. This outcome was anticipated given that the practitioner survey was primarily circulating within the UK, with its reach also extending to Europe through professional associations and their networks and possibly also through snowball sampling. However, it is important to acknowledge that differences in language pairs and in language direction are likely to shape translators' experiences in distinct ways. For instance, high-resource language pairs, such as French-English and Spanish-English, are often characterised by fierce competition, post-editing workflows and/or automation in certain segments of the market, and sustained pressure on rates. By contrast, reverse language directions, such as English-German, as well as translations involving low-resource languages may generally be less susceptible to full automation and oversaturation, potentially affording

translators stronger bargaining power and greater professional autonomy. While the present study does not compare findings systematically across language pairs, this research recognises that such contextual variation may result in different experiences of and attitudes towards (de-)professionalisation and this, therefore, presents an important avenue for future research.

In addition to specialisations and working languages, the practitioners were also asked to select their main sources of work (see Figure 4.3), of which the most common sources of work were via translation agencies (82.5%, n=141) and direct clients (73.1%, n=125). 35.1% (n=60) also indicated that they receive work through their own websites (see also Penet (2025) for a comprehensive overview of translator profiles).

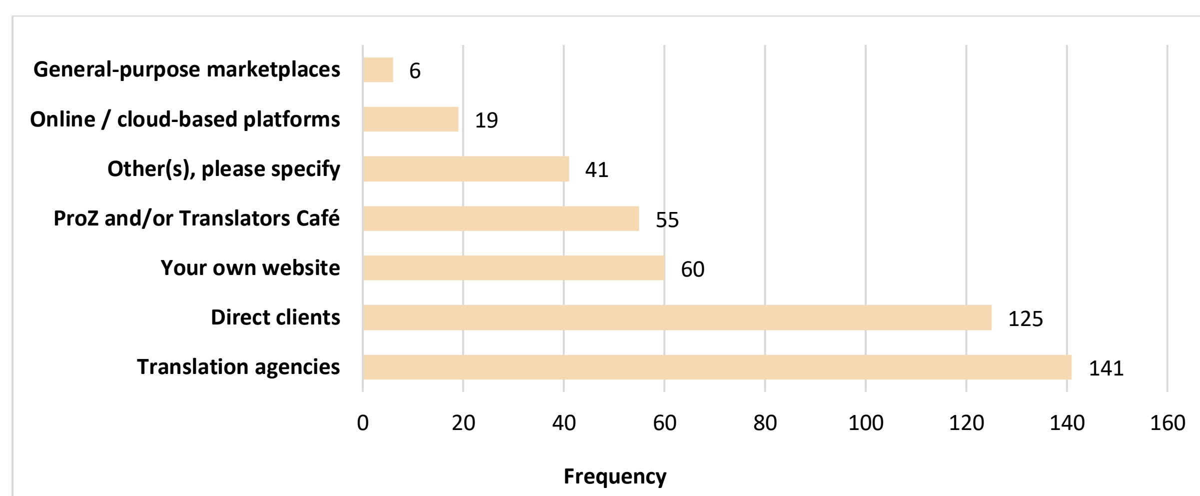

Figure 4.3: Sources of work

4.1.1.4.2 Non-Practitioner Survey Demographic Results

A total of 85 participants took part in the non-practitioner survey. At the time of the survey, just over half of the non-practitioners stated that they were either employed (44.7%, n=38) or self-employed (8.2%, n=7). Out of those who are (self-)employed (52.9%, n=45), their occupations spanned a range of industries, including, amongst others, health and medicine (15.6%, n=7), retail and sales (13.3%, n=6), finance and business (13.3%, n=6) and primary and secondary education (13.3%, n=6). Notably, none of these respondents reported working in or being associated with the wider language industry. This indicates that the non-practitioner data from those who are (self-)employed reflects the perspectives of individuals outside of professional translation, providing an external viewpoint on translation and its societal role. A further 32.9% (n=28) identified as a student (undergraduate, postgraduate, or PhD). However, these participants were not asked to indicate their field of study at the time of the survey. This limits the ability to determine whether there were any students who had engaged in language- or translation-related subjects, which might have influenced their responses, and

this should be taken into consideration when interpreting the survey findings. Meanwhile the remaining respondents were out of work, retired, or preferred not to say.

Additionally, as with the practitioner sample, a wide range of ages were represented, from 25 and under to 65 and over. Unlike the practitioner sample, the non-practitioner sample was generally much younger with the most populous age group standing at 25-34 (51.8%, n=44) and the next most populous group as 18-24 (27%, n=23). Regarding location, 13 countries of residence were represented, with 76.5% (n=65) selecting the UK as the country that they were based in.

In terms of whether anyone has ever purchased translations before, only 12.9% (n=11) stated that they have previously sought and purchased professional translation services for personal matters. Out of this small group of non-practitioners, 63.6% (n=7) based their purchase on both price and quality, 18.9% (n=2) on just quality, and 18.9% (n=2) on just price. 45.6% (n=5) of these respondents were students and 54.5% (n=6) were employed. In terms of age, 62.7% (n=8) were 34 and under, 9% (n=1) were between 35 and 44, and 18.9% (n=2) were between 55 and 64. Geographically, 62.7% (n=8) were based in the UK, with the remaining 27.3% (n=3) being located in the United States, Germany and France, respectively.

4.1.2 Focus Groups

As noted in the opening of this chapter, practitioners were invited to participate in a follow-up focus group for further discussion of the topics covered in the survey. At this point, it is worth mentioning that focus groups were not conducted with the non-practitioners. Given the study's focus on (de-)professionalisation, the practitioners were deemed better positioned to be able to reflect meaningfully on issues such as professional autonomy, expertise, ethics and industry developments. By contrast, it was speculated that the non-practitioners were perhaps less likely to possess the specialist understanding and industry experience required to sustain meaningful in-depth group discussions on the (de-)professionalisation of translation, increasing the risk of assumption-based or speculative exchanges. Moreover, it is important to reiterate that non-practitioner opinions were sought specifically because my framework signals societal recognition as an essential element of successful professionalisation. As the aim was to capture non-practitioners' general perceptions of translation rather than detailed accounts of what they consider to be the factors influencing the (de-)professionalisation of translation, an in-depth qualitative exploration in the form of focus groups was not conducted. For the two reasons addressed, a survey-based approach was considered more appropriate for collecting non-practitioners' general perceptions of and attitudes towards translation.

It is common for focus groups to be carried out alongside surveys as a means to explore collective beliefs and the ways in which social groups discuss shared experiences (Koskinen, 2008; Svahn, 2016). I chose the focus group method to complement my online surveys, with the latter allowing me to reach a wider audience to collect a healthy amount of data, and the former permitting me to obtain specific details regarding the questions at hand. As the focal point of my study relied on the accumulation of views, understandings, and experiences of translation, I deemed the survey method coupled with complementary focus groups as useful techniques to triangulate in order to provide the necessary insights to my research questions. Triangulation is when two methods are used to collect and analyse data on the same research questions (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014).

Focus groups offer ample opportunities to elicit further comments relating to the issues addressed in the surveys. Within TS, they have been implemented to draw on translators' experiences, presenting a sound platform for generating qualitative data regarding translators' working conditions, attitudes and group dynamics (e.g. Brogger, 2017; Koskinen, 2008; Schjoldager and Zethsen, 2003; Svahn, 2016). To illustrate, Brogger (2017) conducted two focus groups to evaluate whether there are diverging levels of medical translation competence between experienced medical translators and medical professionals or translators of other specialisations. Discussion topics were organised in an interview-style format, opening with broad questions which were then proceeded with follow-up questions. Meanwhile, Svahn (2016) organised three focus group sessions with MA students in an attempt to map out their self-development towards feeling like a translator. Svahn's (2016) focus groups were semi-structured, meaning that the moderator had a set of pre-determined questions and topics that were discussed in no particular order and the participants were free to expand on the topics as they wish. However, during unplanned long silences, the moderator would take a more active role. In essence, focus groups enable researchers to better understand how certain groups of people respond to certain experiences (Böser, 2016), and this is one of the goals of my study.

Furthermore, focus groups, in comparison to interviews, are less obtrusive as the researcher tends to take the position of a moderator instead of imposing questions on the participants. As such, focus groups, whether online or in-person, are a valuable mechanism to encourage participants to react to other participants' views, thereby making new insights available that might otherwise have remained undisclosed (Schjoldager and Zethsen, 2003). Group discussions discourage habitual or semi-automatic responses since other participants may challenge an answer, encouraging individuals to be more analytical and thoughtful in their contributions (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014).

Focus groups also bear limitations that must be factored in. Recruiting relevant participants who are willing to take the time and who are accessible is one of the greatest challenges in this type of research (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014). For instance, prior to any planned sessions,

it is difficult to predict the number of guaranteed participants, meanwhile other obstacles include dominance, conformity, and hesitation. Furthermore, as with the case with the online surveys, voluntary participation introduces the possibility of self-selection bias, as those with availability, stronger opinions or greater interest in the discussion themes may be more likely to take part, potentially limiting the diversity of perspectives. Additionally, the interactive nature of focus groups can give rise to social desirability bias, with participants potentially conforming to perceived group dynamics or hesitating to express dissenting views. To address these issues during recruitment and during the design stage, the participants were assured of confidentiality as well as anonymity in the reports that followed, the sessions were moderated in a neutral and non-evaluative manner, and the discussion prompts were general, explorative and open-ended. These strategies were implemented to foster an environment that encourages participants to share their honest perspectives openly and reflectively. During the focus group analysis stage, as with the case when analysing the survey data, the focus group findings were not generalised beyond the sample in order to account for potential issues relating to self-selection and social desirability. To further mitigate participation-related challenges, a Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix III: Focus Group Information Sheet) was shared with the prospective participants, informing them of what will be expected of them during the session, including active engagement and equal contribution. Also, my focus groups were conducted remotely to encourage participation, and confirmation emails with a consent form (see Appendix IV: Focus Group Consent Form) attached were distributed as an attempt to confirm attendance and to ensure that the participants were comfortable with the arrangements of the focus group. Despite any potential drawbacks, focus groups are one of the most convenient methods to find out about a group of individuals' conscious thoughts about a given topic (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014).

4.1.2.1 Focus Group Recruitment

The recruitment period ran for the same amount of time as the practitioner survey period, so from Monday 13 November 2023 until Friday 1 December 2023. At the end of my survey, there was a final message notifying the respondents that their responses were safely submitted in addition to an invitation to participate in a follow-up focus group. If they wished to take part, then the link that followed opened up to a separate Eventbrite page where the volunteers were able to select their preferred session. Five 60-minute focus groups were initially scheduled between Monday 8 January 2024 to Thursday 11 January 2024. Prospective participants could then proceed to register their interest for one of the sessions, and upon receipt of their registration, a copy of the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form was emailed to them to ensure that they were happy with the arrangements (see Appendices for focus group information sheet and consent form).

One week following the launch of my survey and focus-group registration, one of the sessions was yet to receive any sign-ups. The decision was made to cancel this session in order to guarantee sufficient participant numbers in the other groups.

At the end of the recruitment period, a total of 13 volunteers registered their interest in participating. However, five volunteers dropped out, resulting in two sessions each having only one participant left. These two participants were asked for their availability to participate in an alternative session that has more participants, for which they both agreed. As a result, an additional two sessions were cancelled. In the end, four people participated in the first session on Monday 8 January 2024 and four in the second session on Wednesday 10 January 2024.

At the time of the focus groups, all participants (100%, n=8) identified as a freelance translator with one participant clarifying that freelance translation was their secondary occupation alongside their main occupation as a lecturer in TS. The majority of participants were based in the UK when the focus groups took place (75%, n=6), with one participant (12.5%, n=1) temporarily residing in Switzerland at the time and an additional participant (12.5%, n=1) was based in Portugal. Regarding qualifications, 87.5% (n=7) of participants stated that they have either an undergraduate or a postgraduate degree in translation and/or languages. Meanwhile, the remaining participant (12.5%, n=1) clarified that they have an undergraduate degree in Music yet that they regularly participate in CPD to enhance their translation competence and knowledge. Regarding language pairs, all participants (100%, n=8) stated that they translate into English, with the most common language to translate from being French (62.5%, n=5). Other languages to translate from included Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, German, Italian, Dutch and Japanese. Unfortunately, not every participant shared their translation specialisations (50%, n=4). However, out of those who did share this information (50%, n=4), specialisations included law (50%, n=2), human resources (25%, n=1), and sake and sake brewing (25%, n=1).

4.1.2.2 Focus Group Design

As previously mentioned, the focus groups lasted 60-minutes each and took place remotely, via Microsoft Teams. The meeting invitations were sent 2 working days prior to the event, which also included a prompt to confirm their attendance and to return a signed copy of the consent form if they haven’t done so already.

The focus groups were organised in a semi-structured format, in that discussion prompts were provided to help navigate a free-flowing discussion (see Appendix VII: Focus Group Discussion Prompts). On the days of the sessions, I acted as the moderator and did not actively participate. My role was merely to observe, to provide the discussion prompts and to re-engage the discussion or navigate it back to the theme at hand if the discussion derailed.

It is normally best to open with a question that participants can answer easily (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014), and as such, both of the focus group sessions began with a welcome message reminding the participants of the purpose of the focus groups and with general introductions so that participants could familiarise themselves with the setting and with each other. The introductions also included a question that asked the participants to briefly explain what attracted them to becoming a translator. After the introductions, three themes were discussed, and two discussion prompts were provided for each theme. I shared my screen to a PowerPoint presentation that displayed the focus group questions and this remained visible for the entirety of the session so that the participants could refer to them whenever they needed to. The first theme was labelled "The Professional Translator", and the questions prompted the participants to discuss the characteristics that they believe make up the professional translator and whether there is a place for amateur translators and hobbyists. The second theme pertained to "Freelance Translation as a Profession", asking the participants their reasons as to whether they consider translation to be a profession and whether they think it is de-professionalising. A definition for de-professionalisation was provided in case of any unfamiliarity with this term. The final theme related to "Modern Practices", focussing on the participants' current experiences as a translator. The discussion prompts aimed to elicit any industry developments and trends that they witnessed or experienced over the course of their careers and whether these influenced their career plans or made them change the way they view translation. The sessions ended with closing remarks and a wrap up question that gathered the participants' final thoughts about the future of the profession.

Similar to the case with the survey question design, careful consideration was given to ensuring that the focus group discussion prompts were not leading and did not unduly shape participants' responses. To achieve this, the focus group prompts were intentionally broad, explorative and open-ended in order to facilitate open and reflective discussions and also allowing for the participants to express a range of viewpoints. Additionally, I acted as the moderator for both focus groups and I made the conscious effort to adopt a neutral and non-evaluative approach. Efforts were made to encourage balanced participation, to prevent individual participants from dominating the discussions, and to create an environment in which a spectrum of views could be expressed. Probing was used selectively and only for the purposes of clarification or elaboration, rather than to challenge, validate, or steer responses in a particular direction. Collectively, these design and facilitation choices helped to avoid leading discussions and minimise the risk of social desirability. The focus groups captured the participants' own perspectives on translation as a profession, rather than responses shaped by the researcher's assumptions or perceived expectations.

4.1.2.3 Transcription

In order to be able to perform a critical analysis of my focus groups, the sessions were audio and video-recorded and then transcribed.

While transcription is often described as a time-consuming task, it is not uncommon for it to be presented as an indispensable step when performing qualitative research using interviews and focus groups (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014). Not only does transcription enhance our understanding of the participants and the information that they share, but it also enables researchers to catch elusive details, such as tone and word choices, that might otherwise have been overlooked without a descriptive written record (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014). However, there is no single comprehensive approach that is capable of providing the researcher with a holistic narrative of the original sessions (McMullin, 2021).

In response, choice needs to be made between naturalised transcription and denaturalised transcription, or somewhere in between, depending on what is most suitable for the study's purpose (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014). Bucholtz (2000) and McMullin (2021) explain that naturalised transcription (intelligent verbatim) adapts the spoken word to written conventions by editing out irrelevant details such as noises, pauses, and filler words, and denaturalised transcription (verbatim) preserves all features of oral language and records every utterance in as much detail as possible, including stutters, repetitions, inaudible segments, and nonverbals. Nonetheless, transcription is, in essence, a subjective procedure because the transcriber decides what to include in the transcript and whether to correct grammatical errors (Kowal and O'Connell, 2014; McMullin, 2021).

Given that transcription can be a lengthy process, researchers often use transcription software to automate the process (McDonough Dolmaya, 2024). Microsoft Teams was used to conduct the focus groups, which allowed me to use Microsoft's automatic transcription feature. A grammatically accurate transcription which included notes on non-verbals was not necessary for my data analysis as I was more focussed on the content of the discussions rather than, for instance, mannerisms and tone of voice. The automated transcriptions were thus lightly edited to ensure that the transcripts read well enough in order to conduct a thematic analysis.

When proposing a project, it is crucial to pre-empt any ethical issues that may arise over the course of the investigation. The next section will summarise the main ethical issues that I had to consider during the data collection process.

4.2 Ethical Considerations

There are many benefits to conducting surveys and focus groups online, such as minimal resources, real-time accessibility, and cost-effectiveness. Nevertheless, research within TS may involve, for instance, human participants (i.e. translators, clients and recipients), language, culture, identity and even ideology, and so researchers need to consider the impact of their research and whether there are any ethical issues (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014). In

relation to research involving human participants specifically, common ethical issues that are associated with surveys and focus groups include pressure to participate, confidentiality, and anonymity (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014).

4.2.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent is one the core principles in ethically designed research (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014), ensuring that prospective respondents are able to make an informed decision regarding their participation. This usually involves presenting the participants with information outlining, in simple terms, the nature of the research and requesting them to sign and date a consent form (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014). Failing to obtain informed consent results in volunteers agreeing to take part without a full understanding of the research's intention and how the data will be handled. As such, an information sheet, outlining the purpose of my study, what the participants will receive in return, the ways in which the data will be handled, the fact that participation is voluntary, and withdrawal terms, was made accessible to all prospective survey and focus group participants (see Appendices). The respondents were required to read this information before they were able to gain access to the survey or sign up for a focus group.

Similarly, while it is crucial to obtain respondents' consent, it is equally important to permit them to withdraw their consent at any given time (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014). Respondents were, therefore, free to withdraw at any point during the survey, and their responses were excluded from analysis. Similarly, focus group participants were also free to withdraw without providing any reason before the date specified on the information sheet and accompanying consent form.

4.2.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

While any researcher may have the best of intentions, failing to remove identifiable information from the survey or focus group responses and any reports that follow is unethical as this may be considered an intrusion of privacy (Roberts and Allen, 2015; Sim and Waterfield, 2019). Therefore, confidentiality and anonymity are also critical ethical considerations in any survey or focus group study (Roberts and Allen, 2015; Sim and Waterfield, 2019). These terms are often treated synonymously, however, there are notable distinctions. On the one hand, confidentiality relates to how the collected data is handled and the extent to which it is disclosed, while on the other hand, anonymity concerns whether individuals can be identified from the data (Sim and Waterfield, 2019). anonymity was preserved by ensuring that personal identifiers, such as names and contact details, were not reported in my study or in any reports that follow, and likewise, confidentiality was ensured as I controlled data access and stored responses in secured locations.

Furthermore, external confidentiality, the disclosure of information by the researcher, can be monitored by those leading the study. However, within the context of focus groups, internal confidentiality, information that might be disclosed between members of the group, cannot be guaranteed as the researcher has less control over this. It is up to the individual participant's own discretion as to how much personal information they wish to disclose. However, this risk is further enhanced in the unlikely event that the focus groups involve individuals previously known to each other. As such, internal confidentiality typically relies on the adherence to a set of ground rules (Tolich, 2009). With this in mind, guidelines were provided in the focus group information sheet, stating that it is up to the participant to decide if they wish to use their real name and whether they choose to have their camera switched on or off.

Above all, ethical concerns can be mitigated when the necessary precautions, such as discretion and safe storage locations, are implemented and there is transparency between the researcher and participants.

4.3 Data Analysis

As mentioned at the opening of this chapter, this research engaged in participant-orientated research by collecting qualitative and quantitative data through online surveys and focus groups. Carrying out different data analysis techniques, such as quantification, comparison charts, and thematic categorisation, were therefore required considering that my data was collected using various methods and question formats. Without proper analysis, my data on its own would not fulfil its purpose of providing meaningful insights to my RQs.

Both statistical (see Section 4.3.1) and thematic (see Section 4.3.2) analyses were carried out on my datasets. The responses to my demographic questions, multiple choice, and Likert scale items were quantified and reported as descriptive statistics (simple frequency tables and percentages) and charts. Additionally, to test whether there is a statistical difference between two outcomes (i.e. Yes vs. No), the chi-squared test and corresponding phi effect size was used. Meanwhile, my open-ended responses and focus group transcripts required a thematic analysis in order to elicit the key themes.

4.3.1 Statistical Analysis

When handling quantitative data, researchers typically use various descriptive statistics techniques, such as measuring frequencies, central tendencies (mean median and mode) and dispersion or variance (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014; McDonough Dolmaya, 2024).

SPSS, a data management software package that performs a wide range of statistical procedures, was used to perform various analyses on my quantitative data as well as to investigate the existence of any relationships between variables. Key features include its ability to calculate frequencies, percentages, and modes, to perform crosstabulations (an analysis tool commonly used to compare the results for one or more variables with the results of another variable), and to visualise the data and statistics by means of various types of appropriate charts, such as bar charts. Users have reported SPSS to be a dynamic solution to disentangling quantitative data into organised statistics as the tool offers a comprehensive range of complex statistical tests that can be performed (Williams, 2024).

The first set of analyses related to calculating frequencies and percentages for all of the closed-ended results. The output provided a collection of simple frequency tables, which tallied up the total counts of each response category for each of the closed-ended questions in addition to providing their associated percentages. In order to visualise these results, each of the simple frequency tables was converted into a bar chart to indicate the mode as well as to visualise how the counts for each response category compare (McDonough Dolmaya, 2024). Not only did this information assist with mapping out the survey populations (see Section 4.1.1.4 for demographic results), but calculating frequencies and percentages also provided the relevant statistics to support or contextualise the open-ended results (see Chapter 5 for theme one results; Chapter 6 for theme two results; Chapter 7 for theme three results).

The second set of tests was crosstabulations, comparing the results of two variables at a time to identify the existence of any relationships. Some examples of the variable pairs include satisfaction rates towards current experiences as a translator and whether practitioners have ever considered leaving the profession; achieved qualifications and whether practitioners believed that only qualified translators are capable of applying the skills required to translate; age and whether practitioners considered themselves a professional; and working hours (full-time vs. part-time) and whether practitioners considered freelance translation a secure career. Crosstabulations were produced for relevant pairs of variables with a view to identifying preliminary relationships between variables for further investigation.

The third set of tests examined whether differences between dichotomous response categories were statistically meaningful. The chi-squared (χ^2) test of independence was applied where respondents selected between two options (typically yes or no), and assessed the significance of the difference between the observed and expected value under the null hypothesis of no difference (Mellinger and Hanson, 2016). Statistical significance was evaluated using a p-value threshold of 0.05, with a $p \leq 0.05$ indicating that the difference is statistically significant, and $p > 0.05$ indicating that the difference is not statistically significant. In line with good statistical practice, the chi-squared test results were interpreted alongside the phi (ϕ) effect size, providing an indication of how large and meaningful the difference

between the response categories is. Following commonly used guidelines, phi values of approximately 0.1, 0.3 and 0.5 were interpreted as small, medium and large effects respectively, whilst acknowledging that these thresholds are indicative rather than absolute (Ben-Shachar et al., 2023). This combined approach allows statistically significant differences to be contextualised in terms of their relevance. To emphasise, chi-squared tests and corresponding phi effect sizes were applied only to dichotomous variables, whereas items with more than two response categories (e.g. Likert scales) were analysed descriptively (Mellinger and Hanson, 2016).

4.3.2 Thematic Analysis

Alongside the statistical analyses, thematic analyses were performed for the open-ended responses of both datasets in addition to the focus group transcripts. A thematic analysis involves identifying patterns and themes in qualitative data to address the research questions (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014), encompassing much more than just summarising the data, also requiring a clear interpretation of the patterns that are identified (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

My thematic analysis approach adhered to the six-step iterative process documented by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013), an approach commonly used in the social sciences (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017; Nowell et al., 2017):

- Phase one: Familiarisation of the data;
- Phase two: Generating initial codes;
- Phase three: Searching for initial themes;
- Phase four: Reviewing themes;
- Phase five: Defining themes;
- Phase six: Producing the report.

My thematic coding was conducted using NVivo, a popular tool used by TS researchers handling qualitative data (McDonough Dolmaya, 2024). While some users claim that NVivo requires a considerate amount of time to master, many describe the process as time-efficient, transparent, and accommodating to large amounts of data (Dollah et al., 2017; Hilal and Alabri, 2013; Nowell et al. 2017).

Furthermore, it is imperative that a thematic analysis should be performed as consistently as possible. In order to achieve this, my coding was fully reviewed twice, with at least two weeks between each review (see Section 4.3.3 for warrantability criteria in qualitative research and how this was achieved in my project).

4.3.2.1 Phase One: Familiarisation of the Data

The first step in handling any qualitative data necessitates an in-depth familiarisation of the data before coding (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As such, before importing my practitioner dataset and non-practitioner dataset into NVivo, the responses for each of the open-ended questions were reviewed in order to foster a gist of the types of comments that the respondents offered. It is recommended to become as immersed as possible into the data to ensure that a comprehensive familiarisation of its contents is gained (Nowell et al., 2017). This is often achieved by reading the data repeatedly before starting the coding process and using this time as an active way to search for initial meanings and patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2006). During this phase, researchers are also likely to make notes about potential ideas for coding (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Both datasets were reviewed twice. In relation to my practitioner dataset specifically, these initial readings revealed that MT and AI technologies were frequently cited, and apart from those who attested that freelance translators need to adapt to changing work processes, most responses evoked a negative sentiment towards these technologies; that client relations, especially with translation agencies, are quite poor as a result of general ignorance on behalf of the client as well as not having agency over rates and over choice of working methods; and that the practitioners, in general, spoke positively of translator associations and their efforts to promote professionalism and professionalisation.

The focus group transcript preparation stages followed the same protocol as for both of my survey datasets. Both transcripts were reviewed twice before importing them into NVivo in order to gather a sense of the key themes and sentiments that were relayed during the sessions. Some of the initial insights drawn from these readings include frequent comparisons to other professions or groups of experts; experiences of working with direct clients and with translation agencies; and whether there is a place for amateur translators and hobbyists in the translation profession.

4.3.2.2 Phase Two: Generating Initial Codes

Once the researcher has familiarised themselves with their data, they can transition to working systematically through the data in order to begin generating initial codes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). After familiarising myself with my collected data, individual coding frameworks were mapped out, one for each of the datasets and one for the transcripts. These frameworks were initially guided by the study's conceptual framework on (de-)professionalisation outlined in Section 3.5 (see also Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description), but were modified to better reflect the recurring sentiments and preliminary patterns identified during my initial readings. As Saldanha and O'Brien (2014) note, theoretical frameworks often serve as a basis for generating coding categories. For example, formal

training constitutes a core marker of professionalisation (see Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 for summary of professionalisation approaches), therefore an initial code, “Translator Training”, was created and later broken down to “Necessity of translator training” and “CPD” etc. to fit the scope of the survey commentary and focus group discussions. These frameworks were provisional, serving as a starting point which evolved throughout the coding process.

Each coding framework was tailored to suit its respective dataset. For the practitioner dataset and focus group transcripts, codes were structured around my RQs. This served two purposes: firstly, it ensured that coding was aligned with my RQs in; and secondly, each of the open-ended survey questions and focus group themes pertained to a particular RQ anyway. This method helped me to approach my coding in a systematic and organised manner. Therefore, the top-level codes represented a RQ, and the child codes represented emerging (sub-)themes identified during my initial readings. As implied in the previous paragraph, these (sub-)themes represented the sentiments and comments about the various markers of (de-)professionalisation in a translation context. Meanwhile, for the non-practitioner dataset, codes were not organised on the basis of my RQs. The codes were organised thematically which was more suitable based on my initial readings and on the fact that not all of the RQs were addressed by the non-practitioner survey. If I had organised my codes in relation to my RQs, then some of the categories would have been sparse or empty.

With draft coding frameworks in place, the datasets and transcripts were imported into NVivo to begin the first cycle of coding. During this stage, researchers typically organise the data in a meaningful and systematic way by identifying important sections of the data and attaching labels to them (Braun and Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). This process is often referred to as open coding, which is the first level of coding that is required in order to identify distinct and emerging concepts ready for categorisation (Saldanha and O’Brien, 2014). Open coding consists of, therefore, sifting through the data and organising similar phrases and concepts, or segments of texts, into broad thematic domains (Saldanha and O’Brien, 2014). As such, each sentence or parts of sentences that captured something, whether explicitly or implicitly, about any of the (de-)professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3 and Table 3.4) was labelled with an appropriate code. For clarification, I did not code entire responses, only the relevant sentences or phrases. A “Miscellaneous” category was also created to host the segments that relayed relevant information but did not fit into any of the initial or newly developed codes.

Furthermore, central to open coding is the additional opportunity for sub-coding data (Williams and Moser, 2019), and the researcher is free generate as many levels of coding that they find useful as long as it doesn’t become counterproductive (King, 2004). My analyses for the practitioner dataset and transcripts evolved into a hierarchical coding system (King, 2004), whereby the broader higher-level codes provided an overview of the more detailed lower-order codes. To illustrate, each of the segments placed under the codes “MT and AI”, “Client Relations”, “CAT tools” and “Online Platforms” evoked a particular sentiment. As such, child

codes were added in order to distinguish between the “Positive”, “Negative” and “Neutral” remarks. A similar example relates to the codes “Threats to the Profession” and “Reasons for De-Professionalisation”, whereby there were thematic patterns in the content. As such, rather than organising the extracts according to whether they were positively or negatively disposed, they were organised thematically, with each child code representing a specific group of reasons or threats.

Moreover, sections of text can be labelled with as many codes as the researcher deems relevant (Saldanha and O’Brien, 2014). There were many occasions when segments were labelled with more than just one code as they were relevant to at least two codes. I adhered to this approach from the beginning of the first coding cycle to ensure an element of consistency.

As expected, the provisional coding frameworks developed based on my (de-)professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3 and Table 3.4) and on my initial readings began to change during the actual coding process. Numerous changes were made to my practitioner dataset’s coding framework, while the modifications to my transcripts’ and non-practitioner dataset’s coding frameworks were not as significant. The coding process for my transcripts and non-practitioner dataset was much simpler and more direct because there was significantly less codable data and fewer codes to handle.

Below is a summary of the changes that were made to my initial coding frameworks (not including minor amendments to code names and to code hierarchy):

- After a closer reading of all of the codable data, new codes were generated upon identifying new thematic patterns in the data. For example, the codes “Translation Workflows” and “Influence on Translators’ Rates” were not considered as part of my initial framework.
- Existing codes were modified by merging together those with overlapping content. For example, there were separate codes for “MT” and for “AI”, however, these were merged together because it came to my awareness that the respondents typically spoke about these technologies alongside each other.
- Similarly, codes which hosted more than one distinct idea were broken down. For example, “Client Relations” was separated into “Experiences with Direct Clients” and “Experiences with Translation Agencies” as the responses tended to refer to either (direct) clients or translation agencies, or they compared the two types of clients.
- The coded phrases within “Controlling Admission to the Profession”, “Professional Conduct”, “Training”, and “Job Security” were originally organised into “Positive”, “Negative”, “Neutral” child codes. However, most of the extracts were categorised under “Neutral”. As such, after reviewing the extracts, thematic patterns in the content

were found. A series of new thematic child codes for each of the aforementioned parent codes were generated which offered labels that were more befitting and exact.

Items within the "Miscellaneous" categories were also reviewed to ascertain whether any of these items could be assigned to any of the new codes that were generated during this cycle. Some of the items were able to be categorised while the others remained in this category until later stages of the coding process.

4.3.2.3 Phase Three: Searching for Initial Themes

Once all of the data is coded, the researcher can pursue the next phase of beginning the search for the themes that best define the data. There are no hard and fast rules about what, in particular, makes a theme, but it can generally be defined as an abstract pattern that brings meaning to recurring experiences and whether it captures any significance to the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

Before collating codes into themes, my coding was fully reviewed one calendar month after the initial analysis to assess whether the datasets and transcripts were coded appropriately and whether any edits or even re-analyses were required. I did this as a means to ensure that the coding is as reliable and as consistent as possible (McDonough Dolmaya, 2024; see also Section 4.3.3 for warrantability criteria).

Below is a summary of the changes made during the first full review of the coding:

- Some of the segments that were initially labelled under just one code were, however, also relevant or captured something about an additional code. As such, all of the codable data was re-assessed to ascertain whether any segments were relevant to any additional codes.
- Previously uncoded segments were re-evaluated to verify whether I still deemed them irrelevant to answering any of my RQs. Some of the uncoded segments were, thus, designated a code, while others, primarily incomprehensible or irrelevant remarks, remained uncoded.
- The extracts under "Miscellaneous" were revisited to verify whether any could be categorised. Some of these extracts were categorised while others remained uncategorised.
- New parent and child codes were created, and all of the coded extracts were re-assigned accordingly.

Aside from minor amendments to some of the code names, there were not any further significant changes at this stage, so I proceeded to the identification of initial themes which were generated inductively from the raw data.

With an inductive approach, themes derive from the contents of the data (McDonough Dolmaya, 2024; Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014). In this vein, the themes are generated freely without trying to fit them into pre-existing frameworks (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014) or the researcher's preconceptions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). If a deductive approach was adopted, then the themes would conform to the researcher's theoretical and analytical expectations or even be based on the outcomes to prior related studies, and this may not produce a rich description of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In order to foster initial inspiration for potential themes that best represent the raw data, word clouds were generated for each of the datasets and for the transcripts to reveal some of the most frequently cited words. Figure 4.4 below is an example of a word cloud that was generated based on the practitioner dataset:

Figure 4.4: Example of a word cloud that was generated based on the practitioner dataset.

The word cloud in Figure 4.4 highlights some of the various topics broached in the practitioner survey and previews potential key themes or sub-themes. With knowledge of the survey questions and the types of responses that were elicited (see Section 4.1.1.1.1 for an overview of the types of questions asked; see also Appendices for survey questions), one can deduce that relationships or experiences with "clients" and "agencies" may constitute a theme. Likewise, attitudes towards "money", "pay" and "cost" are likely to constitute another theme. There are also a number of words that pertain to training, such as "undergraduate", "training", and "qualifications", suggesting that a further theme may relate to translator training and education. That being said, these ideas are general and provisional and can only be confirmed once they have been closely analysed against the derived codes.

When searching for themes, researchers should also be wary about being too guided by their RQs, and they should not disregard themes even if there happens to be no immediate or direct

relevance (King, 2004). This is because this type of information can later prove to be significant in adding background detail to the study (King, 2004). As such, an initial list of themes was generated (see Table 4.2), one for each of the datasets and, likewise, one for the transcripts, that reflect the raw data rather than tailoring the themes so that they reflect the (de-)professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3 and Table 3.4) or fit the scope of the RQs. The generated word clouds also assisted with this process. With this approach in mind, patterns quickly became evident. Firstly, some codes clearly fitted well together and could, thus, denote logical themes. To illustrate, there were several codes that related to the use and influence of various translation technologies. I collated the relevant codes into a provisional theme that was called "Reception of Translation Technologies". Similarly, there were codes that related to respondents' accounts of their careers as translators, which were then categorised under the theme "Experiences as a Translator". And secondly, many of my parent codes (e.g. "Societal Recognition" and "Necessity of Service Area") already began to form themes of their own.

Moreover, it is important to not abandon data or codes, which is why it is also recommended to create a "Miscellaneous" theme to temporarily host the codes that do not seem to fit into any of the themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Upon a closer review of the initial themes (see Table 4.2), those pertaining to the focus group transcripts and the non-practitioner dataset appeared to overlap with those pertaining to the practitioner dataset. Considering that it is important to consider whether the themes work not only in the context of a single dataset or interview but also across all datasets and/or interviews (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017), the themes drawn from both datasets and also from the transcripts were combined so that they can be refined collectively. In doing so, the focus group and non-practitioner themes collapsed into the practitioner themes (see Table 4.3 for the final themes before the write-up stage).

Practitioner	Focus Groups	Non-Practitioner
Amateur and Non-Professional Translators	Client and Public Perceptions	Miscellaneous
Client Relations	Freelance Translation as a Profession	Perceptions of Translation Technology
Risk of De-Professionalisation	Markers of Professionalisation	Translation Skills
Experiences as a Translator	Miscellaneous	Perceived Role of Translators
Job Security	Non-Professional Translators	Value of Translation Services
Miscellaneous	Participants' Backgrounds	
Necessity of Service Area	Attitudes to Translation Technologies	
Professional Associations		
Rates and Income		
Societal Recognition		
Translation as a Specialised Activity		
Attitudes to Translation Technologies		
Translator Training		
Translators' Reasons Why FT is a Profession		

Table 4.2: List of initial practitioner, focus group, and non-practitioner themes.

4.3.2.4 Phase Four: Reviewing Coding and Themes

The fourth phase begins once a set of themes has been devised, and they now require revision and refinement (Braun and Clarke, 2006). During this phase, it is typical for researchers to review each theme and the associating coded segments to determine whether they form a coherent pattern, whether there is enough data to support each theme, and whether the themes accurately reflect the contents of the dataset (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Some inadequacies in the initial coding may be revealed during this process, and if so, revisions may be required and new codes may be inserted and others removed or merged (King, 2004).

The coded extracts for each theme were reviewed, revealing that changes needed to be made. This is expected considering that coding is an ongoing and organic process (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Below is a summary of the key changes that made during this stage:

- A frequent modification concerned the merging of codes in response to identifying overlapping content.
- Similarly, some codes were broken down due to not being very precise or there was not a clear distinction between them and other similar codes. Re-coding the extracts drawn from deleted codes was, thus, required.
- The extracts within several parent codes (e.g. “Translation Workflows” and “Professional Associations”) were initially organised in terms of sentiment (Positive, Negative, Neutral). However, the majority of these extracts within these categories were coded under “Neutral”. After re-evaluating these codes, thematic patterns in the content were identified which proved to be more befitting and descriptive of the associating extracts. New sets of child codes for each of these parent codes were, thus, generated.
- The remaining codes that were organised on the basis of whether the extracts were positively or negatively disposed (“Attitudes to AI and MT”, “Attitudes to CAT tools”, “Attitudes to Online Platforms”, “Experiences with Translation Agencies” and “Experiences with Direct Clients”) were also reviewed, and various combinations of thematic child codes were trialled. However, every outcome resulted in overlapping child codes which were neither succinct nor comprehensive enough. Hence, I reverted back to the original sentiment orientated child codes.
- Aside from some minor changes to code names and re-evaluating the segments categorised under “Miscellaneous”, no further amendments were made at this stage.

By the end of my second round of revisions, all of the data that I deemed relevant to answering my RQs was allocated a code. The decision was made to cease further revisions because I felt

that no further major modifications needed to be made. Ending my revisions at this stage was justified considering that coding can be considered finalised once it has been scrutinised at least twice over an extended period of time (King, 2004).

The themes that were developed during the previous phase (see Table 4.2) must also be reviewed alongside the coding. It is recommended to refine the themes until they are specific enough so that they constitute an independent and distinct theme, yet broad enough to capture a complete set of ideas (Nowell et al., 2017). In other words, this process involves forming manageable sets of themes that succinctly summarise the data (Nowell et al., 2017). As such, new themes may be created while others may be merged or removed (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The following points were considered when reviewing my themes: whether the themes made sense, whether the data supported the themes, whether there was too much or too little content within each theme, whether any themes overlapped, whether there were any sub-themes, and whether there were any additional themes or sub-themes in the data that were not already identified (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

Before beginning the refinement process, the list of initial themes (see Table 4.2) was reviewed to identify overarching themes, which are: Current Landscape of the Translation Industry, Translator Attitudes Towards Their Career, The Professional Translator, Societal Recognition of Translation Services, and Sustainability of the Translation Profession. Each of the individual themes identified in Table 4.2 was then assigned to one of the identified main themes as a sub-theme.

Following the organisation of my list of preliminary themes (Table 4.2) into sets of main themes and supporting sub-themes, I proceeded with revision and refinement. Below is a summary of the key changes that made (see also Table 4.3):

- Regarding the sub-themes “Translation as a specialised activity”, “Job security” and “Professional associations”, there was not much data to support them. These themes collapsed into other sub-themes or the data contributed towards one of the newly formed sub-themes (“Professional qualities” and “Measures to protect the profession”).
- There were distinct ideas within the sub-theme “Risk of de-professionalisation”. For this reason, it was broken down into two separate sub-themes: “Threats to the profession” and “Reasons for de-professionalisation”.

Main theme: Current Landscape of the Translation Industry **Sub-themes:** Necessity of Service Area Integration of Translation Technologies	**Main theme:** Translator Attitudes Towards Their Career **Sub-themes:** Experiences as a Translator Rates and Income Client Relations
Main theme: The Professional Translator **Sub-themes:** Professional Qualities Amateur and Non-Professional Translators Translator Training	**Main theme:** Societal Recognition of Translation Services **Sub-themes:** Non-Practitioners' Reception of Freelance Translation Translators' Assumptions of Public Perceptions
Main theme: Sustainability of the Translation Profession **Sub-themes:** Measures to Protect the Profession Threats to the Profession Risk of De-Professionalisation	Miscellaneous

Table 4.3: List of main themes and sub-themes before the write-up stage.

By the end of this phase, researchers should have a good idea of the different themes, how they fit together, and the overall story they tell about the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is advised that a researcher can only finalise their themes once all of the data that is clearly relevant to the research questions has been allocated to a theme (King, 2004). In other words, once the scope and content of each theme can be described by the researcher, they can move on to the next phase (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

4.3.2.5 Phases Five and Six: Defining and Reporting Themes

Once the themes are identified, the researcher can transition into the next phase which primarily involves defining each of the themes with content, writing detailed analyses and identifying the story that each theme tells (Braun and Clarke, 2006). At this stage, it is imperative to not only consider how each of the themes fit within the scope of the RQs, but also to ensure that the theme names immediately give the reader a clear sense of what the themes are about (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). Table 4.3 reflects all of the changes made up until this point and shows my sets of main themes and sub-themes before I began the write-up stage.

The researcher can begin to write up the final report once the themes are fully established and defined with content (Braun and Clarke, 2006). At this point, it is relevant to point out that further amendments to the organisation and labelling of themes were made during the

write-up stage. The themes "Societal Recognition of Translation Services" and "Translator Attitudes Towards Their Career" were broken down because their content overlapped with and was relevant to the other themes. These changes subsequently resulted in some of the sub-themes also necessitating minor modifications in their labels (see Table 4.4 for the final list of themes; see Chapter 5 for current landscape of the translation industry; Chapter 6 for the professional translator; and Chapter 7 for sustainability of the translation profession).

	THEME 1	**THEME 2**	**THEME 3**
MAIN THEME	Current Landscape of Translation as a Service	The Professional Translator	Sustainability of the Translation Profession
SUB THEMES	Demand for the Service Changes to Translation Workflows	Professional Characteristics of Translators and Translation Services Amateur and Non-Professional Translators Necessity of Translator Training	Job Security Risk of De-Professionalisation

Table 4.4: List of final main themes and sub-themes

4.3.3 Warrantability Criteria

Initially proposed by Wood and Kroger (2000), warrantability is a method of evaluating qualitative research quality and the extent to which analyses are trustworthy and sound. As summarised by Saldanha and O'Brien (2014), warrantability is evidenced by:

- Orderliness and documentation;
- Accountability: conducting and reporting the study in a way that helps (an) external auditor(s) to examine and assess the research processes;
- Demonstration: showing, in detail and by using evidence, how the arguments reported in the study have been constructed;
- Patterns: explaining patterns, accounting for exceptions and demonstrating that the analysis is exhaustive;
- Coherence: discussing claims and counter claims and demonstrating that they are logical;
- Plausibility: showing that claims make sense in relation to other knowledge;
- Fruitfulness: showing that the research has implications for future work.

My research fulfils at least the basic requirements of the warrantability criteria. Firstly, orderliness, documentation and accountability have been achieved. The circumstances and methods under which my data collection methods were performed, including details regarding distribution, participants and recruitment, and tools were detailed in Section 4.1.

Moreover, during the entire coding process, detailed notes within NVivo were written up to record my emerging impressions and evolving ideas. Any changes that were made to my coding methods and approaches were also documented in these notes. Additionally, all of the documentation produced during the data collection process (i.e. participant information sheets, consent forms, survey questions, focus group prompts) has been included in the Appendices. Therefore, by documenting my research process and outcomes in my notes and throughout this chapter and by including all relevant documentation in an appendix, I believe that orderliness, documentation and accountability have been achieved. Secondly, the requirements for demonstration have also been met. As it should become evident in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, the arguments presented are, indeed, based on the findings drawn from the surveys and focus groups. Participants' anonymised quotations extracted from the open-ended survey responses and from the focus group transcripts in addition to descriptive statistics summarising the quantitative survey results were consistently used throughout my discussions to back up my arguments and claims. In doing so, thirdly, coherence was also addressed by consistently linking the claims made to the study's findings and to previous studies within TS. In this way, claims were connected to the collected data and/or aligned with related studies, thereby demonstrating the logical basis of the arguments and that they hold together. Counterclaims were also acknowledged wherever relevant. Furthermore, the criterion of patterns is evidenced by my approach to my thematic analysis. As explained throughout Section 4.3.2, codes were generated inductively and were based on the recurring sentiments, themes and ideas shared by the participants. As such, the patterns and themes discussed in the forthcoming chapters reflect the shared thoughts and feelings of the participants, with multiple quotations from multiple participants often being provided to further back up the arguments. Any deviations from the identified patterns were also highlighted to show that all facets of an argument were accounted for. Moreover, plausibility is evidenced as perspectives from the sociology of professions were used to make sense of the collected data and, therefore, to better understand the circumstances influencing translation's (de-)professionalisation. Relevant literature from TS was also cited to show how my findings align with related studies. Finally, fruitfulness has also been achieved as new questions were raised after conducting this study and the implications for future research are outlined in Section 8.3.

Having established the data collection and data analysis methods required to complete this research in addition to having delineated the main theoretical and conceptual orientations (see Chapter 3) that help to make sense of the collected data, the following chapter reports the first theme of results, made up of two sub-themes, that pertain to defining the current landscape of translation as a professional service.

5 Theme One: Current Landscape of Translation as a Service

This chapter explores how translation is practised and perceived by the general public as well as by the practitioners themselves. Sub-theme one regards the demand for the service (Section 5.1), reporting results relating to the prestige and value of human translation services (Section 5.1.1), translation as a specialised activity (Section 5.1.2) and translation technologies as competitors (Section 5.1.3). Sub-theme two concerns the recent changes to translation workflows (Section 5.2), reporting results relating to the accessibility of clients and resources (Section 5.2.1), changes in efficiency and productivity (Section 5.2.2), the transition to post-editing workflows (Section 5.2.3), the integration of online translation platforms (Section 5.2.4), and client relations (Section 5.2.5). This is followed by a discussion of theme one's results, exploring practitioner-client relationships (Section 5.3.1), societal recognition of the necessity and complexity of the service (Section 5.3.2), and occupational prestige (Section 5.3.3) before summarising the landscape of the translation industry in terms of current practices and trends (Section 5.3.4).

5.1 Sub-Theme: Demand for the Service

5.1.1 Prestige and Value of Human Translation Services

Freelance translation was not highly regarded in terms of prestige[20] (i.e. respect and admiration) by neither the practitioners nor by the non-practitioners, and this is reflected by Figure 5.1 which shows that only 5.8% (n=10) of practitioners rated their profession as very prestigious. Furthermore, when the practitioners were asked to rate how the general public would likely rate the prestige of the translation profession, only 1.2% (n=2) of practitioners selected very prestigious, whereas over half (57.9%, n=99) selected not very prestigious or not prestigious at all (Figure 5.2). The practitioners' assumptions were not exactly in line with non-practitioner assessments, however, as 8.2% (n=7) of non-practitioners rated freelance translation as very prestigious and only one fifth (20%, n=17) rated it as either not very prestigious or not prestigious at all (Figure 5.1). It is perhaps worth mentioning that the single non-practitioner who rated the profession as not prestigious at all was, in fact, one of the respondents who has previously purchased translation services. Otherwise, the remaining non-practitioners who have previously commissioned translations have all rated the

[20] 'Prestige' and 'status' are both terms that refer to social standing. However, prestige is more closely aligned with the respect and admiration associated with translators (see Aly (2018) for study on translators' occupational prestige; see also discussion in Section 5.3.3), meanwhile status, within the scope of TS, refers to social rankings and translations' professionalisation (Ruokonen, 2013; see also Section 3.3.2).

profession as somewhat prestigious or higher. Either way, neither the practitioners nor the non-practitioners viewed freelance translation as a highly prestigious occupational endeavour.

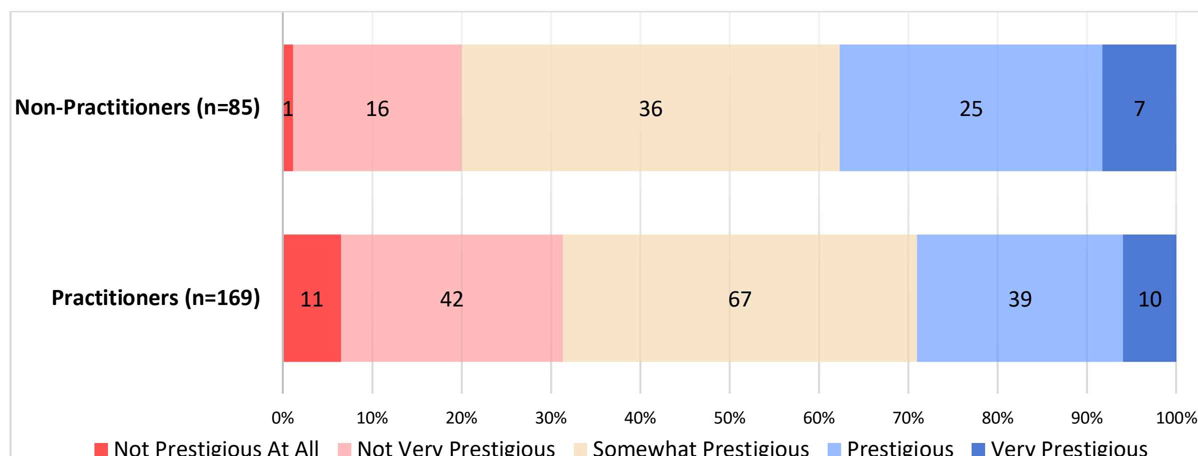

Figure 5.1: Prestige of the profession (NP=85, P=169).

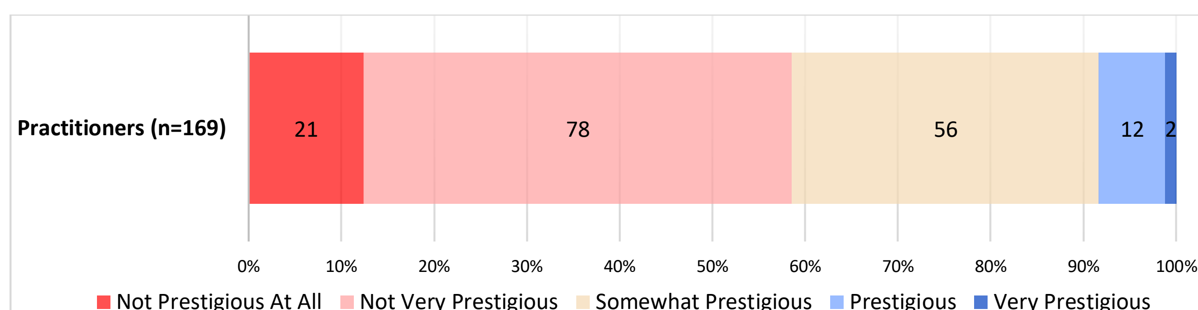

Figure 5.2: Practitioner assumptions about public perceptions of the prestige of the freelance translation profession (n=169).

Four main reasons were put forward by the practitioners to explain why freelance translation currently lacks prestige and they can be summarised as: the race to the bottom culture of the profession and the lack of financial rewards; the feeling of replaceability because of the implication that translation work can supposedly be completed by machines more effectively than if it was completed by humans; the lack of respect towards translators; and a general lack of recognition for the contributions that translators make. In essence, the practitioners held the firm conviction that they deserve much more respect and recognition than what they currently receive. That being said, a handful of practitioners also advocated that this was not always the case because translation was described to have once been a reputable profession where translators were "appreciated for their work" [P-S-17][21]. Not only that, but as one practitioner pointed out, such a poor reputation is expected because "this is part of freelance work regardless of the industry" [P-S-69], thus suggesting that it is the freelance aspect of the profession that brings down the reputation of translators (see Section 5.3.3 for discussion on occupational prestige).

[21] Participant codes were used to be able to distinguish between the various data sources, and they follow the format [Practitioner (P) or Non-Practitioner (NP) – Survey (S) or Focus Group (FG) – Participant Number]. As such, the code [P-S-1] would indicate that the source is from the practitioner survey and relates to participant number one.

Regarding the overall value of human translation services, 79.5% (n=136) of practitioners rated them as very valuable and not a single practitioner selected not very valuable or not valuable at all (see Figure 5.3). However, there was a clear discrepancy between how the practitioners believed the general public would value such services and how the non-practitioner survey population actually valued them. Only 3.5% (n=6) of practitioners believed that the general public would rate human translation services as very valuable (see Figure 5.4). This assumption does not, however, align with the non-practitioners' opinions because 80% (n=68) of non-practitioners rated human translation services as very valuable or valuable, and not a single non-practitioner selected not valuable at all (see Figure 5.3). Additionally, the single non-practitioner who rated human translation services as not very valuable has not previously sought such a service.

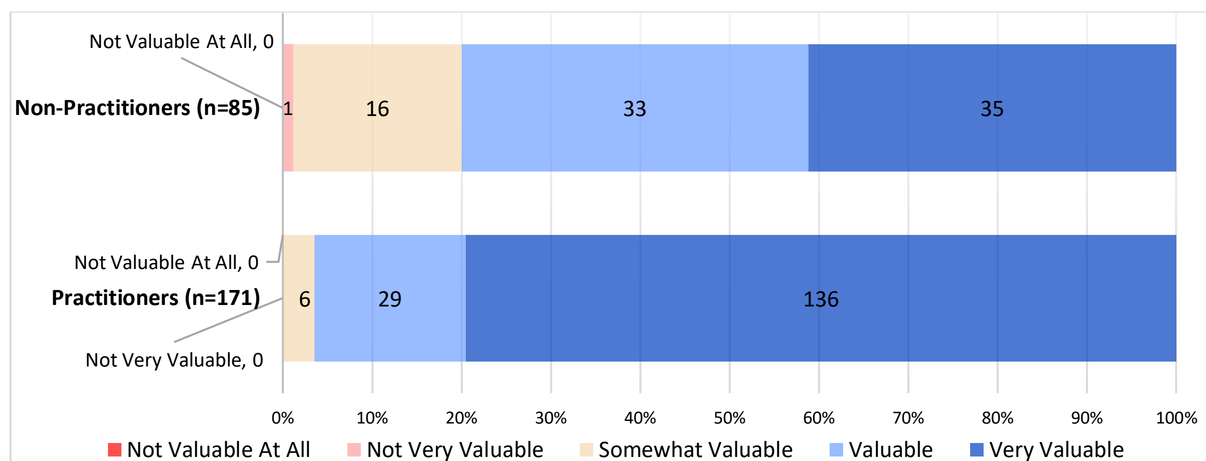

Figure 5.3: Value of human translation services (NP=85, P=171)

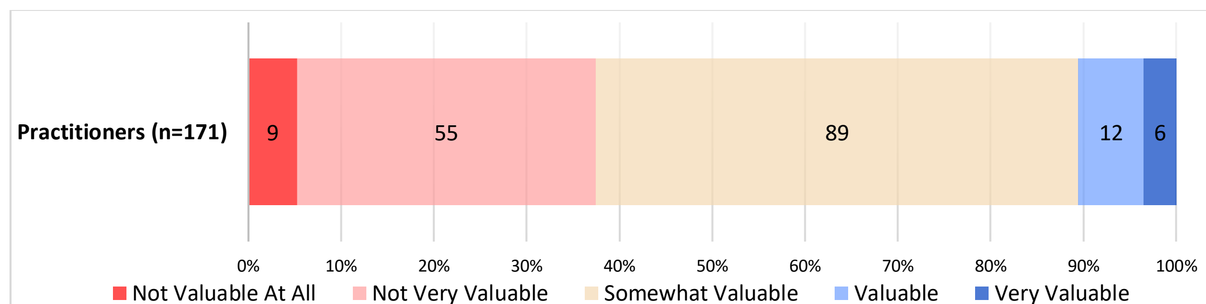

Figure 5.4: Practitioner assumptions about public perceptions of the value of human translation services (n=171).

At a surface level, the practitioners deemed human translation services valuable. However, some of the practitioners specified different forms of value, reporting, for example, a lack of "social value" [P-S-67]. To illustrate, apart from two (1.2%) practitioners who were not concerned about societal recognition or how the wider public perceives the profession, many practitioners expressed sentiments along the lines of feeling, for instance, "powerless" [P-S-25] as well as "undervalued or overlooked" [P-S-160]. One practitioner even attested that freelance translation is "one of the most undervalued professions" [P-S-94]. In fact, many practitioners speculated that the lack of social value stems from the perception that human

translators and translation technologies are at parity, and in turn, the practitioners felt that such technologies are, consequently, devaluing not only the skills that humans possess, but also the high-level work that translators commit to.

Significant doubts over the financial value of the profession were also expressed by the practitioners. Essentially, many practitioners shared a narrative about how the general public has been convinced that human translation services are not worth paying for and that clients "jump at the chance of cheaper solutions" [P-S-59] regardless of whether the quality is satisfactory or not. However, when the non-practitioners were asked about translation as a paid service, 81.2% (n=69) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that paying for translations is an unnecessary expense (see Figure 5.5). Out of those who have previously commissioned translations (n=11), a total of 10 (90.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the aforementioned statement, suggesting that those who sought translation services see the financial value of the service.

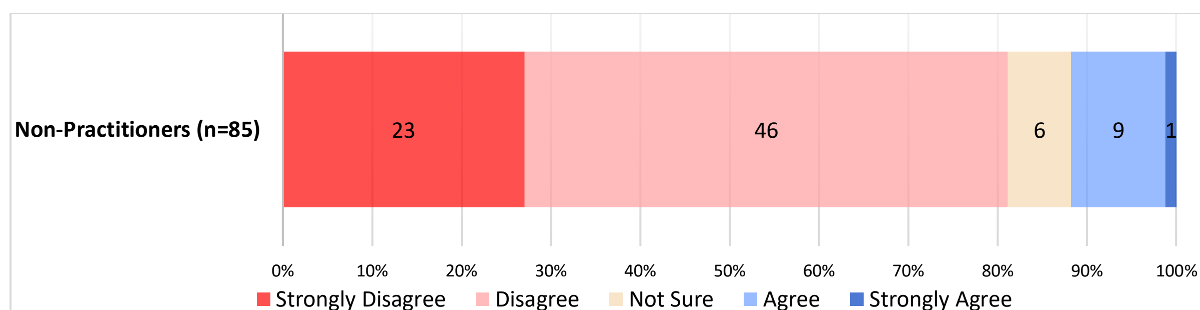

Figure 5.5: Paying for translations is an unnecessary expense (NP, n=85).

The opinions put forward by the non-practitioners regarding the value of human translation services contrast with what the practitioners assumed about how the general public would regard human translation services. Apart from two (2.4%) non-practitioners who highlighted whether you seek a human translator or not depends on the desired level of quality and on the stakes of the translation, the non-practitioners were generally appreciative of what human translation services bring to society. They were described by the non-practitioners as "very valuable" [NP-S-54], "useful" [NP-S-12], "vital" [NP-S-84] and "important" [NP-S-66], especially for multicultural societies, with business, education, agriculture, and mums therapy constituting some of the domains where more translation services would be welcomed. Having more flexibility to be able to request translations into or from specific dialects was also suggested by the non-practitioners (see Section 5.3.2 for discussion relating to societal recognition).

Moreover, the non-practitioner survey commentary regarding the value of the service aligns with Figure 5.6 which shows that 88.3% (n= 75) of non-practitioners agreed or strongly agreed with the reality that human translation is and will remain an essential service. At a more granular level, four out of the five (80%) non-practitioners who disagreed with the aforementioned statement have not previously sought translation services. Meanwhile, the

practitioners reached a similar conclusion at 81.9% (n= 140) agreeing or strongly agreeing with the same statement.

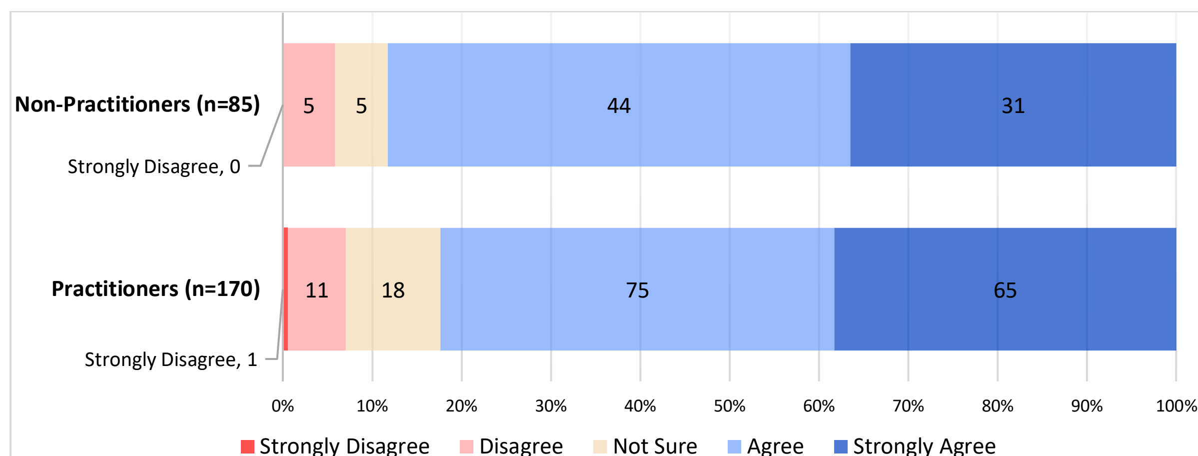

Figure 5.6: Human translation is and will remain an essential service (NP=85, P=170).

5.1.2 Translation as a Specialised Activity

82.4% (n=141) of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed with the fact that translation requires the strict application of specialised knowledge (see Figure 5.7). Meanwhile, around two thirds of non-practitioners (67.6%, n=66) selected agree or strongly agree for the same statement. Interestingly, out of the non-practitioners who have previously purchased translation services (12.9%, n=11), only one (9%) strongly disagreed with the aforementioned statement while the remainder either agreed or strongly agreed. Nevertheless, the specific skills that were cited by the practitioner survey respondents to be required by a professional translator are, amongst others, the ability to write professionally and accurately, a strong command of both the source and target languages, and domain specific knowledge. Meanwhile, the focus group participants also mentioned familiarisation with specialised technology, attention to detail, and research skills (see Section 6.1 for more results relating to the characteristics of a professional translator). These findings feed into previous research on translator skills and competences postulating that the skills necessitated by a professional translator go beyond language capabilities and that a professional translator's skillset is complex, encompassing a combination of skills related to, for example, localising, problem solving, being competent with general and translation technologies, as well as developing business acumen (e.g. PACTE, 2017; Petrova, 2022; Pym, 2013; Rico Pérez and Torrejón, 2012; Salamah, 2021; Hao and Pym, 2021; see also Section 2.4.1 for a summary of literature relating to translator competences).

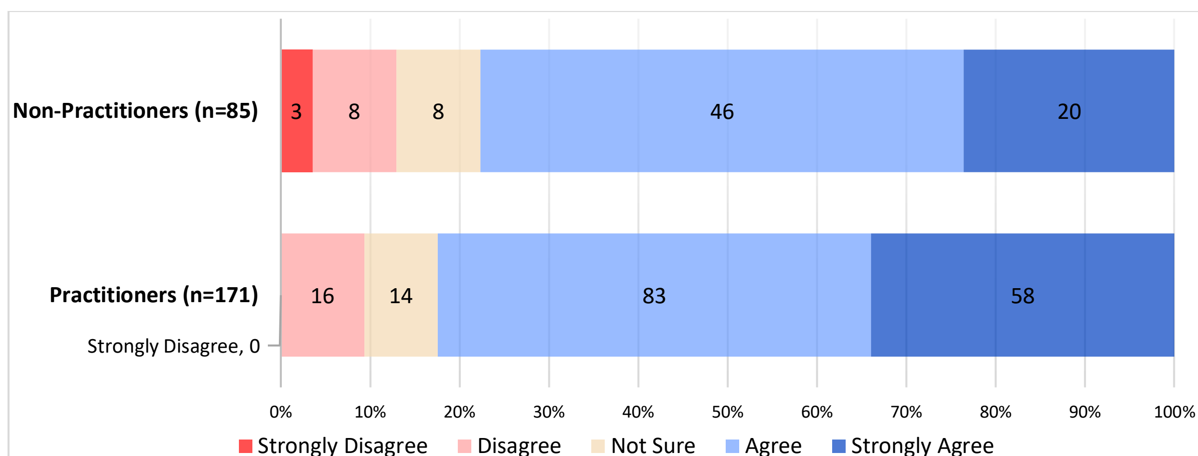

Figure 5.7: Translation requires the strict application of specialised knowledge (NP=85, P=171).

While approximately four out of five practitioners considered translation to be a specialised activity that not everyone can do and one requiring commitment to developing specialised skills, only around half of the practitioners (n=86, 50.3%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that only qualified translators are capable of applying the knowledge and skills required to translate (see Figure 5.8), suggesting that one does not have to be qualified in order to be able perform translation (see Section 6.3 for more results relating to translator training). It can be assumed that those who do not possess any translation-related qualifications or certifications would be more likely to reject the aforementioned statement. When verifying this hypothesis, fourteen out of the twenty (70%) practitioners who do not have any qualifications or certifications at all, in addition to six out of ten (60%) practitioners who have a degree in a subject other than translation or languages, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the aforementioned statement. In other words, two-thirds of the practitioners (66.6%, n=20) who do not have an educational background in languages or translation believed that you do not need to be qualified in translation in order to translate.

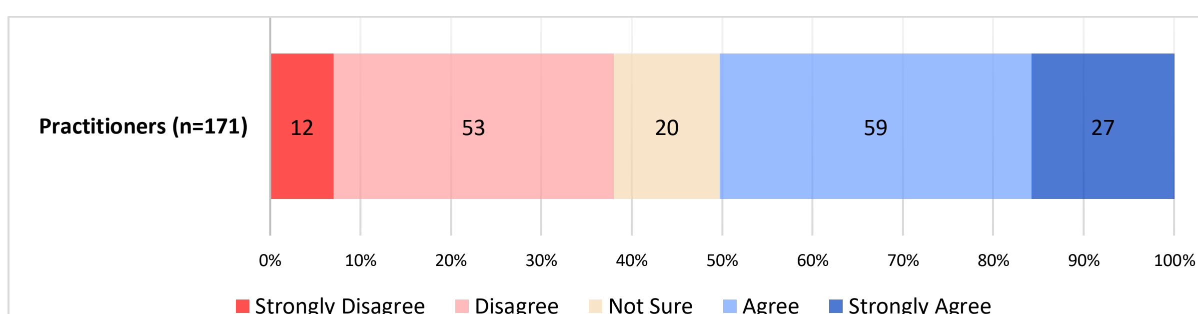

Figure 5.8: Only qualified translators are capable of applying the knowledge and skills required to translate (P, n=171).

Furthermore, when asked about the level of specialisation associated with translation skills (see Figure 5.9), 42.7% (n=73) of practitioners rated them as very specialised with a further 47.4% (n=81) rating them as specialised. In fact, only two practitioners (1.2%) stated that translation is neither a specialised task nor possesses an exclusive body of knowledge. However, when asked to rate the speciality of translation skills from the perspective of the general public, only 3.5% (n=6) suggested very specialised (see Figure 5.10). One practitioner

stated that "translation used to be a niche specialised profession appreciated for their work" [P-S-17] but is no longer so. Meanwhile a further practitioner advocated that "professional translation skills remain valuable in so far that they are a useful skill set apart from MT" but questioned whether they are "valued by clients" [P-S-28]. In other words, many practitioners believed that "translators are fighting a losing battle" [P-S-69] in terms of showcasing what they do and why it is so important and specialised.

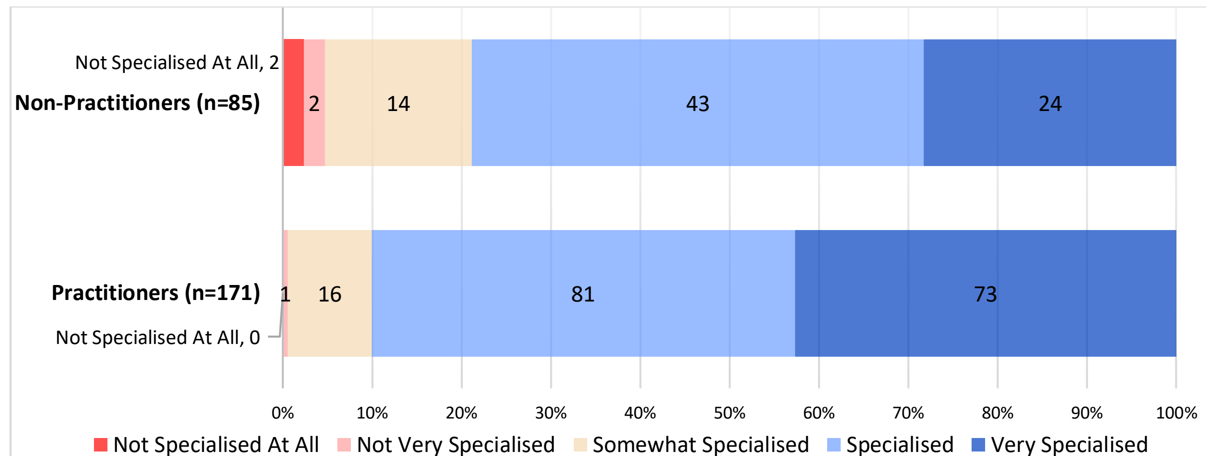

Figure 5.9: Speciality of the skills required to translate (NP=85, P=171).

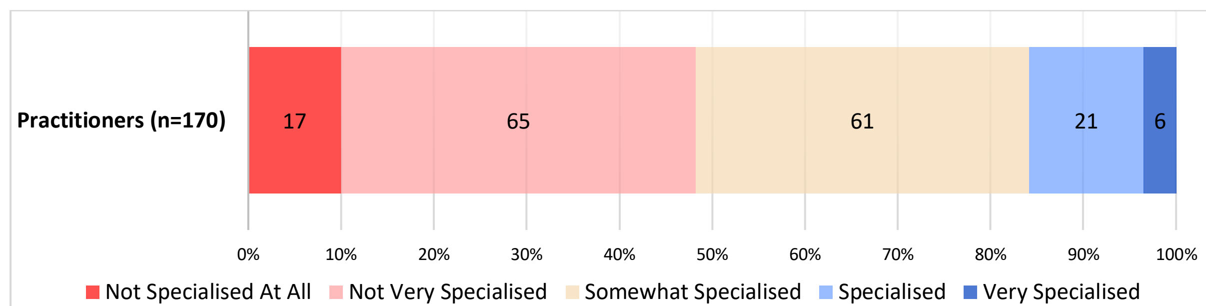

Figure 5.10: Practitioner assumptions on public perceptions of the speciality of translation skills (n=170).

The non-practitioners were also asked a series of questions relating to how they perceive the speciality of translations skills, and their opinions do not align with what the practitioners assumed about how the general public would rate the speciality of translation skills. A total of 68.8% (n=67) of non-practitioners rated translation skills as either specialised or very specialised (see Figure 5.9). Meanwhile, 87.1% (n=74) of non-practitioners considered translation to be a complex task (see Figure 5.11). More specifically, the ratings were unanimous amongst the non-practitioners who have previously commissioned translations (12.9%, n=11), with all rating translation as a complex task and all rating the speciality of translation skills as either specialised or very specialised. In relation to Figure 5.11, the difference between the observed frequencies is statistically significant ($\chi^2[1]=46.69$, $p < 0.001$), and the effect size is large ($\phi=0.74$), meaning that this difference is unlikely to be due to chance. Additionally, this set of non-practitioner results indicates a potential misjudgement on behalf of the practitioners regarding how non-practitioners perceive the level of skill required to translate.

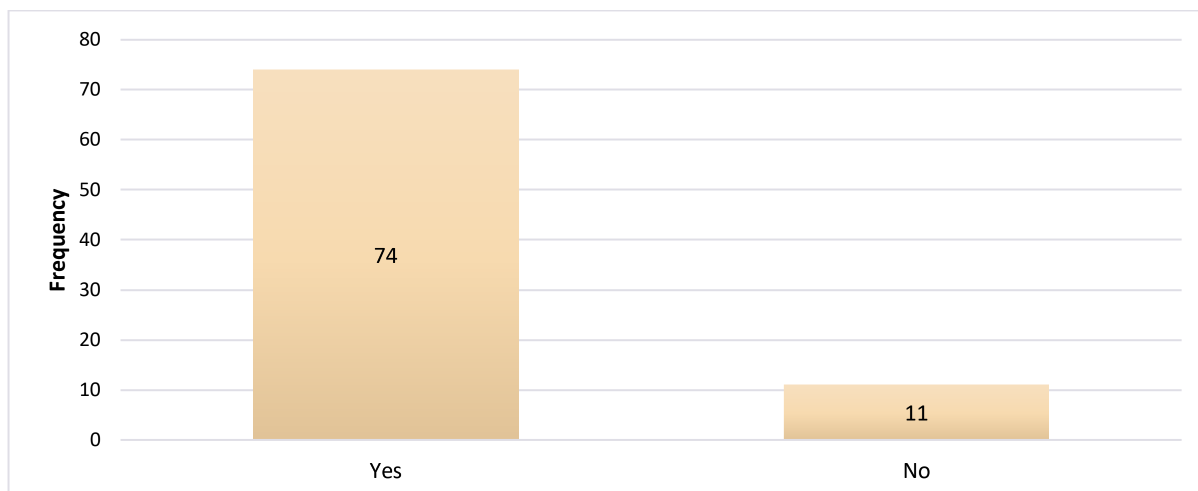

Figure 5.11: Translation is a complex task (NP, n=85).

In their comments, the non-practitioners suggested what they thought were key translator competences, citing a comprehensive understanding of the nuances, slang, cultures, and histories of the languages involved, good attention to detail, and knowledge of a subject field. One non-practitioner even acknowledged that others may “assume translating material is the same as using a programme to translate” [NP-S-12], but language and translation were generally recognised by the non-practitioners as complex and that professional translation cannot be easily replicated by machines and thus should remain a human interaction (see Section 5.3.2 for discussion relating to societal recognition).

Similarly, from the practitioner perspective, MT and AI performance does not yet match that of a skilled human. To illustrate this (see Figure 5.12), 70.8% (n=121) of practitioners disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that translation work is becoming standardised and less complicated because of technological developments, suggesting that translation is still a complex task despite the availability of translation technologies to automate translation processes. This aligns with the result that 79.5% (n=136) of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed with the fact that professional translation skills are just as valuable and exclusive now as they were during pre-machine translation times (see Figure 5.12).

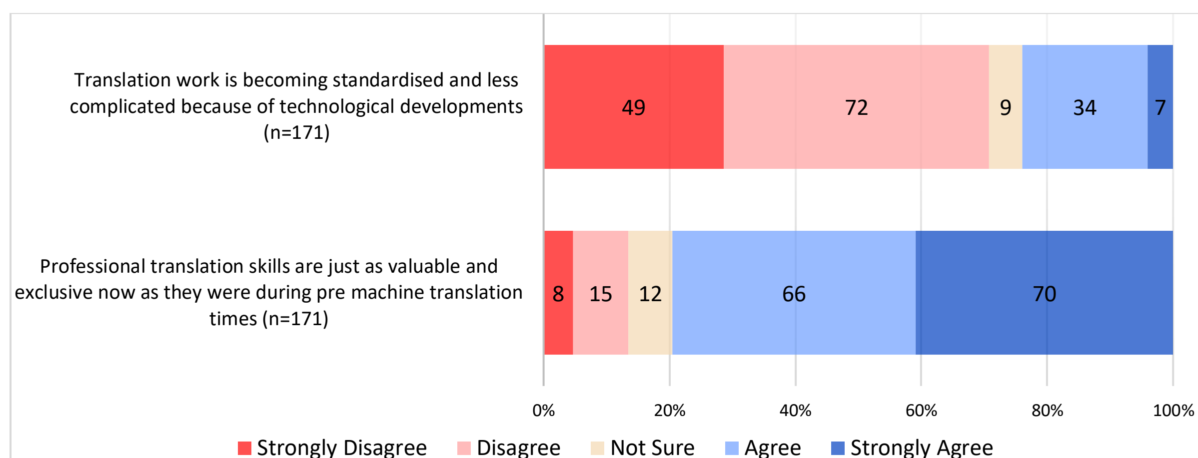

Figure 5.12: Translation work is becoming standardised and less complicated because of technological developments (P, n=171) and professional translation skills are just as valuable and exclusive now as they were during pre-machine translation times (P, n=171).

Many practitioners provided reasons to justify why they believed that professional translation skills are still valuable in the age of machine learning technologies. For instance, many practitioners asserted that not only do human translators enhance low-quality MT and AI output, but human translators are also needed when handling specialised content that cannot be entrusted to translation technologies. In fact, many practitioners also discussed how the rise of MT has encouraged them to specialise in niche areas where human expertise is crucial and cannot be replicated by machines, with one practitioner feeling particularly "sceptical" [P-S-157] about whether machines will ever attain the "cultural knowledge and sensitivity" [P-S-157] that humans possess. According to many practitioners, niche human translation markets will remain, with business, legal, technical and literary matters being cited as key domains where MT simply cannot be relied on, and therefore, professional judgement is still required. Indeed, translation technologies are "here to stay" [P-S-133], but human translators will always have the upper hand as long as they continue to educate clients of the "superiority of human skills and training" [P-S-133]. That being said, there was one focus group participant who was "amazed" [P-FG2-4] by the amount of MT that is being used within clinical trials, which indicates how MT is used even for specialised translation. In fact, previous literature has shown how debates and trials have already taken place in regard to ascertaining when MT can or cannot be used in certain high-stake settings (e.g. Mehandru et al., 2022; Nunes Vieira et al., 2021; Pecina et al., 2014; Dew et al., 2018; Wahler, 2018; Bowker and Ciro, 2015; see also Section 2.1.1 for a summary of literature relating to the use of MT in high-stakes settings for the purpose of facilitating access to information and services).

5.1.3 Translation Technologies as Competitors

Many practitioners claimed that translation technologies are marketed as cheap and convenient and are, according to one practitioner, "deceiving clients and killing the profession" [P-S-34]. Automated translation solutions were heavily criticised by the practitioners for reducing the demand for professional human translators by advertising that

they can deliver the same quality as human translators and by encouraging clients to seek cheaper solutions. More specifically, the practitioners were under the impression that "people think that they don't need professionals anymore" [P-S-24] because "why ask a translator" [P-S-146] when translations can supposedly be completed in a fraction of the time and at a fraction of the cost of a professional human translator. In fact, one focus group participant described a conversation that they had with a computational linguist who believed that "the translator no longer existed" [P-FG2-4] because "MT was doing everything" [P-FG2-4]. Essentially, the practitioners speculated that MT and AI are marketed to "look very polished" [P-S-101] and that, in turn, clients and the general public are unaware of their limitations and that they do not understand why such tools shouldn't be used. This commentary provides context to why 60.2% of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the demand for professional human translation services is decreasing over time (see Figure 5.13), but the same commentary does not completely align with the fact that only around one third of the practitioners (36.2%, n=62) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the quality and ease of access to MT and AI tools reduce the demand for professional judgement (see Figure 5.13). Indeed, the demand for professional human translation services may certainly be in decline, but according to the practitioners, the demand for professional judgement remains to handle or translate specialised content as well as for editing and proofreading activities.

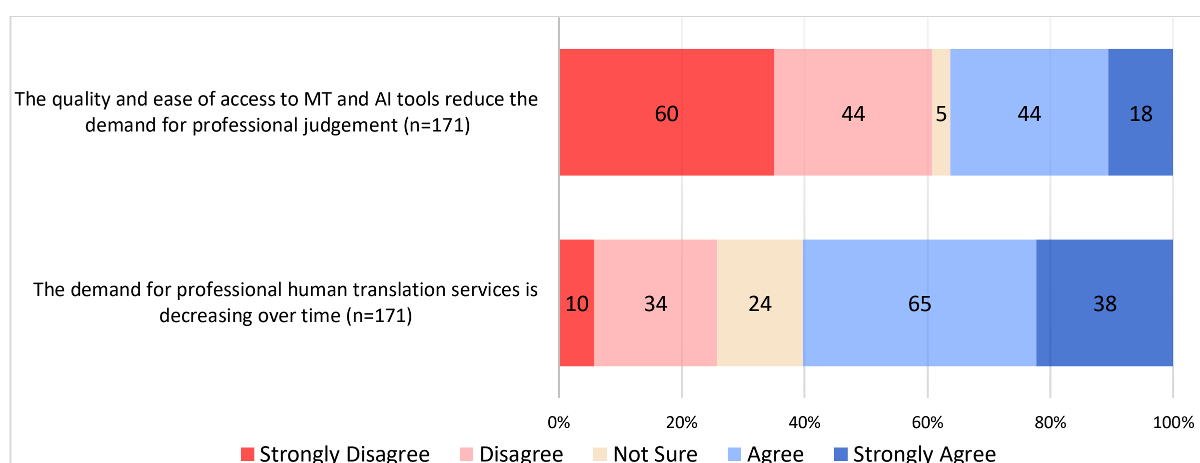

Figure 5.13: The quality and ease of access to MT and AI tools reduce the demand for professional judgement (P, n=171) and the demand for professional human translation services is decreasing over time (P, n=171).

Furthermore, translation activity is transitioning into an era where "not every document requires human translation" [P-S-10]. While the practitioners generally argued that there will always be a need for professional human input to ensure accuracy and quality, it was also feared by many practitioners that "human translators will only be needed where it is important to get it absolutely right" [P-S-12]. As such, the human translation market will survive, but it will shrink over time, and this was predicted by many practitioners to be the consequence of an increasing number of translation projects being "swallowed by MT" [P-S-12]. Particularly for the cases of low-priority, perishable and general translations, "where the amateurs mostly live" [P-S-23], free MT and AI are likely to completely take over this portion

of the translation market, promoting the idea that human translators are slowly becoming a "dying breed" [P-S-18]. According to the practitioners, long-term implications include the integration of translation technologies extending from the lower- and non-professional end of the market to the point when "eventually, [all] translation will only be done by machines" [P-S-25]. The focus group participants elaborated on this by revealing that work is continuously being lost to AI. They concluded that this technology is "dangerous" [P-FG1-2] and "is really not going to help the profession" [P-FG1-1] but "we have to accept that AI will be used" [P-FG2-3] because the translation of certain documents and domains can be easily automated. That being said, one focus group participant showcased a bit more optimism, explaining that "language is a human thing at the end of the day" [P-FG2-1] and that they "really doubt that any machine could replace humans" [P-FG2-1].

Another prediction that was put forward by the practitioners described a translation market that is separated into two segments, notably specialised or "real translation, practised by qualified professionals" [P-S-53] or "the human" [P-S-60], and "DIY/low-cost translations" [P-S-100] or just "MT" [P-S-60] which is handled by amateurs and non-professionals. Indeed, there is still a place for professional human translators because of the demand for specialised translation, but they are at risk of becoming a "luxury" [P-S-34] service only that is characterised by a "minority of ultra-specialised, ultra-professionalised translators" [P-S-100].

All things considered, the practitioners did not deny the fact that MT and AI output has improved considerably over recent years and that it is becoming "good enough by itself without human input" [P-S-60], but this is, consequently, triggering a downward spiral in rates and is also posing the risk of putting many "out of business" [P-S-60]. Just over half of the practitioners (n=93, 54.4%) believed that human translation services can, however, withstand competition over future technological enhancements while the remainder was not sure or disagreed with this assertion (see Figure 5.14). Interestingly, the non-practitioners appeared to have more faith than the practitioners in relation to the sustainability of human translation services, with 67% (n=57) agreeing or strongly agreeing with the same statement (see Figure 5.14). In relation to the non-practitioners who have previously commissioned translations (12.9%, n=11), all bar one agreed or strongly agreed that human translation services can withstand competition over future technological enhancements.

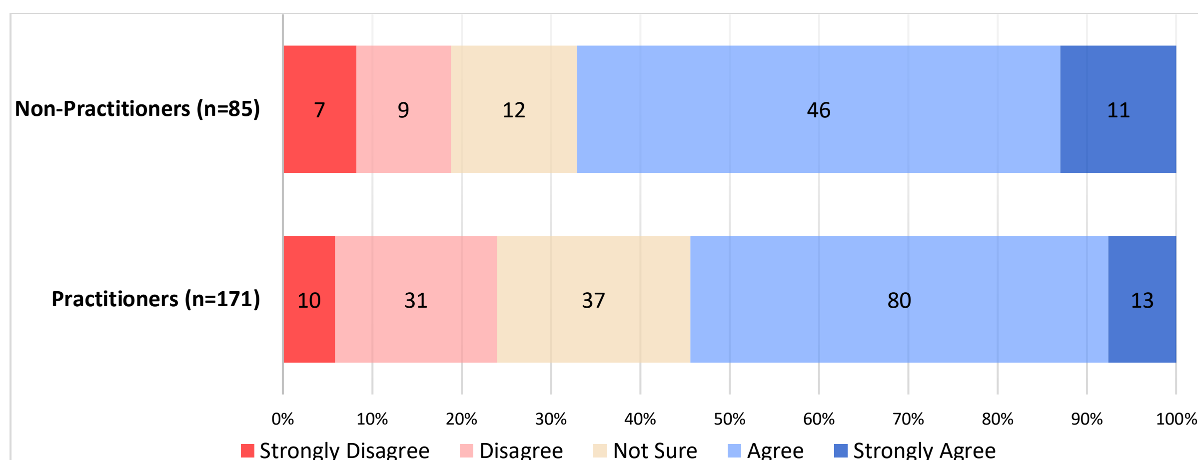

Figure 5.14: Human translation services can withstand competition from future technological enhancements (NP=85, P=171).

Focussing on the non-practitioner perspective, 52.9% (n=45) considered MT and AI competitors to professional human translators (see Figure 5.15). Regarding the small group of non-practitioners who have previously sought translation services (12.9%, n=11), the ratings of whether MT and AI are competitors are also split, with seven (63.6%) considering the technologies competitors and the remaining four (36,4%) not perceiving them as competitors. Also in relation to Figure 5.15, the difference between the observed frequencies is, however, not statistically significant ($\chi^2[1]=0.43$, $p = 0.513$), and the effect size is small ($\phi=0.07$). On this note, it becomes relevant to address that previous research has focussed on the reasons that encourage non-translators to engage with raw MT output instead of seeking a professional translator (e.g. Nurminen and Papula, 2018; Nurminen, 2021; Robertson et al., 2021; Nunes Vieira et al., 2023; see also Section 2.1.1 for a summary of literature relating to the uses of MT by non-translators).

In relation to Figure 5.15, one non-practitioner clarified that competition is, however, purely at a financial level because “why do [professional translation] if I have Google Translate for free?” [NP-S-8]. However, this does not necessarily mean that the non-practitioners also believed that these tools offer quality and accurate translations as only 17.7% (n=15) considered Google Translate or other similar online translation tools as very trustworthy or trustworthy (see Figure 5.16). It is perhaps also noteworthy that the non-practitioners who have previously commissioned translations (12.9%, n=11) did not rate the trustworthiness of MT and/or AI very highly, with 6 (54.5%) rating the technologies as somewhat trustworthy and a further 4 (36.4%) rating them as not very trustworthy. One non-practitioner specified that “when I say “yes” to Google and ChatGPT as competitors, that is because I think that some people will choose to use them – not because I think they are of a similar quality” [NP-S-85]. Similarly, a further non-practitioner expressed that they “use DeepL to translate and it is a good service but I trust people more” [NP-S-20]. In short, the non-practitioners summarised that accuracy is more important than cost, with professional human translation services standing as the more accurate and trustworthy option.

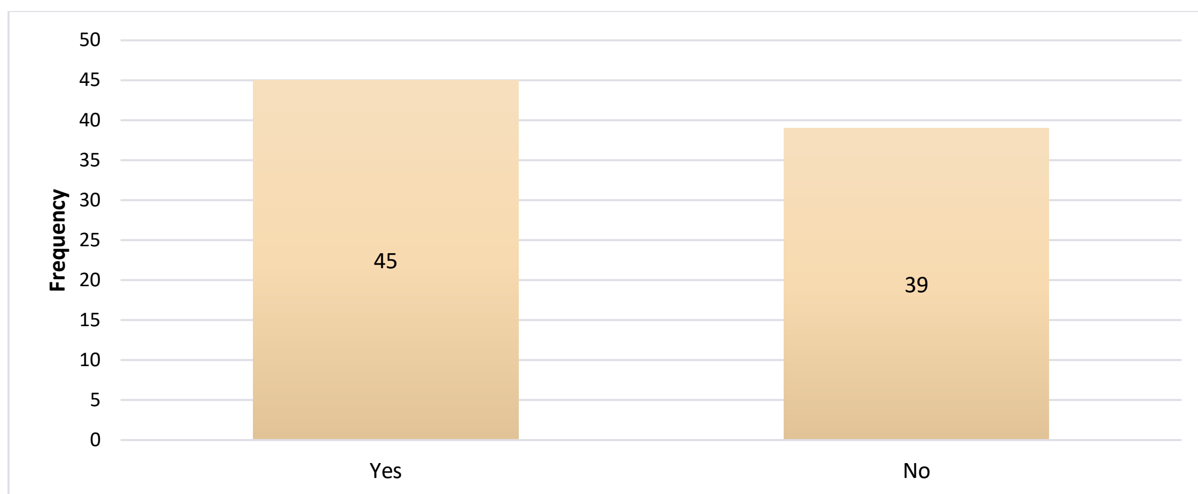

Figure 5.15: MT and AI are competitors to professional human translators? (NP, n=84)

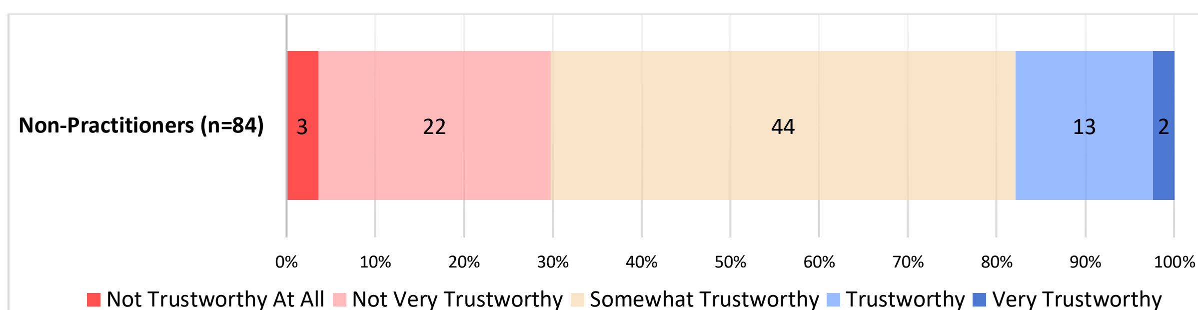

Figure 5.16: Trustworthiness of Google Translate or other similar online translation tools (NP, n=84).

Although such technologies have greatly improved over the years (see studies by Gaspari, 2024; 2016; Doherty, 2016; Briva-Iglesias, 2023; van der Meer, 2019; Wang et al., 2022; van der Meer, 2024), many examples were provided by the non-practitioners to illustrate their pitfalls and how the accuracy from professional translation cannot yet be replicated by machines. Regarding personal use, one non-practitioner explained how a lot of anime use English subtitles to explain the meaning of Japanese jokes and phrases, but these English subtitles often do not make any sense at all. A further non-practitioner provided the example that translating "something as simple as a song title from English to French and back again leads to a different collection of words" [NP-S-85]. Furthermore, several non-practitioners explained that these technologies are not accurate enough and could pose serious risks within high-stake settings such as healthcare and legal environments. It was also explained by the non-practitioners that MT and AI can fail to detect tone and that they are not well versed with aspects such as local slang and dialects. Indeed, the non-practitioners admitted that such technologies are suitable in a "day-to-day environment" [NP-S-70], but translations produced by humans are not only more trustworthy and accurate, but the risk of the context of the message getting lost with technology would also be reduced (see Section 5.3.2 for discussion relating to societal recognition).

Interestingly, participants across both focus groups discussed how professional translation may not be necessary for all situations. To illustrate, one participant used DeepL to facilitate an email conversation about holiday planning, which they considered went very well. A

further focus group participant regularly uses MT to translate websites to gain a "rough gist" [P-FG2-3]. Meanwhile, a third participant made the distinction between using MT to navigate a foreign city, yet not trusting it to translate their medical records for which they would request a credentialled colleague. These focus group participants concluded that the choice of whether to use MT depends on what the translation is needed for, and that there is, indeed, a place for MT especially in a "non-professional capacity" [P-FG1-4].

5.2 Sub-Theme: Changes to Translation Workflows

5.2.1 Access to Clients and to Resources

Following the expansion of Web 2.0 technologies, a positive change that was described by a handful of the practitioners relates to access to resources (8.8%, n=15), and also that it is now possible to "work almost anywhere for almost any client" [P-S-14]. By facilitating remote working, practitioners have been able to connect with new clients and colleagues from all over the world to be much easier and quicker than ever before.

Moreover, the expansion of the internet has enabled unlimited access to vast amounts of information available online. The internet has proved to be a "wonderful tool" [P-S-89] as it allows the practitioners to research very effectively online, even for specialised fields, without needing to access a library. Not only that, but one practitioner stated that the internet is beneficial to "search for information on agencies/direct clients" [P-S-101], supposedly to help them to discern which clients they may be able to foster good and trustworthy relationships with.

In addition to specialist software that facilitates admin processes such as keeping track of projects and issuing quotes and invoices, access to resources was also discussed within the scope of translation-related resources. Translation memories, voice recognition, and AI were some of the "many tools in the translator's toolkit" [P-S-153] that are useful to "change the dynamic of [one's] own work" [P-S-153] and are essential to remain competitive. In other words, these digital tools have enhanced the experience of being a successful and productive freelancer.

5.2.2 Changes in Efficiency and Productivity

CAT tools were one type of translation technology that was described as a "lifesaver" [P-S-165]. According to twelve (7%) practitioners, CAT tools have positively influenced translator productivity by enabling translators to work more quickly and with more consistent terminology as well as offering the ability to translate files for which the original software is

not installed (e.g. InDesign). Overall, CAT tools appear to make translators' "lives so much easier" [P-S-128] as they boost productivity and have helped to streamline their work. Without them, it would be hard to compete in the market. Despite the myriad advantages, five (2.9%) practitioners reported negative experiences, explaining how CAT tools can slow down translation, interrupt the flow of translation, and affect quality. Not only that, but frustration was expressed over CAT tools' upfront costs and how their user interfaces are "terrible" [P-S-23]. Furthermore, if you do not possess an accumulated translation memory, then the advantages are limited. Indeed, there are many shortcomings to CAT tools, but these are problematic primarily for new or inexperienced translators who may not have had the time to build up their resources or master the functionalities of CAT tools. Otherwise, the practitioners were rather favourable of what CAT tools have to offer because, in short, they "make workloads less stressful or heavy" [P-S-17]. Moreover, research has regularly been conducted on translator experiences with CAT tools (e.g. Alotaibi, 2014; 2020; Borucinsky et al., 2022; Çetiner, 2018; Ciobanu, 2025; Estelles and Monzó, 2015; O'Brien et al., 2017; Manojlovic et al., 2020; Sun, 2021), and similarly to the case presented above, previous conclusions on CAT tools have also been somewhat varied with a mixed reception towards CAT tools' usefulness and their effects on translator productivity (see also Section 5.3.1 for discussion on how modern CAT tools integrate clients into the workflow).

Furthermore, MT and AI are reportedly "great tools" [P-S-58] for a few practitioners, but only for the specific purpose of reducing the time spent on high volume, repetitive, and general translations. One practitioner clarified that in their experience, MT and AI "only contributes to making the work 10 to 15 percent easier" [P-S-53] and that "it's a mistake to place too many expectations on them" [P-S-53]. However, these technologies were criticised by many practitioners for creating unrealistic expectations of productivity and that using them does not help with the "mental load" [P-S-30] of translation and have been accused of causing a decrease in productivity instead. This remark was primarily made in relation to the vast amount of post-editing that is necessitated after using either MT or AI, a process that requires "constant attention" [P-S-170]. Although MT and AI output can be "impressive" [P-S-41], it still contains errors and inconsistencies, some of which may be difficult to spot and then time-consuming to resolve (see Section 5.2.3 for more results relating to post-editing; see also studies by do Carmo and Moorkens, 2020; Koponen, 2016; O'Brien, 2011; Briva-Iglesias et al., 2023; Gaspari et al., 2014; Guerberof Arenas, 2008; 2013; 2014; Federico et al., 2012). In essence, such technologies are "good in some cases, a waste of time in others" [P-S-115] because they are "not always the best route to the right translation" [P-S-85]. With this in mind, MT and AI are nothing more than time-saving tools which "are only as good as the people using them" [P-S-145] and "if all parties understand how they work" [P-S-88].

Focus group one discussed the pros and cons of DeepL, with one participant praising the output between Dutch and English as well as the ability to integrate the technology into their CAT tools. For them, DeepL is "impressive" [P-FG1-4] and "astonishingly good" [P-FG1-4] to

the point where they generally perform all their translations through the software unless specifically told not to. The same participant admitted that their opinion of MT may be a bit “controversial” [P-FG1-4], but they did not deny the facts that it is a useful tool to produce draft translations, to compare the output with their own translation to find mistakes and mistranslations, or to quickly look up vocabulary. Although a further participant added that they do not personally use the technology, they agreed that DeepL can, indeed, be useful and can “come in handy when things don’t come to mind” [P-FG1-1]. However, they stressed that it “should be used carefully […] and someone who is not a translator may not know how to use it carefully” [P-FG1-1]. That being said, a further participant, who identified as a lecturer in TS, held the firm conviction that DeepL and other MT tools should never be used for professional translation, and that they always recommend to their students to translate from scratch. All things considered, the participants of focus group one concluded that the effectiveness of DeepL and other MT tools is ultimately dependent on the language combination and that they should be used cautiously.

5.2.3 Transition to Post-Editing Workflows

A general theme that was elicited from the practitioner survey commentary relates to how clients are supposedly exploiting the availability of translation technologies and are, as a result, favouring vendors who are willing to accept low rates and post-editing and/or proofreading assignments. On this note, it is relevant to address that a further point of contention in relation to MT and AI is post-editing, a development that is “dull” [P-S-110] and is taking the best bit away from translation and leaving translators with the “tedious editing bit” [P-S-8]. Moreover, asking translators to post-edit is reportedly a way for clients (both direct and translation agencies) to cut costs.

Although there are translators who avoid MTPE work, one practitioner pointed out that they “worry there will be a point when I will have no work left unless I take it on” [P-S-77]. Despite any displayed resistance against MTPE, one practitioner stated that “whether to use AI or MT is a decision for the client, not the translator” [P-S-38]. That being said, educating clients of the shortcomings of MTPE is reportedly an ongoing challenge.

The sentiments of the focus group participants align with the practitioner survey respondents. One participant described post-editing as “soul destroying” [P-FG1-4] and how it is “incredibly sad” [P-FG1-4] that there are fewer opportunities nowadays to translate from scratch. For the participants, MTPE has become difficult to avoid considering that MT is becoming “deceptively good” [P-FG2-2] and that clients are no longer willing to pay the prices for full translation. On this note, the participants reported that MTPE is likely to become an increasingly popular service because “people really believe that it is a solution” [P-FG2-1]. However, with the rise

of post-editing assignments, the focus group participants have found that they are more frequently declining jobs where very poor post-editing rates are being offered.

Against this backdrop, the role of a translator is reportedly being reduced to that of a post-editor, or in other words to “checkers” [P-S-11], “revisors” [P-S-120], “IT technicians” [P-S-52], “glorified admin assistants” [P-S-8] or “bilingual editors” [P-S-25]. Indeed, much concern was expressed about the fear of being reduced to post-editors, but “the best human translators […] will still be able to have good careers, as they provide excellent texts and excellent client-focussed added value” [P-S-3]. Several caveats to surviving as a translator were frequently specified, and that one will only survive as long as they are “outstanding” [P-S-24], offer a “hyper-specialisation” [P-S-2] and “keep up with the times (and technology)” [P-S-29]. Essentially, it is imperative to adapt and learn how to navigate an AI-driven world, otherwise, a translator is at risk of being “swept away” [P-S-3]. However, the ongoing development of AI has left some respondents feeling “worried” [P-S-93] and “uncertain” [P-S-103] about the future of the profession. If the industry is projected to become even more automated than it currently is, then some feared that “in the worst-case scenario” [P-S-103], the entire profession is at risk of becoming “extinct” [P-S-103] or the need for translators and even post-editors will be “eliminated” [P-S-23].

5.2.4 Integration of Online Translation Platforms

Online translation platforms have become much more prominent in recent times and are becoming hard to avoid even when working with agencies. In alignment with this trend, research on the organisation, features, and reception of online translation platforms has also expanded (e.g. Piróth, and Baker, 2020; Fırat, 2021; Fırat et al., 2024; Fırat and Şahin, 2025; Benmansour and Hdouch, 2023; see also Section 2.2 for a summary of literature relating to crowdsourcing and platform economy). That being said, only 1.2% (n=2) of practitioners strongly agreed and a further 14% (n=24) of practitioners agreed with the statement that online / cloud-based translation platforms provide a great opportunity for professionals to find meaningful (satisfying) work (see Figure 5.17). This aligns with the practitioners’ observations that a lot of the work available on such platforms is very short term and fragmented. With this in mind, online platforms are only “good to find work if there is work” [P-S-165] and for those who rely on such platforms are “really putting oneself out of a job” [P-S-46].

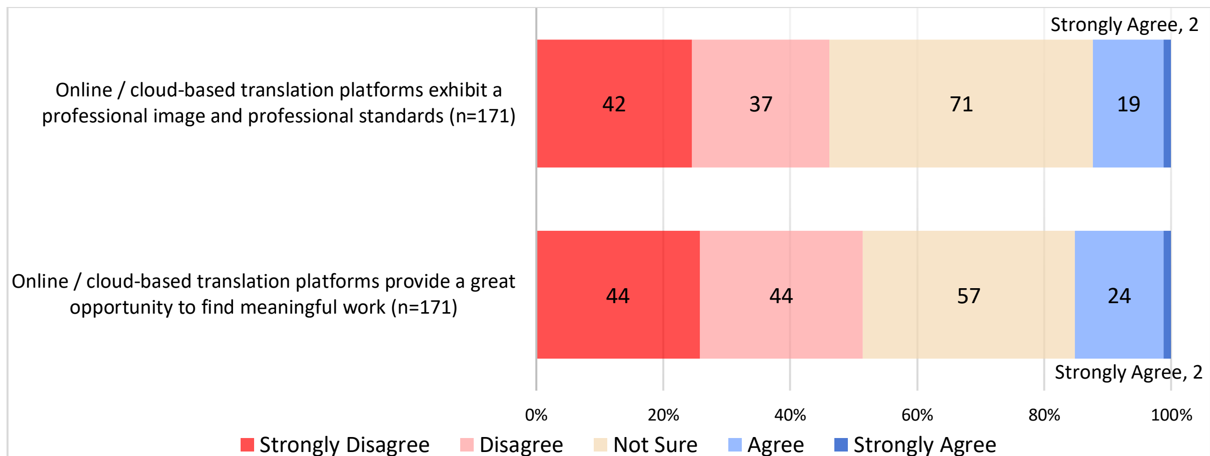

Figure 5.17: Online / cloud-based translation platforms exhibit a professional image and professional standards (P, n=171) and online / cloud-based translation platforms provide a great opportunity to find meaningful work (P, n=171).

In relation to the question of professionalism, only 1.2% (n=2) of practitioners strongly agreed and a further 11.1% (n=19) of practitioners agreed that online / cloud-based translation platforms exhibit a professional image and professional standards (see Figure 5.17). In fact, the perceived professionalism of online platforms is, according to the practitioners, most likely impacted by the trend of there being "way too many scammers on translation platforms" [P-S-96] in addition to the race to the bottom culture of what should be a "proud profession" [P-S-93]. In particular, gig platforms were cited as being "harmful for translation" [P-S-147] because they reduce the status and credibility of the profession by forcing professionals to compete with people who are not professional, trained, experienced, or ethical, which in turn, sets a new low standard in the eyes of the clients. More specifically, some practitioners speculated that the work available on platforms is distributed amongst a global pool of non-professionals who are nothing more than "bilingual and want a bit of extra money" [P-S-165] (see Section 6.2 for more results relating to amateur and non-professional translators).

Aside from the four (2.3%) practitioners who specified that they have no intention to use online translation platforms and have no experience with them, this type of technology was predominantly met with negativity. The rise of agencies insisting on use of their online systems has reportedly limited translators' agency, with concern also expressed over having to dedicate significant amounts of their time updating their availabilities on the platforms as well as over a "downward spiral of prices" [P-S-157]. Simply put, these platforms "pay peanuts" [P-S-80] and there is now a risk of becoming "chained to agencies and their so-called translation tools/platforms" [P-S-15]. According to the practitioners' experiences, such platforms take control away from the translator and direct it to the purchaser or intermediary agents. These client portals are supposedly rarely designed with the translation workflow in mind, and they have been described by the practitioners as "unsuitable" [P-S-60], "frustrating" [P-S-92] and "mostly rubbish" [P-S-98], which are not only less efficient than CAT software, but also produce translations which are of a lower quality than in comparison to professional translation.

5.2.5 Client Relations

When speaking about clients generally, only one (0.6%) practitioner praised their clients for being “decent” and for offering lots of repeat work, and an additional two (1.2%) practitioners stated they have better relationships with their direct clients as opposed to translation agencies. Otherwise, the commentary relating to practitioners’ experiences with direct clients and translation agencies was overwhelmingly negative.

In particular, the practitioners were concerned about their agency because clients (both direct and translation agencies) are supposedly taking increasing amounts of control over how the practitioners should work. Ideally, the practitioners would like to decide their own work methods, however, this is not always the case. Clients “dictate” [P-S-41] which CAT tools their vendors should use, and considering that different clients use different tools, some practitioners complained that they are expected to familiarise themselves with many different CAT tools in their own time and at their own expense. Practitioners also reported situations where they are restricted to their client’s TMs only and they are not permitted to use their own resources. One practitioner described a situation where they lost a client because they did not agree with some of the terms that they found in the client’s TM. In other words, the practitioners argued that they have little say over which tools and resources they can work with and that “clients choose how [we] translate” [P-S-7].

Practitioners have also noticed considerable changes in the expectations that are being set by their clients, citing “poor industry practices, particularly among agencies” [P-S-48]. Most job offers are now sent via a portal and in addition to the expectation of translating a high number of words per day for low-pay, the deadlines that are being set by agencies have also become “super short” [P-S-47] and “unacceptable” [P-S-52]. The practitioners also complained about a “lack of communication” [P-S-48] and “no personal interaction” [P-S-48] from their clients who are constantly pushing prices down and prioritising speed over quality. Meanwhile, others felt that “unrealistic expectations” [P-S-118] are being set, with clients not only expecting very fast responses and quick turnaround times but are also assigning jobs on a first-come first-served basis rather than assigning based on competences. Essentially, the practitioners speculated that the growing deployment of translation technologies has triggered an even greater time pressure, with agencies “not planning ahead” [P-S-47] and giving “practically no time at all” [P-S-61] to complete translations, indicating an apparent struggle of balancing the client’s expectations and delivering high-quality translations (see also Carreira (2024) for bad business practices in the language industry).

5.3 Discussion

It is evident that the contemporary translation industry has evolved and is continuing to evolve in step with the ongoing advancements of general and translation technologies. The above results help us to determine emerging trends and the influences that they have on how the translation profession and its practitioners are perceived, as well as how the practitioners themselves are responding to these changes.

The use of CAT tools and other translation technologies, predominantly MT, has become customary and it would be difficult to imagine the contemporary translation industry operating efficiently without them given the vast volumes of content that now needs to be translated and that the adoption of such technologies is often prompted by business pressures for increased productivity (Herbert et al., 2023). From project management to the acts of translation and post-editing themselves, translation and general technologies have become essential to every step of the translation workflow. Indeed, both practitioners and clients of translation services have profited from the digitisation of translation processes, but as it will be discussed in more detail below, the scope and extent of benefits differ significantly between the two groups.

Furthermore, MT and AI are not exclusive to translation professionals as they are also used in non-professional contexts by those who are not professional translators. In fact, it can be argued that MT is actually used more frequently by general users than by professional translators for the purpose of obtaining the gist or a basic understanding of a text (Nurminen, 2021; Nurminen and Papula, 2018; see also Section 2.1.1 for literature on MT use by non-practitioners). Against this backdrop, many assumptions were put forward by the practitioners who participated in this study, speculating that non-practitioners have poor MT literacy and that they view professional human translators and translation technologies at parity. However, as evidenced by the results reported earlier in this chapter and as discussed further in the upcoming sections, the practitioners seemed to have misjudged, in part, how non-practitioners actually perceive the complexity of translation activity as well as the overall value of the service.

This present discussion also engages with this study's bespoke framework on (de-)professionalisation (see Section 3.5 for an overview of the framework), channelling certain elements from the professionalisation criteria, namely maintaining professional authority and securing societal recognition, and exploring them further in a translation context (see Table 3.3 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description). This contributes to the wider discussion in Section 6.4.5 which further operationalises the professionalisation criteria introduced in this thesis to ascertain, and to what the degree, the professional attributes that can be associated with translation.

5.3.1 Practitioner-Client Relationships

As illustrated by the professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3), one cornerstone of successful professionalisation, namely campaigning for recognition of the profession, relies, in part, on the acquisition and maintenance of authority over clients. For this reason, exploring how clients of translation services are perceived to regard and utilise such services is essential to verifying whether translators' professional authority is being upheld or eroded, and whether translation is perceived as expert work or a commodified service.

It is important to accentuate that the general public is composed of different sub-groups, and the attitudes elicited from the non-practitioner results belong primarily to those who do not engage with professional translation services on a regular basis but may engage with MT or AI under casual circumstances (see non-practitioner demographic results in Section 4.1.1.4.2, namely that only 12.9% (n=11) of non-practitioners have previously purchased professional translation services). The practitioner results regarding a different sub-group of non-practitioners, namely their clients (direct and translation agencies), revealed that clients' translation needs and expectations of translation solutions, whether automated or human, illustrate a very different narrative when compared to the attitudes elicited from the non-practitioner results. In other words, while the non-practitioner results indicated that translation is generally not an automatable activity (see non-practitioner commentary in Section 5.1.3), clients of translation services are, as implied by the practitioner commentary, profiting from the availability and the capabilities of various translation technologies.

CAT tools, for example, are no longer exclusive to practitioners since modern CAT tools are designed to be used by clients too (see also Ciobanu (2025) for an overview of the evolution of CAT tools). Previous versions of OmegaT and Wordfast, for instance, did not have project management or collaborative features and were initially designed to be used by the translator in order to optimise the sole process of translating a text (see Section 5.2.2 for findings on the practitioners' reception of CAT tools). Whereas, modern CAT tools, such as Phrase, Trados Studio and memoQ, are either cloud-based or have cloud functionalities that also incorporate client-server tools to facilitate collaborations between translators and their colleagues as well as their PMs. To elaborate, certain modern CAT tools permit PMs to not only verify (weighted) word counts, to monitor progress, to set deadlines and to share their preferred terminology resources to be used in the project, but they also permit PMs to restrict or grant access to certain features, such as MT, segmentation and the ability to edit the source text, based on how they wish the project to be handled. Indeed, practitioners may have some influence over the workflow, but PMs and the clients that they represent have, nevertheless, been afforded a greater capacity to oversee the workflow and to mould the project specifications around their preferences. For example, not only do clients "dictate" [P-S-41] which CAT tools their vendors should use, but they make translators "less autonomous on the whole, both in terms

of how we translate a text and how much we are able to charge for it" [P-S-61] (see Section 5.2.5 for results on client relations).

Furthermore, online translation platforms, which directly connect buyers with linguists and offer on-demand translation work, are on the rise (Fırat, 2021), but this type of work organisation arguably benefits the client more than the translator. To illustrate, online translation platforms enable clients to not only reduce their costs through the automation of certain processes (e.g. automated project management based on algorithms), but the cloud-based functionalities grant access to a global pool of translators of a range of abilities and reputational scores. They also enable the monitoring of translators' work in real-time (Cukur, 2024; Moorkens, 2020a; Garcia, 2017). My results supplement the preceding claims by showing that such platforms fail to provide stable or sufficient work, and that they have a race-to-the-bottom culture. The competitive nature of such platforms also pits qualified and experienced translators against those less qualified, undermining professional standards and earnings. The practitioners have also reported discomfort with the level of surveillance, with one noting experiences of "clients looking over my shoulder, checking when, how, how long for, etc. I work on a project" [P-S-31]. Taken together, this evidence suggests that translators are not reaping the same scope of benefits from these platforms as their clients, expressing concern towards the "very short term […] and fragmented" [P-S-155] nature of the workflow (e.g. microtasks), as well as towards the repercussions that such working methods have on their professional image (see also Figure 5.17 that depicts that only 12.3% (n=21) of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed that online / cloud-based translation platforms exhibit a professional image and professional standards) and on their capacity to negotiate professional rates (see Section 5.2.4 for practitioners' reception of online translation platforms).

Moreover, the practitioner survey commentary also reveals that clients are requesting post-editing workflows more frequently. Although 70.8% (n=121) of practitioners disagreed or strongly disagreed that translation work is becoming standardised and less complicated because of technological developments (see Figure 5.12), the practitioners have, nevertheless, speculated that clients attempt to simplify translation by enforcing the use of MT, and perhaps even AI, and then requesting them to "just post-edit" [P-S-145] in order to save time and money (see also Section 7.3.1 for discussion on deskilling). A translator's role is being challenged by their clients in the sense that translators are reportedly more frequently being reduced to post-editors, or in other words to "IT technicians" [P-S-52], "glorified admin assistants" [P-S-8] or "bilingual editors" [P-S-25], a trend that is unlikely to reverse given that post-editing has become an industry standard (O'Brien, 2021; Koponen, 2016) and that MT and AI have recently been reported as dominating trends (ELIS Survey, 2024; 2025). Against this backdrop, one focus group participant admitted personally and on behalf of their colleagues that they are rejecting poorly paid post-editing projects more frequently than ever before [P-FG1-2]. However, translation operates on the basis of a global network of translators

and so there will always be an alternative “cheaper / less experienced translator” [P-S-41] for clients to amicably work with, creating the impression that professional translators, irrespective of whether they are qualified and experienced, are dispensable.

My findings ultimately postulate that the development and integration of online translation platforms, MT as well as CAT tools have warranted a deeper integration of clients into the translation process. These technologies have provided clients with new means to micromanage, as well as to challenge and negotiate the practical and financial conditions that navigate how their translation requirements are fulfilled. Translators’ professional agency is, thus, being challenged not only because of “the downward pressure on rates from large translation agencies” [P-S-3] and the setting of “unacceptable” [P-S-52] deadlines to suit the clients’ timeframes, but that clients are becoming increasingly vocal by “insisting” [P-S-27] on and “demanding” [P-S-41] which tools, methods and resources that their translators can employ. In fact, it is a relatively known fact that practitioners have to persistently face low rates of pay, a lack of social benefits, and reduced job security, a situation which is exacerbated by the questionable business practices of translation agencies and by the disruptions brought by MT and AI (Carreira, 2024). In this regard, it is unsurprising that the practitioners expressed a sense of marginalisation and strong sentiments of feeling “powerless” [P-S-25] and “undervalued or overlooked” [P-S-160] as they are losing control and influence over their working methods and the conditions of the projects. Unfortunately, these sentiments have been brewing within the professional translator community for quite some time now as feelings of disempowerment and a lack of professional visibility are seemingly prevalent amongst freelance translators (Moorkens, 2020a). Circling back to the professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3), the findings do not provide sufficient evidence to support the claim that translation consistently fulfils the professional attribute of upholding professional authority in practitioner-client relationships.

Setting aside their impact on professional agency and on client relations, it is equally important to clarify how online platforms, CAT tools and MT contribute in distinct ways to the wider processes of (de-)professionalisation, as defined by the framework introduced in Section 3.5. CAT tools function as an assistive technology that are primarily adopted by professional translators, requiring specialised training and specialised technological competences to be used effectively. As such, the professionalisation argument comes into play given the need for specialised technological expertise. Adopting and working with CAT tools signal, arguably, alignment with certain professional attributes drawn from the professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3), particularly those relating to specialised knowledge and a degree of professional exclusivity. Online platforms, by contrast, contribute more directly to de-professionalisation by restructuring recruitment practices, pricing structures, workflows and project allocation. These platforms often prioritise speed, availability and cost over qualifications and experience, thereby weakening translators’ professional autonomy and reducing their control over working conditions. This dynamic corresponds more with the

de-professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.4), particularly those relating to loss of professional control and influence, delegation or subordination, and the erosion of professional authority in practitioner-client relationships. Meanwhile, MT and AI represent a fundamental obstruction to professionalisation as they directly challenge the perceived necessity, complexity and exclusivity of human translation. While these technologies can be integrated into professional workflows and, under certain circumstances, enhance productivity, their widespread accessibility and improving performance democratise translation and encourage the perception that translation can be performed without professional expertise, thereby intersecting with several de-professionalisation criteria, including automation, deskilling weakening professional recognition, and a reduced demand for professional judgement. Taken together, CAT tools, online platforms and MT do not exert a uniform influence on the profession; rather, they shape translation's (de-)professionalisation trajectory in different ways by either reinforcing or undermining key professional attributes (see also Section 7.3.5 for a discussion on how each of these technologies distinctly contribute to de-professionalisation).

5.3.2 Societal Recognition of the Necessity and Complexity of the Service

Also in relation to the professionalisation criterion of campaigning for recognition of the profession (see Table 3.3), this relies not just on translators upholding authority in their relationships with their clients, but also on securing validation from society (both clients and the wider general public) that translation is an essential service and a specialised activity. However, my results reveal that the practitioners felt that their value and role as a translator are changing, assuming that the majority of non-practitioners do not valorise the quality, expertise and professionalism that a professional human translator brings to translation workflows. In other words, the practitioners suspected a lack of societal recognition for their contributions, as indicated by Figure 5.2, Figure 5.4 and Figure 5.10 which reveal that the practitioners assumed that the general public do not associate high levels of prestige, value and expertise with human translation services.

At this point, we can touch base with Forsyth and Danisiewicz's (1985) model of professionalisation (see Section 3.1.3). Their power-based professionalisation model (i.e. professionalisation through the acquisition and maintenance of power, autonomy and control) relies on the foundation of societal recognition which is acquired through the general public validating the service in question as complex, exclusive and essential (see Section 6.4.4 for discussion on professional control). This validation from the general public within a translation context is, however, tentative on the basis that the practitioners are under the impression that there is "a lack of appreciation [from the general public] of the added value a human can bring to the process" [P-S-14].

5.3.2.1 Recognition From The General Public

On the one hand, the non-practitioners who participated in this study generally acknowledged that translation, although not a very prestigious profession (see Figure 5.1; see also Section 5.3.3 for discussion on occupational prestige), requires a specialised set of skills (see Figure 5.7 and Figure 5.9), that it is not a simple task (see Figure 5.11), and that it is an essential service (see Figure 5.6) that is worth paying for (see Figure 5.5). Simply put, this sub-group of non-practitioners validated human translation services as essential, complex and worth the investment, and thus supporting the fulfilment of the professionalisation criterion regarding securing societal recognition (see Table 3.3).

Indeed, while the non-practitioners do trust and rely on Google Translate or other similar tools to a certain extent (see Figure 5.16), perhaps for MT gisting purposes (see literature in Section 2.1.1), this does not signify that they believe that MT is inherently the better option. Perhaps to the practitioners' surprise, the non-practitioners were quite nuanced regarding the shortcomings of translation technologies with their summary of the limitations of MT aligning with the practitioners' arguments justifying why professional human input is still indispensable even in the age of MT (see Section 5.1.3 for results relating to translation technologies as competitors). In other words, both groups came to the conclusion that human translators are requisite when handling specialised and/or culturally sensitive content (i.e. legal and medical documents, songs, and manga) that cannot be entrusted to translation technologies as the risks of inaccuracy and mistranslation would be ripe. Therefore, it is possible to draw the provisional conclusion that the non-practitioners of this study have at least a basic level of MT literacy and that they recognise that translation technologies and professional human translators are simply not at parity. This finding challenges the common assumption amongst the practitioners that non-practitioners generally exhibit poor MT literacy. While it is true that some general users of MT may have limited understanding of either the technology or the translation process, other users, as argued by Nurminen (2025), may demonstrate at least a basic level of MT literacy (see also Figure 2.2 for Nurminen's (2025) alternative mapping of MT gisting).

In an attempt to contextualise why the non-practitioners were quite well-versed with MT, it is worth referring back to the demographics of the non-practitioner survey population which revealed that 79% identified as 34 or under at the time of the survey (see Section 4.1.1.4.2 for non-practitioner demographic results). A common belief is that younger generations are supposedly more capable of mastering new digital tools and technologies as a result of having greater exposure to technology at school, at home, and within the wider community than previous generations (Lai and Hong, 2015). In turn, this assumption could justify why the non-practitioners appeared to be generally well-versed with MT, a tool which is widely available and often free, and why it shouldn't be used under all circumstances. However, in a blog post published on the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

website, the concept of young people being better equipped to handle new technology was debated. It was argued that those born in or belonging to the “net generation” and the “smartphone generation” are, on the one hand, fundamentally different because of their exposure to technology, but on the other hand, are not necessarily at an advantage because capabilities with technology very much depend on their socio-economic backgrounds and family environments during their childhood and adolescence (UNESCO, 2021). This argument was supported by a report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), where it was suggested that while access to technology has greatly increased, young people from more advantaged backgrounds (i.e. higher income homes and access to higher education) tend to have better quality access to technology, which allowed them to spend their time to gain confidence and proficiency with technology (OECD, 2015). However, the non-practitioner survey probed neither the language skills of the participants nor their socio-economic backgrounds, and as such, it is not possible to adequately determine whether there is, in fact, a correlation between the non-practitioners’ educational and familial backgrounds and their levels of MT literacy. As such, this could be a future avenue of research in order to confirm or challenge why the non-practitioner survey population appeared relatively well-versed with MT technology.

5.3.2.2 Recognition From Clients

On the other hand, an examination of perceived client perspectives indicates shortcomings in the extent to which the professionalisation criterion of securing societal recognition can be said to be fulfilled. Although there is a growing demand from society for translation services for commercial, political, humanitarian and personal purposes, this does not necessarily allude to an appetite for professional human translation services in particular. Indeed, it is important to reiterate that the practitioners advocated that there are still many clients who “invest in good translators” [P-S-54]. However, it cannot be denied that my findings allude to the reality that a shift is currently taking place whereby client demand for MT and AI-assisted translation services is catching up with and is, arguably, beginning to overtake the demand for professional human translation services in certain segments of the market. In fact, the practitioners themselves acknowledged and have begun to accept that MT and AI will become more frequently requested by their clients because “not every document requires human translation” [P-S-10] and clients recognise this. While 81.9% (n= 140) of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed that the human translation market will remain essential (see Figure 5.6), it was also predicted by approximately 60% of practitioners that the demand for professional human translation services will decrease over time (see Figure 5.13). In other words, the practitioners alluded to a projected reality that sees human translation services requisite for the production of high-quality translations, but their clients’ demand for services that translate from scratch wanes in the wake of their intensifying pursuit for quicker and cheaper automated solutions. Presumably, this decrease in client demand is a repercussion of clients becoming increasingly favourable of post-editing services and MT and AI becoming

dominating trends (ELIS Survey, 2024; 2025). Essentially, the practitioner results indicate that the necessity of professional human translation services will remain for the time being for the cases of specialised content that clients cannot yet entrust to MT or AI, but the necessity of such a service for low-priority, general and perishable content is debateable, especially since such work is capable of being "swallowed by MT" [P-S-12].

As with the case for the necessity of the service, the question of perceived complexity is also debatable when attempting to evaluate from the clients' perspective. It is not explicit as to whether typical translation clients consider translation to be a complex activity. However, there are a few assumptions that can be made based on what the practitioners of this study had to say about their experiences with their clients. For instance, one assumption relates to the idea that delegation is necessitated whether in the form of clients deferring to the expert skill of a practitioner or in the form of delegating to translation technologies or to amateurs and non-professionals. If we were to break this assumption down further, then clients opting for MT or for an amateur or non-professional rather than a professional human translator, thus, implies that translation is perceived to be a task that requires some form of specialised intervention, but that translation is perceived as automatable and/or as not complex enough to demand the specialised input from a trained and experienced professional. It is important to bear in mind, however, that clients may opt for MT solely for business reasons that are based on the assumption that MT coupled with post-editing is quicker and cheaper. Likewise, they may choose to delegate to an amateur or non-professional because they are, in the practitioners' eyes, more flexible and agreeable in relation to rates and turnaround times. In these regards, it may not necessarily be that translation is deemed a simple automatable task, rather there is scope to assume that clients make their decisions in accordance with their budgets and deadlines and therefore need to find ways to be as cost-effective and as time efficient as possible. All things considered, whether and to what extent clients consider translation to be a complex and specialised activity is also up for speculation, but it cannot be denied that their reported tendencies certainly portray translation as a task that does not necessarily demand professional intervention.

5.3.3 Occupational Prestige

The practitioners' assumption was precise, however, with respect to the prestige of the profession in that both the practitioner and the non-practitioner survey respondents were aligned regarding freelance translation's lack of prestige (see Figure 5.1). This finding contrasts with Aly's (2018) study on the occupational prestige of translators in Egypt, concluding that both translators and non-translators in Egypt regard the translation profession highly. Turning back to the context of this research, the practitioner commentary in Section 5.1.1 indicated that the lack of respect and recognition for their contributions, the race-to-the-bottom culture of the profession, and the prospect of being replaced by technology are the roots of the

practitioners' poor prestige. As per this reasoning, the prestige of the profession is, thus, largely dependent on the degree to which the general public recognises the practitioners involved and subsequently the extent to which they socially and financially value the service. In academic literature, occupational prestige is described using similar terms, referring to a subjective reputational construct that is rooted in the level of respect, admiration and status ascribed to a particular occupation (Fujishiro et al., 2010; Aly, 2018). Moreover, a practitioner with high occupational prestige tends to be, but not always, positively correlated with years of education and with income, and can typically experience the voluntary deference of others (Hughes et al., 2024).

As we have recently established in Section 5.3.2, the non-practitioners largely recognised the importance of professional human translators and their services as well as how their work is too important and complex to be left to the responsibility of machines. However, recognition, respect and admiration are not synonymous, and it is important to ascertain whether the non-practitioners' recognition of the practitioners' contributions also manifests respect and admiration. Nakatani et al. (2019) explores both of these concepts, clarifying that admiration stems from approval and awe for one's qualities and accomplishments (see also Algoe and Haidt, 2009; Onu et al., 2016; Schindler et al., 2013), whereas respect is earned based on deeds and character (Li and Fischer, 2007). As per this logic, a translator who has completed a complex or large translation project, for instance, may be admired for their skills and their capacity to complete a complicated assignment, and in turn, they may also be respected for their professionalism (i.e. one's attitude towards their work in terms of their occupational behaviours and practices) as well as for their moral and ethical attitudes towards their work. As established, the non-practitioners recognised the contributions of professional translators, deeming human translation services a valuable asset to multicultural societies. However, whether they also admire the practitioners for their qualities, and also respect the professional translator community for who they are and what they represent in terms of morals, ethics and values is not exactly explicit. Therefore, any preliminary conclusions that the non-practitioners admire and/or respect practitioners are contingent and require further exploration. For this reason, it could be worth probing the non-practitioners further regarding the amount of prestige that they associate with the profession, channelling specifically their levels of admiration and respect that they ascribe to professional translators as this information, coupled with a potential sentiment analysis, would nurture a more comprehensive narrative on translation's occupational prestige.

With respect to clients specifically, the practitioner commentary presented throughout this theme suggests that there is little evidence to postulate that clients, particularly translation agencies, respect, or at least admire, the practitioners that they collaborate with. To elaborate, if the practitioners were to enjoy respect and admiration from their clients, then it could be hypothesised that they would also profit from decent remuneration as well as automatic discretion for all projects, outcomes which are typical byproducts of occupational prestige

(Hughes et al., 2024). However, although the non-practitioners consider translation a valuable service that is worth paying for (see Figure 5.5), the practitioner results show that the growing demand for and incorporation of various translation technologies have not only led to "ridiculous rates" [P-S-58] and "haggling" [P-S-1] from clients, but it has also contributed towards a translator's professional role and agency being challenged and diminished (see Section 5.3.1 for discussion on practitioner-client relationships), realities that would not correspond with an occupation ascribed with high occupational prestige. In this regard, the practitioners' reasons justifying their lack of prestige are validated here since a lack of admiration and respect particularly from translation agencies is implied and this is provisionally evidenced through unrelenting issues relating to poor remuneration, to the unquestioning deployment of MT and to a lack of translator agency.

Moreover, it is also worth seeking influential factors that exist beyond the borders of the translation industry. On this note, it is worth turning our attention to a comment made by one practitioner who attested that the lack of prestige is expected because "this is part of freelance work regardless of the industry" [P-S-69]. In fact, it has become common in recent times for employment arrangements to shift away from full-time regular work to independent contracting, namely freelancing, and this trend dominates the UK translation context (Hubscher-Davidson, 2021; Zadik et al., 2019; see also Section 3.2.1 for neo-liberal trends within a translation context). For some translators, this type of work organisation has given them more control over their working lives, whereas for others it has been disempowering as they struggle with low professional visibility (Dam and Zethsen, 2011). Indeed, contemporary perceptions convey freelancers as experts who bring knowledge and innovation to the workplace, however, traditional perceptions consider them, nonetheless, temporary agents performing casual project- or contract-based work (Zadik et al., 2019). For this reason, it is often argued that the self-employed, transitory, and flexible nature of freelance translation impacts the career's perceived professionalism (Dam and Zethsen, 2016), and in turn, its occupational prestige.

5.3.4 Summarising the Current Landscape of Freelance Translation

The translation industry has evolved from a "cottage industry" model to an international and technology-driven industry (Dunne, 2012). Based on the above discussion, presented in Sections 5.3.1, 5.3.2 and 5.3.3, both the practitioner and the non-practitioner survey respondents maintained that human translation services, whilst lacking prestige (see Figure 5.1), are essential and valuable to society (see Figure 5.3 and Figure 5.6) and that translation is a specialised activity (Figure 5.9). However, with reference to RQ1 (see Section 8.1.1 for full response to RQ1), the translation industry is transforming in the sense that translation is neither as lucrative nor as creative as it used to be as new jobs are becoming "more of a style-polishing exercise" [P-S-8] that does not pay much. While the practitioners acknowledged that

the technologisation of the industry is an inevitable change, not everyone perceived it as a positive one since this new way of working (i.e. finding work and clients via online platforms, adopting MT and AI technologies and post-editing practices, haggling over rates, assigning work on a first-come-first-served basis, pressure to maintain high levels of productivity, etc.) is disruptive, seems to threaten translator agency and, as one practitioner summarised, "feels a little like working on an assembly line" [P-S-155]. This sentiment aligns with an observation made by Moorkens (2020a), referring to his survey on the job satisfaction of Irish translators (see Moorkens, 2020b) and how one participant, who identified as a full-time freelance translator, felt that "we are now just a tiny cog in a large machine".

In light of all the changes that have taken place in the translation industry over the last decade, namely intensifying power struggles between practitioners and certain clients, rapidly declining rates, automation and fragmentation, translation, whether human or automated, remains a highly sought after service. The practitioner results specify that the market is splitting into two segments, notably specialised or human translation at the premium end and PEMT at the lower end, of which the former is shrinking due to clients' intensifying pursuit for cheaper and quicker translation solutions and due to more projects therefore being delegated to MT and/or to AI. According to one practitioner, who also seemed to voice the sentiments of other practitioners, the lower end of the market is characterised by "industrial translation based on MTPE, practised by professionals whose identity [we're] not sure of, but who undoubtedly subject themselves to working for volume and delivering second-class work" [P-S-53]. Meanwhile, in order to reach the premium end of the market, the practitioners suggested focussing on a niche specialisation and highlighting their client-focussed attitudes as crucial to be able to continue marketing themselves in order to win reliable clients who seek quality and professionalism. Indeed, MT and other similar technologies are perceived as competitors, and it was accepted by the practitioners that the translation industry is transitioning through an era where not every document needs to be translated by a professional human and that clients will profit from this by opting for automated solutions under the appropriate circumstances. However, human translators are still the more trustworthy and reliable option considering that professional judgement is still required to handle MT and AI output and to translate specialised texts that cannot yet be entrusted to translation technologies. Interestingly, the non-practitioners displayed more optimism than the practitioners regarding the future of the translation industry since the former exhibited more faith regarding human translation services being able to withstand competition from future technological developments (see Figure 5.14).

Above all, innovation and change should not necessarily always be perceived as threats, and "being open to innovation" [P-S-17] is crucial for remaining in business and being considered a professional. With this in mind and despite the advancements of translation technologies as well as the exponential growth of the post-editing sector, 81.9% (n=140) of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed with the reality that human translation is and will remain an

essential service (see Figure 5.6). Additionally, there are still plenty of subjects to specialise in that cannot be handled by MT and AI as well as many clients to work with who “invest in good translators” [P-S-54] and who “care for their text enough to ask for quality” [P-S-36].

This chapter has reported and discussed the results that enabled us to depict the current landscape of the translation industry (see also Sakamoto (2025) for an overview of the changing translation industry), also providing the foundations to explore RQ3, namely the professionalisation and the potential de-professionalisation of translation (see Section 8.1.3). As it will be explored further in Section 6.4, this depiction of the contemporary translation industry, which is based on the findings reported throughout this chapter, will be deconstructed and analysed against this study’s bespoke (de-)professionalisation framework (see Section 3.5), primarily the professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description), to ascertain the extent to which translation can be considered professionalised (see also Section 7.3.5 for an evaluation of the de-professionalisation criteria in a translation context). The following chapter reports the second theme of results, made up of three sub-themes, that pertain to ascertaining the ideal professional translator and the extent to which translation can be regarded as a profession.

6 Theme Two: The Professional Translator

This chapter discusses the extent to which translation can be considered a profession. Sub-theme one considers the professional characteristics of translators and translation services (Section 6.1), reporting results relating to the definition of professional translation from the practitioners' perspective (Section 6.1.1), as well as their attitudes towards professional ethical conduct (Section 6.1.2) and professional translator associations (Section 6.1.3). Sub-theme two concerns amateur and non-professional translators (Section 6.2), reporting results relating to the lack of regulation (Section 6.2.1), competition from less-qualified or unqualified translators (Section 6.2.2), and low-priority, collaborative and volunteer translation (Section 6.2.3). Sub-theme three focusses on translator training (Section 6.3), reporting results relating to the benefits of translator training (Section 6.3.1), domain specific knowledge (Section 6.3.2), university training in translation (Section 6.3.3), and continuous professional development (Section 6.3.4). As with the case for the previous chapter, this present chapter also closes with a discussion of the results, exploring commitment to ethical professional behaviour (Section 6.4.1), the quality of translator education (Section 6.4.2), the proactivity of UK translator associations (Section 6.4.3), and the maintenance of professional control (Section 6.4.4) before closing with the constellation of professional traits that can be associated with translation (Section 6.4.5).

6.1 Sub-Theme: Professional Characteristics of Translators and Translation Services

6.1.1 Defining Professional Translation

Various characteristics were put forward by the focus group participants to describe the ideal professional translator (see also Robinson (2019) and Penet (2024) for handbooks on becoming a translator). Above all, alongside a university degree in languages, translation or a specific subject area, mastering both the source and target languages "to an extremely high level" [P-FG1-2] is imperative. Additionally, a professional translator is also expected to possess good research skills in terms of knowing how and where to research unknown terms as well as being able to find ways to address any knowledge gaps in one's specialisations. In terms of resources, the internet, terminology databases, and CAT tools were cited as the main tools that a professional translator should master in addition to being able to distinguish between helpful and unhelpful tools. Furthermore, being a perfectionist, paying attention to detail, remaining client-focussed, taking the job seriously, and ensuring professional conduct are the attitudinal traits that contribute towards "furthering careers" [P-FG1-1].

When prompted, the practitioner survey respondents described what they thought were the main characteristics that make translation a profession. The professional attribute which was the most frequently cited revolved around the ideas of the existence of a complex body of knowledge and the commitment to developing a specialised skillset (35.7%, n=61). As previously mentioned, there were only two (1.2%) practitioners who believed that translation is neither a specialised task nor possesses an exclusive body of knowledge. Otherwise, translation was generally regarded by the practitioners as a specialised activity that requires dedication to mastering a wide range of translation-related skills including, amongst others, an excellent command of both the source and target languages, professional writing skills, extensive knowledge of at least one subject area, and the ability to think critically. Without such skills, the "job simply cannot be done" [P-S-7]. In other words, translation is a profession that "not everyone can do" [P-S-21] because it is a "complicated process" [P-S-24] and requires a specialised set of skills in order to generate professional and high-quality translations (see Section 5.1.2 for more results relating to translation as a specialised activity; see Section 2.4.1 for literature relating to translator competences).

The importance of extensive training and commitment to CPD were additional professional attributes of translation that were identified by the practitioners (22.2%, n=38). Amongst them, there was an expectation to have a certain level of recognised training, whether a university degree or certifications, before starting a career in professional translation. However, a qualification on its own was reportedly not enough. Those who wish to maintain and further their professional careers should also commit to CPD to maintain and extend their skillset (see Section 6.3 for more results in relation to translator training; see Section 2.4 for literature relating to translator training), but it was also recommended by the practitioners to develop a specialisation or gain in-depth knowledge of specific subject areas (see Section 6.3.2 for more results relating to domain specific knowledge).

Furthermore, translation was labelled a profession because it was regarded by the practitioners as a highly sought after service (22.2%, n=38). More specifically, the practitioners claimed that translation is a global commercial service, an "invaluable asset" [P-S-90] which "makes the world go round" [P-S-126] and functions on the basis of skilled professionals supplying high-quality and specialised translations for clients in return for payment. Simply put, considering that there is a market demand for translation and that translators "provide a service and get paid for it" [P-S-166], translation is, in the practitioners' eyes, unquestionably a profession.

Conducting oneself and one's business professionally was another professional attribute that was associated with translators (17.5%, n=30). Details were provided by the practitioners to elaborate on what they meant by professional conduct, specifying actions such as striving "to follow the highest standards" [P-S-3], obtaining a "membership of a professional association" [P-S-85], taking "responsibility for every piece of work" produced [P-S-59], ensuring that work

has been completed "with due diligence and care" [P-S-92], "managing [one's] own business" [P-S-167] and adhering to CoCs. In other words, without an ethical professional approach towards one's career, work and clients, one cannot be considered a professional translator (see Section 6.1.3 for more results relating to professional associations and Section 6.1.2 for more results relating to professional and ethical conduct).

When prompted, the non-practitioners described what they thought were the main goals and tasks that a professional translator is likely to engage with. Although the practitioners suspected that the "vast majority of people [...] have no idea what TI involves as a profession" [P-S-4], the non-practitioners displayed, nevertheless, a relatively broad understanding of what professional translation entails. The most frequently cited task associated with a professional translator was succinctly and accurately translating (official) documents, materials, scripts, video captions and books, amongst others, from one language (variety) into another, each for the purposes of building bridges, providing accessible content and services, enabling smooth communication and cultural exchanges as well as supporting legal and business matters. Although, as expected, there was some confusion surrounding the differences between translation and interpreting, the majority of non-practitioners understood translation as an umbrella term that encompasses working with written text alongside spoken language. Furthermore, the non-practitioners acknowledged that a professional translator engages in much more than just translation, with tasks such as localising, researching terminology and proofreading having been cited to illustrate this.

6.1.2 Professional and Ethical Conduct

As indicated in the previous section, maintaining professional conduct was a professional attribute that was associated with translators. The practitioner survey respondents showcased faith in their own professionalism and the ways in which they conduct their businesses with almost every practitioner (98.2%, n=168) considering themself a professional (see Figure 6.1). Moreover, despite the recurring practitioner perceptions that there is a lack of respect from the general public towards translators in addition to a general lack of recognition for the contributions that translators make, it may come to a surprise to some practitioners that 87.1% (n=74) of non-practitioners considered freelance translators a professional group of experts (see Figure 6.2). Regarding the non-practitioners who have previously purchased translation services (12.9%, n=11), only one did not consider freelance translators a professional group of experts. Also in relation to Figure 6.2, the difference between the observed frequencies is statistically significant ($\chi^2[1]=46.69$, $p < 0.001$, $\phi=0.74$).

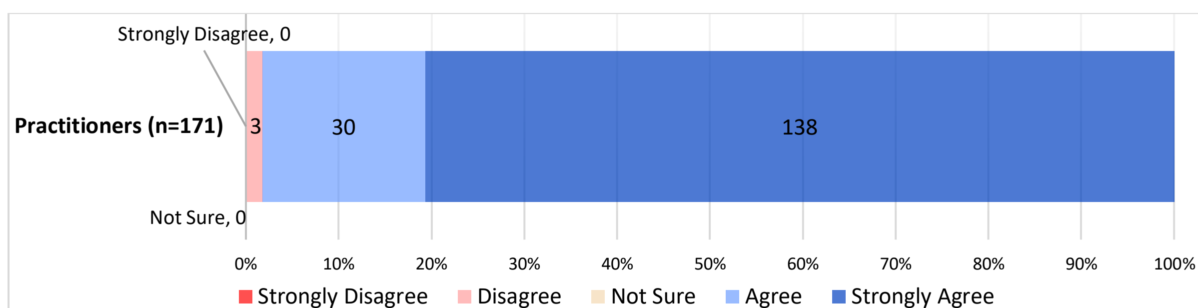

Figure 6.1: I consider myself a professional (P, n=171).

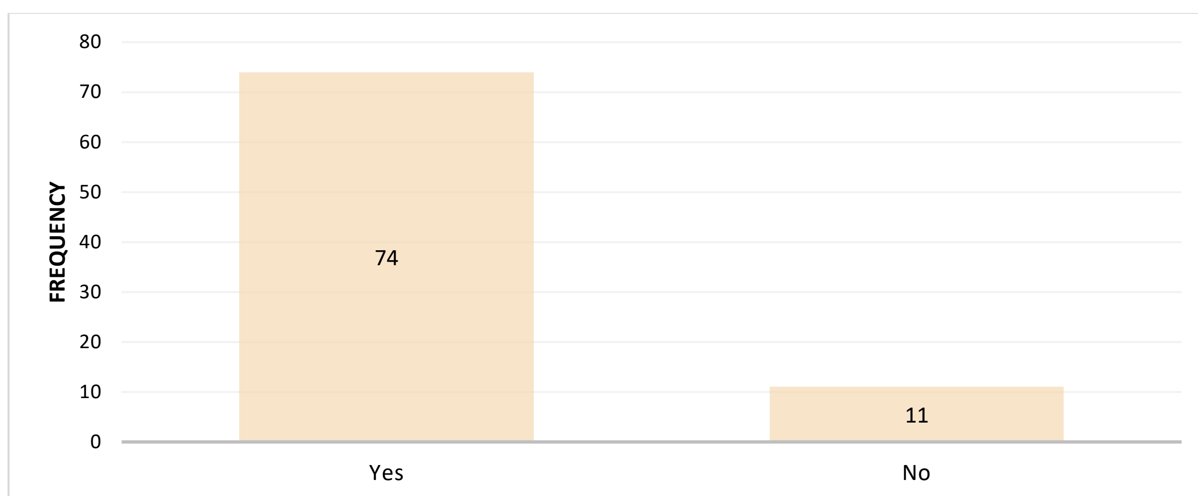

Figure 6.2: Freelance translators are a professional group of experts? (NP, n=85)

Research on exploring ethics and defining CoCs in translation is vast (e.g. Bennett, 2021; 2025; Lambert, 2018; 2020; 2023; Chesterman, 2018; Drugan and Tipton, 2017; Moorkens and Rocchi, 2020; Bowker, 2020; Drugan, 2011; see also Section 2.3.1 for a summary of literature relating to ethical approaches in translation). In terms of CoCs specifically, 84.2% (n=144) of practitioners confirmed that they follow a CoC (see Figure 6.3). The difference between the observed frequencies is statistically significant ($\chi^2[1]=80.05$, $p < 0.001$, $\phi=0.68$). Apart from two (1.2%) practitioners who revealed that they were uncertain as to what constitutes as a CoC, confidentiality, impartiality, honesty, honouring commitments, and responsibility were just some of the professional or ethical values that the practitioners cited as essential in order to be able to remain in the market as a competitor. Interestingly, however, 40.9% (n=70) of practitioners did not think that CoCs are well enforced within the wider translation profession and a further 45.6% (n=78) were not sure about it (see Figure 6.4).

Although Figure 6.4 indicates that the practitioners were either doubtful or unsure about how their colleagues conduct themselves in terms of their professional and ethical choices, the practitioners specified, in their comments, that their doubt is predominantly directed towards the actions of non-professional or “dilettante” [P-S-3] translators. Otherwise, the practitioners generally felt confident that their colleagues, particularly those who are qualified and are members of associations (i.e. ITI and CIOL), follow a CoC.

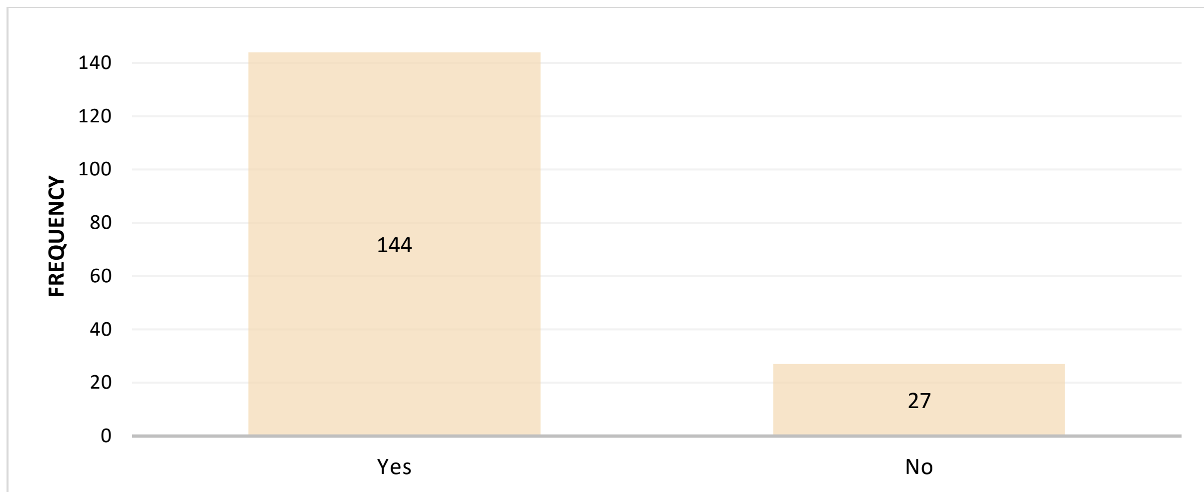

Figure 6.3: Practitioners following a code of conduct (n=171).

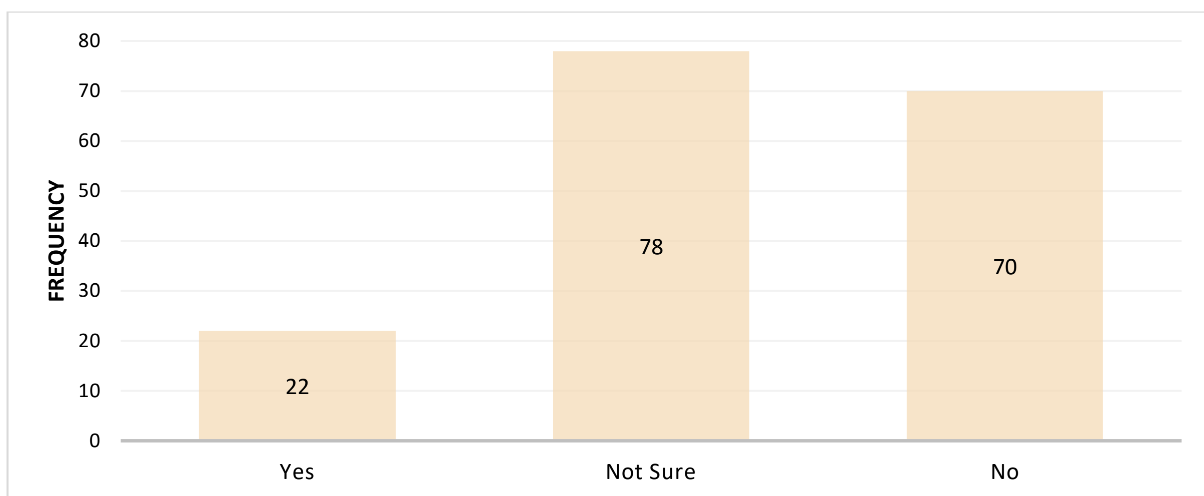

Figure 6.4: Codes of conduct are well enforced by the practitioners within the translation profession (P, n=170).

The practitioners also pointed out that the subject of ethical practice is rarely, if ever, discussed in "everyday conversations" [P-S-47] between professionals and that CoCs may not be in the form of strict written guidelines that are shared by and unify all translators. Instead, a CoC was described by one practitioner as "having some moral" [P-S-17] and "you either have it or you don't" [P-S-17]. Essentially, "we are freelancers" [P-S-90] who do not work for a company and so every translator typically has their own set of ethical beliefs and practices that they choose to follow which make up their individual "USP" [P-S-90]. If their values overlap with the values that are enforced by professional associations, then this was frequently reported by the practitioners as being a mere coincidence. Indeed, the practitioners agreed that some form of a CoC should be mandatory in order to reassure clients and the general public that they are in receipt of high-quality and professional services, but that being said, "a CoC doesn't add much" [P-S-111] and values do not necessarily need to be codified or written, nor do they need to unify translators.

6.1.3 Professional Translator Associations

Becoming a member of a professional translator association was frequently cited as an important endeavour for any translator wishing to exhibit professionalism and high standards (see Section 2.3.2 for a summary of literature relating to professional associations).

Regarding translator associations' entry requirements, 56.1% (n=96) of practitioners confirmed that translator associations' admission criteria enable the selection of qualified and professional members only, whereas the remainder disagreed with this statement or were not sure (see Figure 6.5). This result implies that not every association member is qualified, experienced, or practises at what is deemed a professional level and this aligns with the result that only around two fifths of the practitioner survey population (42.1%, n=72) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that all members listed in translator associations' directories are qualified or experienced professionals (see Figure 6.6).

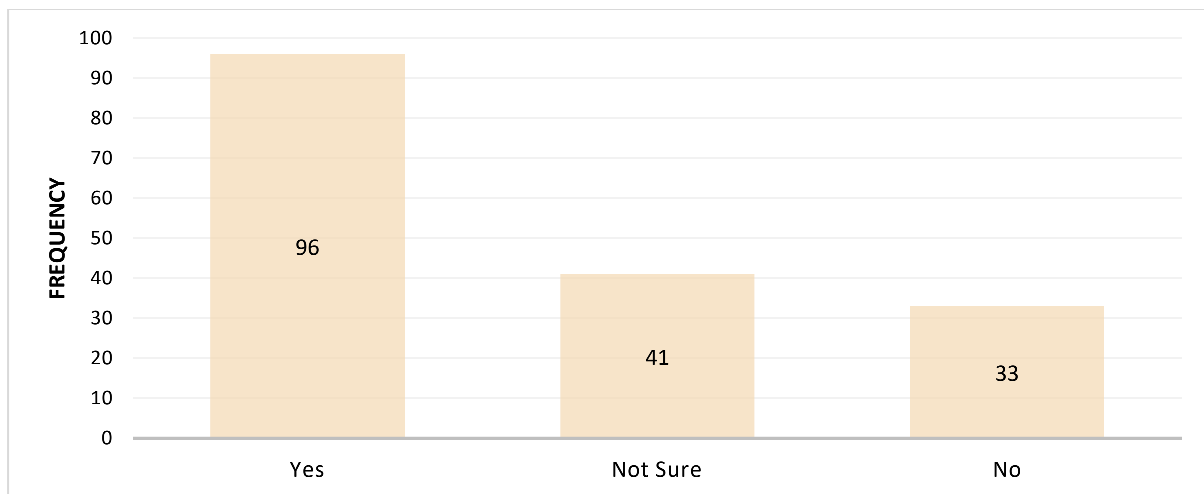

Figure 6.5: Translator associations' admission criteria enable the selection of qualified and professional members only (P, n=170).

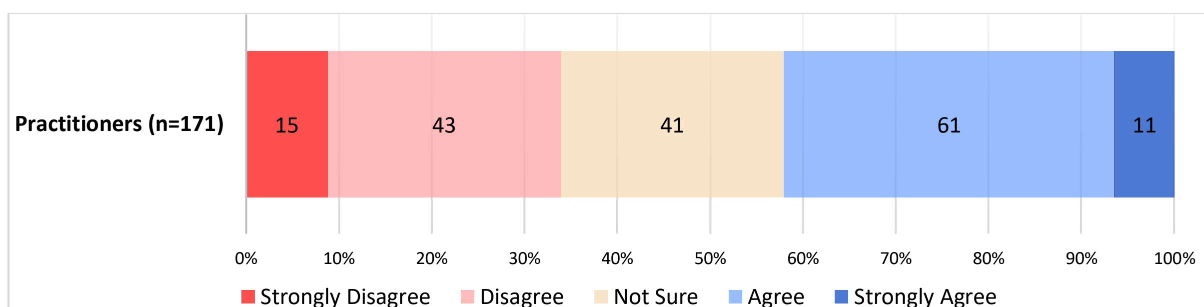

Figure 6.6: All members listed in translator associations' directories are qualified or experienced professionals (P, n=171).

To provide context behind translator associations' entry requirements, the practitioners explained that admission criteria differ depending on the organisation, with some associations enforcing much stricter entry requirements than others. On the one hand, certain associations were criticised by the practitioners for having no entry requirements at all, stating that anyone can become a member if one pays their membership fees. On the other hand, other

associations are reportedly more stringent, and certain associations were labelled as gatekeepers for having unnecessarily difficult requirements for new members. According to the practitioner survey commentary and focus group discussions, entrance to such associations is typically based on a mixture of proof of professional experience, colleague recommendations or client references, education and training, and successful completion of a translation test. Additionally, some associations "exist as a community" [P-S-3] as opposed to a directory that clients can consult for the purposes of improving the working conditions of translators and making the public aware of the importance of working with professional translators. Reportedly, such communities "are less focussed on gatekeeping" [P-S-137] and so entry requirements are likely to be more flexible.

In relation to associations' goals and purposes, the practitioners generally placed the responsibility to professionalise and to protect the profession on associations. As one practitioner stated, "if associations say that anyone can be a translator, then why would the general public assume any different" [P-S-30]. That being said, 86% (n=147) of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed with the fact that translator associations enhance the professional image of translators (see Figure 6.7).

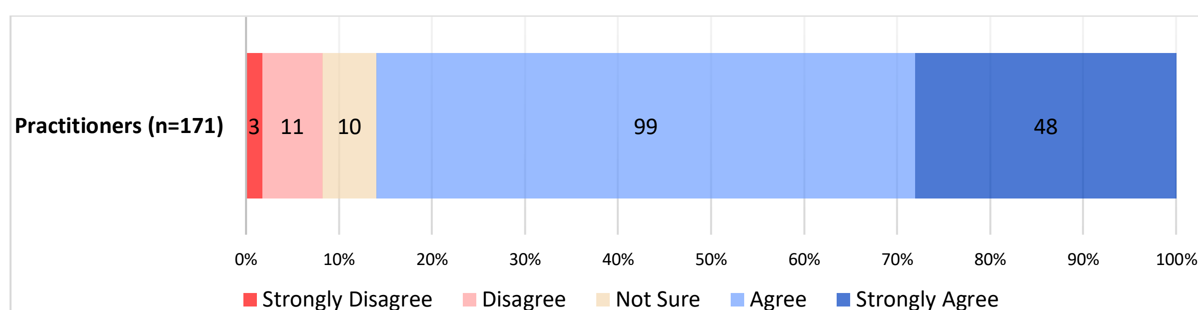

Figure 6.7: Translator associations enhance the professional image of translators (P, n=171).

Particularly over the last decade, associations have reportedly been "changing the world" [P-S-119] by setting high standards, recognising translation as a profession and showcasing the work that translators do. Translator associations are not only appreciated by many practitioners for making progress towards professionalisation, but an association membership is also seen by many practitioners as a sign of quality that can enhance the profiles of individual translators.

Although the efforts made by associations to protect the profession and to uphold professional standards were generally well received and appreciated, some practitioners held the firm conviction, nevertheless, that the standards set by associations could be higher and that more work could be done to get translation recognised as a profession. According to this small group of practitioners, associations are not vocal enough regarding the prevention of price-dumping and the regulation of rates. Not only that, but associations were also criticised by some practitioners for being out of touch with the "digital reality of modern freelance translators" [P-S-76] and not protecting the profession against false claims regarding AI. With

all this in mind, one focus group participant asserted that associations do not fight for the profession and that they should be "set up from scratch" [P-FG1-3]. Interestingly, only one practitioner asserted that "there is a growing need to establish a trade union" [P-S-79].

6.2 Sub-Theme: Amateur and Non-Professional Translators

6.2.1 Lack of Regulations

64.3% (n=110) of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the separation between professional translators and amateur translators has become blurred in recent times (see Figure 6.8). The practitioners explained that the unclear boundaries between professionals and amateurs is a repercussion of the inherent lack of regulation of translation. Indeed, many practitioners stated that it would be desirable if translation were to become a regulated profession, as is the case for traditional professions such as medicine, law, and banking. However, the practitioners displayed a relatively firm conviction, nevertheless, that translation will never be able to attain the status as a regulated profession.

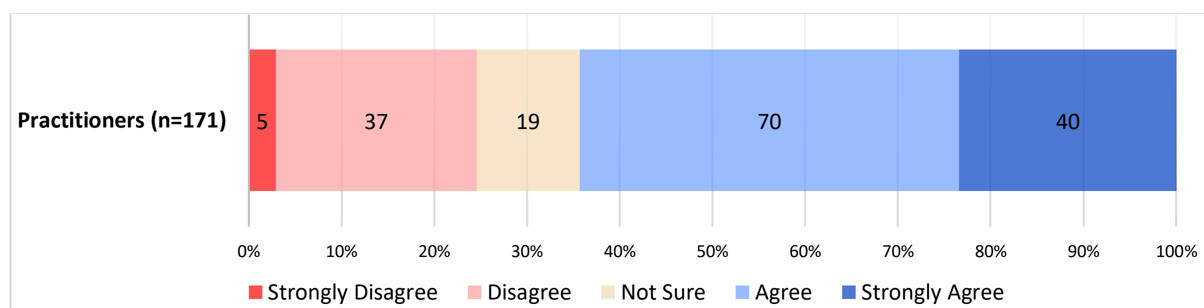

Figure 6.8: The separation between professional translators and amateur translators has become blurred in recent times (P, n-171).

As implied, a recurring concern amongst the practitioner survey respondents and focus group participants related to the fact that there are simply no barriers to prevent the unqualified or the inexperienced from entering freelance translation. Some of the practitioners recalled in their survey comments their experiences of setting themselves up as freelance translators and they explained that one can register as a freelance translator without necessarily having to provide evidence of credentials or professional experience, and this is supposedly the case for many countries around the world. In response, accessing the freelance translation career was classified, by the practitioner survey respondents, as easy because one does not have to be qualified or equipped with relevant experience in order for them to use the title of a professional translator. This point of view aligns with the focus group discussions that elaborated on the topic of public perceptions of translation, which concluded that freelance translation is perceived, particularly by bilinguals, as easy to enter, with one focus group participant making a notable remark that "people have their brain formatted saying that translation is very easy" [P-FG1-3]. However, the practitioners' assessment that freelance

translation is an easy profession to enter was not shared by the non-practitioners. As indicated by Figure 6.9, 83.5% (n=71) of non-practitioners indicated that it is not easy to become a freelance translator, and the difference between the observed frequencies is statistically significant ($\chi^2[1]=38.22$, $p < 0.001$, $\phi=0.67$). Regarding the small group of non-practitioners who have previously commissioned translations (12.9%, n=11), the majority (81.8%, n=9) rejected the notion that it is easy to become a freelance translator.

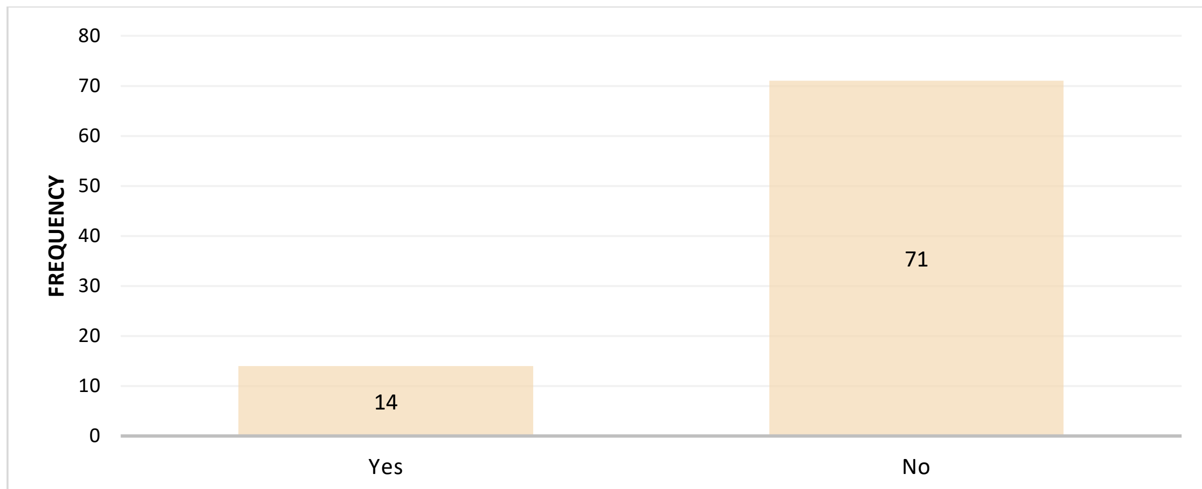

Figure 6.9: It is easy to become a freelance translator (NP, n=85).

Although the practitioner survey respondents portrayed the translation market as easy to enter, this does not necessarily mean that they also believed that it would be easy for just anyone to secure projects. To illustrate this, less than a quarter (24%, n=41) of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that it is easy to find translation work even without the proper credentials (see Figure 6.10).

Furthermore, given the reality that "being multilingual is just normal […] to a lot of people around the world […] and it isn't a big thing" [P-FG2-3], it is rather unsurprising to have found that many practitioners assumed that the general public would believe that those who speak a second language can become a translator. In fact, when probing the non-practitioners regarding this, just less than half of the respondents (47.1%, n=40) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that anyone who speaks a second language can be considered a translator, of which only one belonged to the small group of non-practitioners who have previously sought translation services (see Figure 6.11). Although this is still a significant proportion of the non-practitioner survey population, the non-practitioners clarified in their comments that translation "is not just about knowing the language" [NP-S-70] and that both language and translation skills are equally important (see Section 5.1.2 for more results on non-practitioner perceptions of translation as a specialised activity).

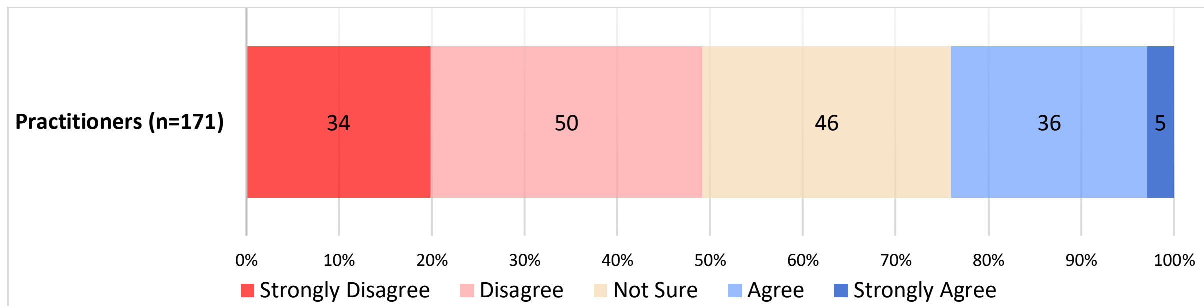

Figure 6.10: It is easy to find translation work even without the proper credentials (P, n=171).

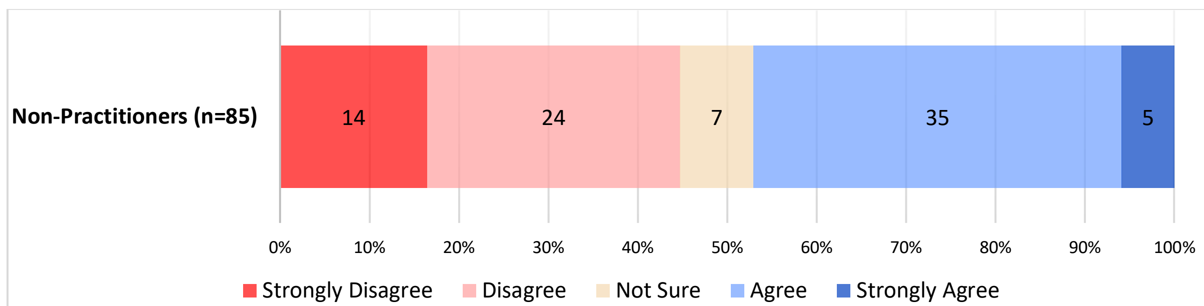

Figure 6.11: Anyone who speaks a second language can be considered a translator (NP, n=85).

The practitioners asserted that, ideally, only those who are appropriately qualified or experienced should be permitted to practise as a translator. However, the measures to control admission to the profession fall short in the practitioners' eyes and should, therefore, be stricter. Consequently, there are now "too many non-qualified [...] and inexperienced translators" [P-S-39] who deliver "shoddy work" [P-S-97] participating in the profession alongside those who have committed themselves to extensive training and have accumulated relevant professional experience. Essentially, the profession "should be exclusive but it isn't" [P-S-87]. Against this backdrop, 63.7% (n=109) of practitioners disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that freelance translation is an exclusive profession (see Figure 6.12). In turn, it was suggested by some of the practitioners that standardised translator qualifications should be administered to regulate who can and cannot offer professional translation services (see Section 6.3 for more results relating to translator training).

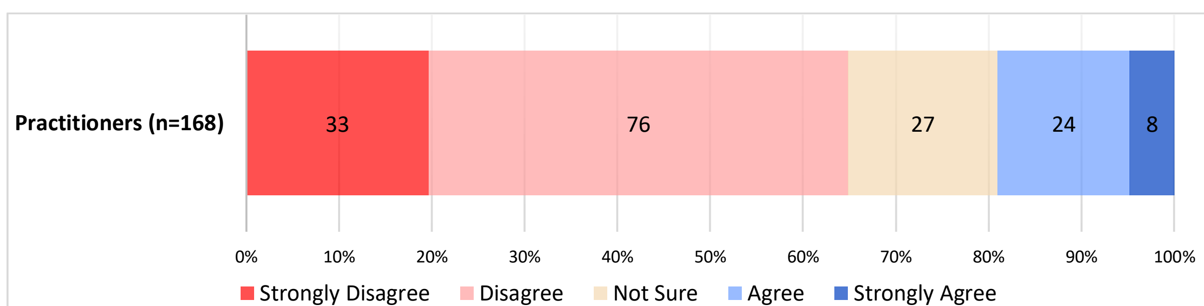

Figure 6.12: Freelance translation is an exclusive profession (P, n=168).

6.2.2 Competition Between Professionals and Non-Professionals

As cited by the practitioner survey respondents and the focus group participants, there are now a lot of bilinguals as well as “adventurers and part-timers” [P-S-23], “hobbyists” [P-FG2-1], and “unskilled people” [P-S-72] who turn to translation as a “side hustle” [P-S-89]. Against the backdrop of the rise of amateur and non-professional contributions, the practitioners were prompted to indicate if they thought that freelance translation is becoming oversaturated and overly competitive, to which 59.9% (n=102) of practitioners agreed (see Figure 6.13). The difference between the observed frequencies is statistically significant ($\chi^2[1]=7.71$, $p=0.005$), but the effect size is small-to-medium ($\phi=0.21$).In response to the growing presence of such translators, 58.5% (n=100) of practitioners believed that professional translators can, however, withstand competition from and maintain autonomy over the increasing contributions of non-professional and amateur translators (see Figure 6.14).

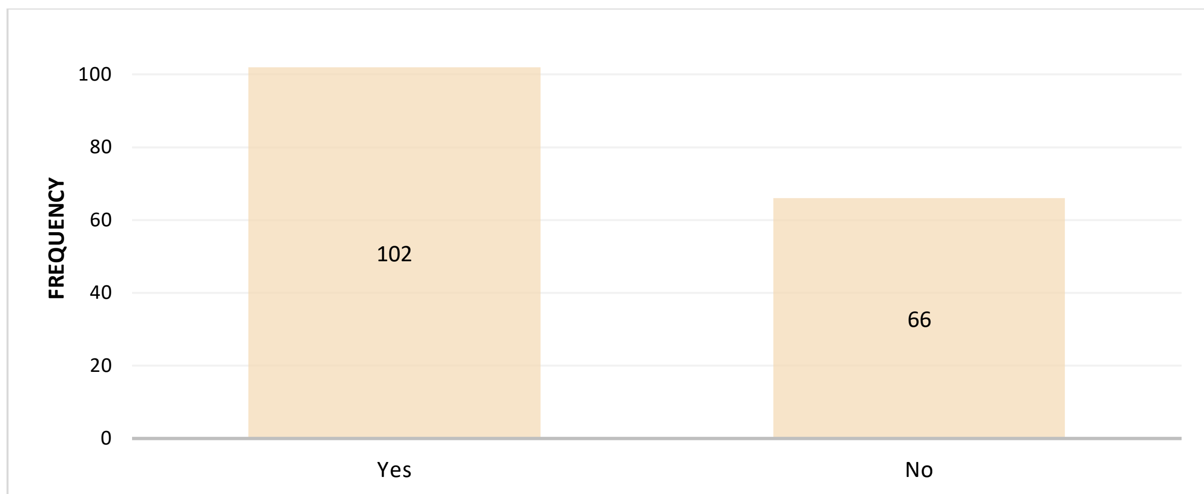

Figure 6.13: The freelance translation profession is oversaturated and overly competitive (P, n=168).

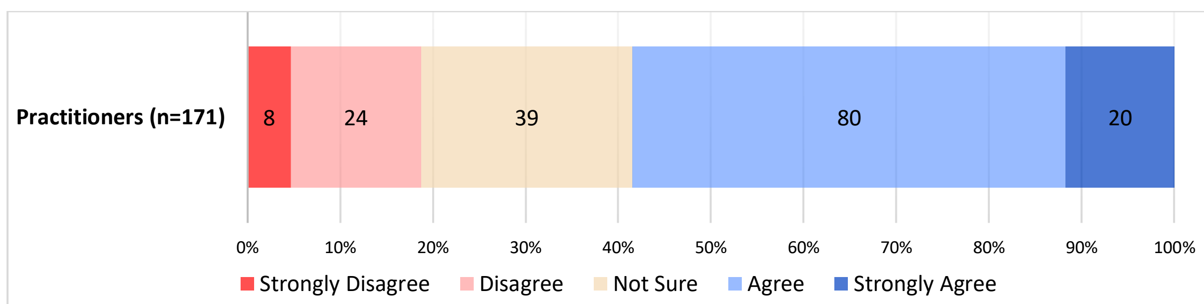

Figure 6.14: Professional translators can withstand competition from and maintain autonomy over the increasing contributions of non-professional / amateur translators (P, n=171).

Many practitioners speculated that they are regularly competing with other translators from all over the world. More specifically, the practitioners reported a current trend where translation agencies, particularly those which are based in the UK or in Europe, are more frequently commissioning translation work to those who live in countries with a lower cost of living. Therefore, “ridiculously low rates that aren’t feasible for translators working in countries where the cost of living is higher” [P-S-103] are being increasingly imposed, particularly by translation agencies. With this in mind, the practitioners reported that it is

almost always possible for a client to find a cheaper translator, thus making it harder for qualified professionals who live in countries with a higher cost of living to negotiate decent rates.

Apart from the issues that arise from commissioning translation work at a global scale, one of the most frequently reported concerns in relation to amateur and non-professional translators was, as implied in the previous paragraph, price-dumping. According to the practitioners, amateurs and non-professionals are “desperate” [P-FG2-1], offering and accepting rates that would be unacceptable in the eyes of a professional. With this assumption in mind, the practitioners speculated that translation agencies can “cut corners” [P-S-3] and “squeeze down rates even further” [P-S-41] by opting for the cheaper amateur and non-professional translators, even for professional requirements. However, it is explained that educating clients on rates and quality is “particularly hard when our competitors are also trying to educate clients that the lowest price is acceptable because there is no difference in quality” [P-S-7]. In turn, this has led to increased competition between all types of translators in regard to securing projects, particularly with agencies. The practitioners expressed disappointment in that clients seem to care more about cost savings and only take on “cheaper translators” irrespective of their location and/or educational and professional backgrounds. As one practitioner summarised, “the search for quicker and cheaper ways of translating products in an industry that is often led by people who are not specialists in the field has often made it a no man’s land, leaving translators to their own luck” [P-S-163].

In short, based on the practitioner survey commentary and on the focus group discussions, it appears as if all one must do to secure projects with agencies is to offer low rates even if they are not suitably qualified or experienced. One practitioner, who has a postgraduate degree in TS, is a member of an association and translates over 300,000 words per year, revealed that they “still get denied agency work […] yet, someone who has translated 100 words a year for the last 3 years meets their criteria, effectively rendering my qualifications redundant in those instances” [P-S-165]. Consequently, the practitioners have noticed that they are more frequently being hired to “fix” [P-S-130] “questionable translations” [P-FG2-1] which they suspected were initially completed by an amateur or non-professional. This commentary aligns with the result that over half of the practitioner survey population (57.9%, n=99) did not believe that translation agencies recruit qualified professionals only (see Figure 6.15). In light of this competition from amateurs and non-professionals, one focus group participant revealed that they were considering giving up freelancing altogether for an in-house job because they refuse to compete with those who are “crawling and kneeling down to clients” [P-FG2-1] and lowering standards with their “cheap translations” [P-FG2-1].

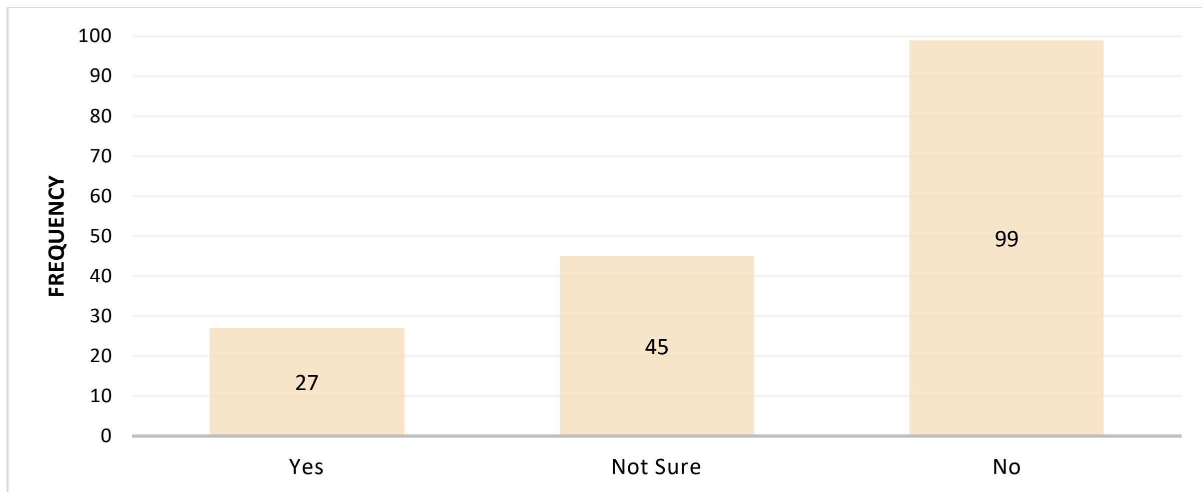

Figure 6.15: Translation agencies employ qualified professionals only (P, n=171).

6.2.3 Low-Priority, Collaborative, and Volunteer Translation

In relation to websites and platforms that crowdsource translation or automate project management (see Section 2.2.1 for literature relating to free crowdsourcing and Section 2.2.2 for platform economy), the practitioners argued that projects tends to be distributed amongst a large pool of non-professionals and that market rates are thus being undercut. Not only that, but commissioning translation projects through cheaper avenues, via online platforms or via a network of amateurs, has supposedly also provoked a "knock-on effect" [P-S-165] by setting the expectation that translation can be performed by anyone and that it should be completed for free or at very low rates.

However, as explained by one focus group participant, it is important to also note that practices such as volunteering and fan translation offer a route to professional translation for genuine aspiring translators, and a further focus group participant stated that "everyone is more than welcome where they contribute positively" [P-FG2-1]. These points of view do not wholly align, however, with the practitioner survey commentary. To elaborate, the practitioner survey respondents who wrote about this topic asserted that translation is a professional service that should never be delegated to those who are not suitably qualified or experienced. In fact, the practitioners speculated that the majority of volunteer and community translators are "nothing more than bilingual, and sometimes barely even that" [P-S-165]. Even for the cases of low priority jobs, 70.8% (n=121) of practitioners disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that delegating low priority jobs to collaborative or volunteer translators is an ideal solution (see Figure 6.16).

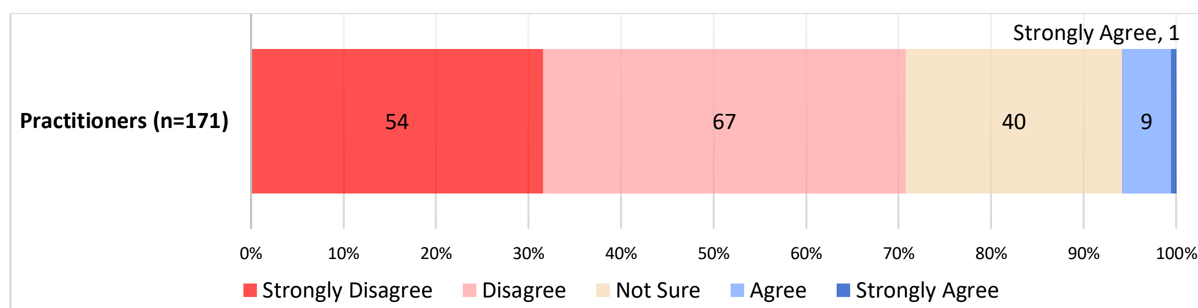

Figure 6.16: Delegating low priority jobs to collaborative / volunteer translators is an ideal solution (P, n=171).

According to the participants of focus group two, whether to use unsuitably qualified or inexperienced volunteers depends on the context and the goals of the charity. To illustrate, "translating some YouTube lyrics" [P-FG2-3] does not require professional input. However, there is a "question of liability" [P-FG2-4] when it concerns asking somebody who hasn't received the training or doesn't have professional experience to take on quite sensitive or significant assignments. Overall, the practitioners from both the survey and focus groups collectively believed that even though charities rely on volunteers, this does not mean that they should settle for those who may not be suitably qualified.

Furthermore, one of the focus group participants discussed an online course that they participated in and how the subtitles were, according to them, evidently not produced professionally. They criticised the fact that they paid for the course and so volunteers and MT should not be used to translate the accompanying materials. They elaborated on this by explaining that these practices are comparable to fan subbing and fan translation for computer games and anime. Essentially, if the product is eventually going to be sold or distributed, then the seller or distributor has the responsibility to ensure that the translation is good enough, but there is no guarantee that quality assurance processes take place under fab subbing and fan translation circumstances. This uncertainty towards fan subbing and fan translation culture is, however, not new, especially when considering that the ethical issues surrounding fan translation and other related practices have already been raised and questioned (e.g. Evans, 2019; Ito, 2017; Vazquez-Calvo et al., 2019; Wongseree et al., 2019; O'Hagan, 2009; see also Section 2.2.3 for literature relating to fan translation).

6.3 Sub-Theme: Necessity of Translator Training

6.3.1 Benefits of Translator Training

Essentially, "in professions such as medicine, law, mechanics, and hairstyling, qualifications are generally a prerequisite for practice. Why does translation have to be different?" [P-S-53] (see Section 2.4 for literature relating to translator training). Perhaps with this in mind, 49.7% (n=85) of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that a formal

qualification in translation should be mandatory for those who wish to become freelance translators (see Figure 6.17). On the back of this result, it is worth determining whether there are any relationships between achieved qualifications and attitudes towards the necessity of translation qualifications. On the one hand, 17 out of the 20 (85%) practitioners who hold no higher education qualifications or certifications at all, in addition to five out of the ten (50%) practitioners who are indeed qualified, but not specifically in translation or in languages, either disagreed or strongly disagreed that a formal qualification in translation should be mandatory for those who wish to become freelance translators. On the other hand, the remaining 54 out of the 76 (71%) who (strongly) disagreed with the statement are indeed qualified in translation or at least in languages (see Figure 4.1 for qualifications held by the practitioners). In other words, that idea that the translation "profession [should not be] restricted to those with translation qualifications" [P-S-60] is not exclusive to those without relevant qualifications, rather it is an idea that is shared even by those who have committed themselves to education in translation and/or in languages.

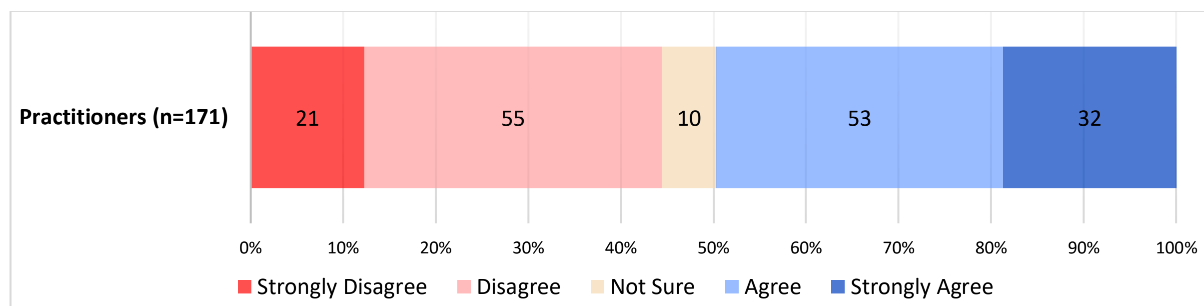

Figure 6.17: A qualification in translation should be mandatory for those who wish to become freelance translators (P, n=171).

Although "it's hard to judge whether a qualification is useful for a certain profession" [P-S-167], there are clear benefits that should encourage aspiring translators to pursue some form of translator training anyway. As summarised by one focus group participant, translator training "is an essential part of the profession […] to meet certain standards before being able to practise" [P-FG2-3]. On a related note, a qualification was regarded by some of the practitioner survey respondents as beneficial particularly for early-career translators as "there is a greater learning curve for new entrants to the profession" [P-S-95] and that it provides them with the foundations to compete in the market to which their foundational skills and knowledge can be broadened through ongoing professional development. The practitioners summarised that a certain level of qualification can, therefore, help to attract clients, open up opportunities to gain valuable industry experience, and secure well-paid projects. Without qualifications, it would be harder for clients to identify and verify good and reliable candidates. Although translator training is currently not mandatory, "training makes a huge impact in the quality of a translator's work" [P-S-163], so those who commit to formal and specialised training are likely to be better overall translators than in comparison to those who do not have such training. Essentially, "you can become a good translator without it […] you could become even better with it" [P-S-150].

That being said, over half (57.9%, n=49) of the non-practitioner survey respondents stated that they would trust a bilingual or multilingual, who doesn't possess any translation qualifications or certifications, with their translation needs (see Figure 6.18), yet the difference between the observed frequencies is not statistically significant ($\chi^2[1]=1.99$, $p=0.159$, $\phi=0.15$). Interestingly, in relation to the non-practitioners who have previously commissioned translations (12.9%, n=11), the responses as to whether they would trust a bilingual or multilingual with their translation needs were also mixed, with five (45.5%) indicating that would trust an unqualified linguist, while the remainder would not trust an individual with such a profile. Although this result indicates that a significant proportion of the general public may not necessarily deem translation qualifications essential to be able to participate in professional translation, one non-practitioner explained that "whilst anyone with a second language can translate, the quality of translation will be riddled with contextual loss / misinterpretations / misleading delivery, unless dealt with by a trained professional" [NP-S-17], and a further non-practitioner pointed out that they "wouldn't want to trust someone with no translation qualifications, but sometimes you have no choice" [NP-S-84].

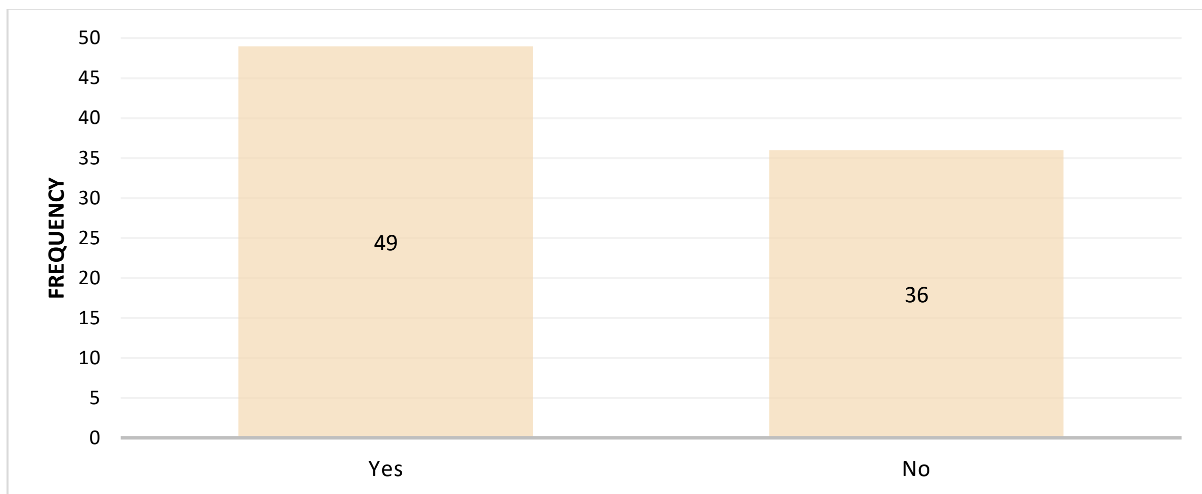

Figure 6.18: Non-practitioners who would trust a bi-/multilingual without any translation qualifications or certifications with their translation needs (n=85).

6.3.2 Domain Specific Knowledge

In response to the arguments presented in the previous sub-section, translator training can, indeed, enhance the overall quality of a translator's work. However, 63.7% (n=109) of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that a formal qualification in translation is not necessary if you have acquired enough relevant experience (see Figure 6.19). It is also worth noting that all of the practitioners without any higher education qualifications or certifications at all (n=20), along with 5 out of the 10 (50%) practitioners qualified in subjects unrelated to translation or languages, either agreed or strongly agreed with the

aforementioned statement (see Figure 4.1 for the qualifications held by the practitioners). While this indicates that nearly all practitioners without translation-specific training support the view expressed, it is important to highlight that the remainder of those who (strongly) agreed are, in fact, qualified in translation and/or in languages or at least have some other form of translation-related certification. This reinforces the observation made in the previous sub-section (Section 6.3.1), that the belief that the profession should remain open even to individuals without translation-specific training is shared not only by those unqualified in translation, but also by many with relevant academic or professional training.

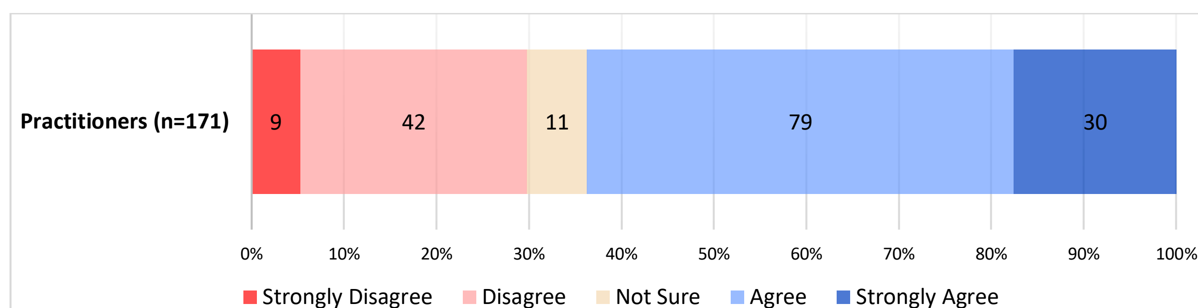

Figure 6.19: A formal qualification in translation is not necessary if you have acquired enough relevant experience (P, n=171).

Based on the practitioners' personal experiences, those with training only in translation often lack the depth of expertise, at least at the beginning of their careers, to translate any kind of specialised content. For this reason, the practitioners attested that a translation qualification on its own is simply not enough in order to be able to translate at an exceptional and professional level or at the premium end of the market. In fact, having "an excellent background in [a] field (e.g. medicine, finance)" was argued to be more valuable [P-S-116] than a background in just translation. Essentially, it is "very important to be a subject matter expert" if you want to succeed at specialised translation [P-FG1-1] or meet the expectations of the premium translation market. One practitioner even stated that they "wouldn't like to see the profession becoming restricted to those with translation qualifications [because] wide-ranging professional experience before becoming a translator is often invaluable for understanding the texts we're translating" [P-S-60]. In other words, training in both translation and in any relevant subject areas are necessary and complement each other. As reported throughout theme one (see Chapter 5), specialisation or "domain-specific knowledge, and lots of it" [P-S-12] are essential for success.

6.3.3 University Degrees in Translation

Translators come from different backgrounds and a university degree in translation is just one of the many types of qualifications that an aspiring translator can equip themselves with prior to entering the translation profession (see Section 2.4.3 for a summary of literature relating to tertiary education for translation). A university degree in translation has considerable value since 60.2% (n=103) of practitioners disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that

a university degree in translation is overrated (see Figure 6.20). Of those respondents, 77 (74.8%) stated that they hold an undergraduate and/or a postgraduate degree specifically in translation (see Figure 4.1 for qualifications held by the practitioners). Meanwhile, the non-practitioners reached a similar conclusion, with 58.8% (n=50) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the same statement (see Figure 6.20). At a more granular level, the responses of those non-practitioners who have previously sought translation services (12.9%, n=11) were not so mixed, with the majority (72.7%, n=8) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that a university degree in translation is overrated, and the remainder (27.3%, n=3) agreeing with the aforementioned statement.

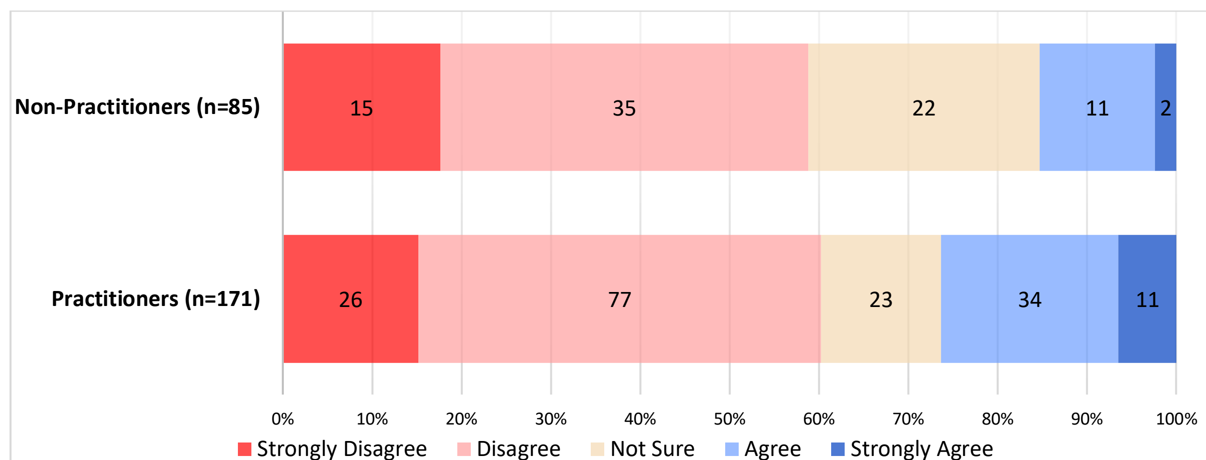

Figure 6.20: A university degree in translation is overrated (NP=85, P=171).

On the one hand, the practitioners concluded that introducing Translation Studies as a university discipline has enriched the profession by promoting translation as an industry that is full of experts. Additionally, by pursuing a degree, aspiring translators demonstrate early commitment to the profession. Not only that, but studying in a university setting allows students to make mistakes and to receive feedback from industry experts.

On the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that over a quarter of practitioners (26.3%, n=45) considered a university degree overrated (see Figure 6.20). Essentially, the practitioners who queried the value of translation degrees believed that it is not guaranteed that one will be able to easily find regular work even if qualified at degree level, with one practitioner describing a degree in translation as "just a dry piece of paper" [P-S-17]. Meanwhile, one non-practitioner suggested that translation "could be some sort of qualification, not a degree" [NP-S-59].

Furthermore, the practitioner survey commentary relating to the type of content that is typically covered in translation degrees was predominantly negative. To illustrate, although 68.4% (n=117) of practitioners thought that learning translation theory is valuable (see Figure 6.21), whereby the difference between the observed frequencies is statistically significant ($\chi^2[1]=26.88$, p < 0.001, $\phi=0.4$), Translation Studies was described, nevertheless, by one practitioner as "nonsense" [P-S-23] and a further eleven (6.4%) practitioners openly

questioned whether teaching translation theory is even necessary or valuable for a professional career in translation. Essentially, teaching translation theory is “fine and good” [P-S-17] yet can be too extensive, and the main criticism associated with such university modules was that it is “separated from the real world” [P-S-103] and that it does not prepare students for the reality of the translation market or equip them with the skills to translate effectively or to succeed commercially. One practitioner stated that they “learned nothing in Translation Theory” [P-S-98] and the content had no use to them as a professional translator.

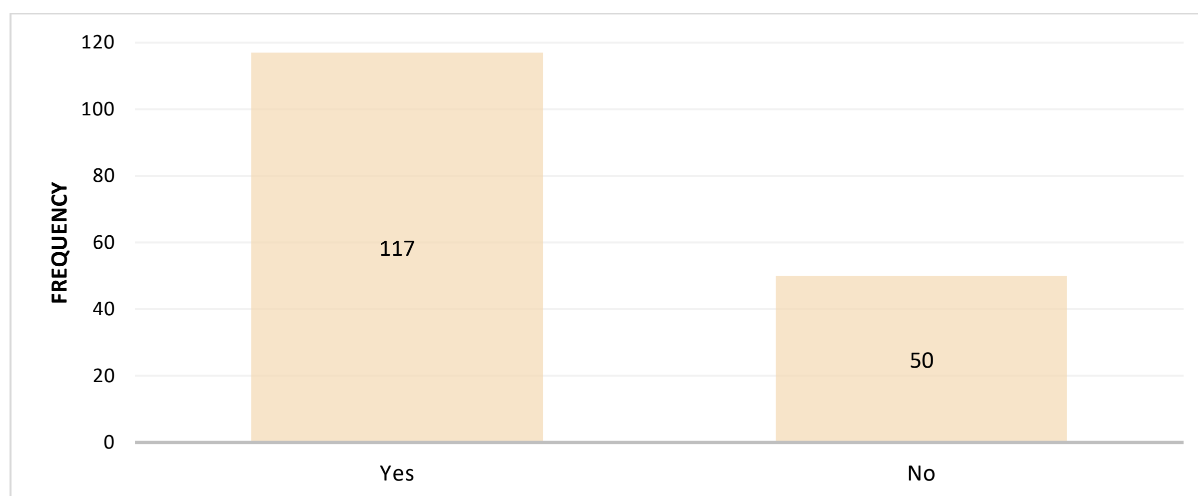

Figure 6.21: Learning Translation Theory at university is valuable? (P, n=171).

Both focus groups spoke about the value of translation as a university degree and their discussions align with the practitioner survey commentary. For example, one focus group participant used to be a mentor for translation students at a university and was “quite surprised” [P-FG1-1] and “amazed” [P-FG1-1] by how little the students knew about the translation workflow before getting their degrees in translation. A further focus group participant discussed how one of their colleagues has a degree in English “but what he produces is a lot better than what many other translation graduates produce” [P-FG2-1]. Meanwhile, a third focus group participant responded to this, stating that they “wish to see a degree in translation matched with a specialism such as law or business or economics or engineering” [P-FG2-3].

6.3.4 Continuous Professional Development

Furthermore, continuous professional development (CPD) was frequently reported by the practitioners to be compulsory in order to show commitment to the profession as well as to refresh and update skills and knowledge. Business, ethics, technology and practical skills were specifically cited as the recommended areas of CPD that translators should pursue in order to remain competitive in the market. However, one practitioner complained that they “hate that most of the CPD / conference offering is now almost exclusively centred around AI and machine translation” [P-S-2].

Regardless, CPD is evidently valued amongst the practitioners, with 89.5% (n=153) of practitioners already partaking in or wishing to partake in CPD (see Figure 6.22). This preference is statistically significant ($\chi^2[1]=118.07$, $p < 0.001$) and associated with a large effect size ($\phi=0.84$). In addition, 84.8% (n=145) of practitioners reported being aware of institutions or authorities that offer CPD for freelance translators (see Figure 6.22), and this is also statistically significant ($\chi^2[1]=86.63$, $p < 0.001$, $\phi=0.72$). As one practitioner succinctly summarised, “there are plenty of companies, universities, individuals, translators’ associations etc offering CPD for translators” [P-S-85].

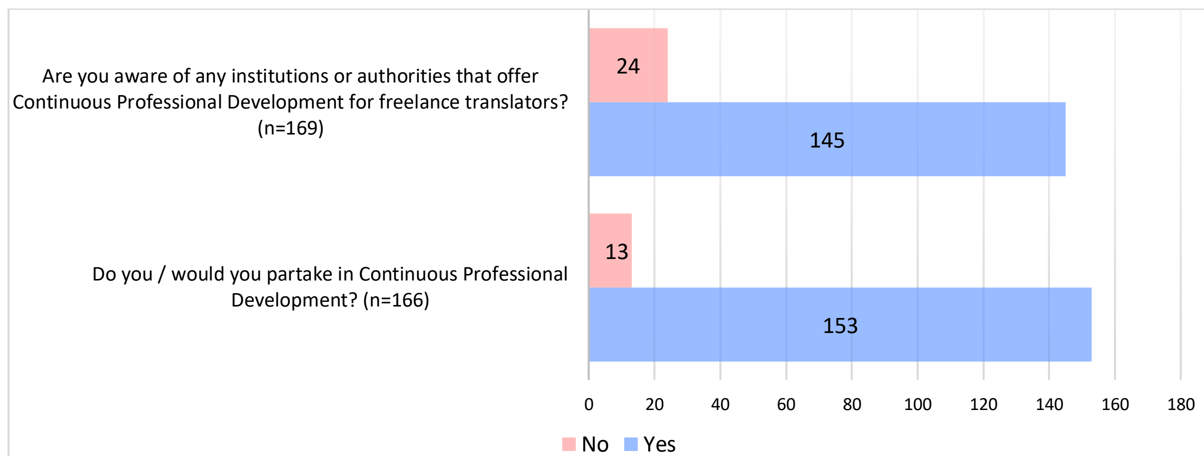

Figure 6.22: Practitioners partaking in or have the intention to partake in Continuous Professional development (n=166) and practitioners’ awareness of any institutions or authorities that offer Continuous Professional Development for freelance translators (n=169).

6.4 Discussion

The accumulation of efficient signals of status (e.g. attested work experience, academic and professional certifications and/or qualifications, and association memberships; see also Section 3.3.2.2 for additional examples of efficient and inefficient signalling) offers a route to professionalisation (i.e. the process of an occupation becoming a profession) for individuals, and those with high (professional) status would typically exhibit various signals of status that demonstrate competence, reliability and professionalism (Pym et al., 2012). As such, the more effectively one exhibits signals of status, the higher their professional status is likely to be. This understanding of professionalisation is, in fact, akin to the trait approach towards professionalisation, a sociological theory that is based on the principle that the more professional traits that an occupation acquires and displays, the more professionalised it is (Sulaiman et al., 2024; see also Section 3.1.1 for an overview of the trait approach).

Constructing a professional identity is crucial for gaining recognition as a competent professional (Sela-Sheffy, 2023), a process that relies on self-perception and one’s willingness

to accumulate various efficient signals in order to demonstrate aptness for their professional line of work. According to Toury (1995), the development of translator identity typically involves the acquisition of a set of assets that navigates translator-related behaviour in a given situation. Within the context of the professional characteristics, or efficient signals, that pertain to the professional translator community, the practitioners that participated in this study cited commitment to translator training and CPD, mastery of a complex body of knowledge, adherence to professional and ethical conduct, and membership of a professional association as some of the main characteristics that make up the profile of a typical professional translator and justify why freelance translation is a profession (see results in Section 6.1). The successful acquisition of these assets, amongst others, should result in a professional identity that projects an individual as a good and reliable worker.

98.2% (n=168) of practitioners identified themselves as a professional (see Figure 6.1), and so it is implied that the translator community collectively enjoys a high professional status and that each of the individual practitioners should have the capacity to display the aforementioned signals. Despite the practitioners' firm conviction that they are competent and reliable professionals, there are however, as will be discussed further in the forthcoming sections, various inefficient signals that are impacting their perceived professionalism and have created a state of market disorder.

As with the case of the discussion of results in Chapter 5 (see Section 5.3), this present discussion continues to operationalise this study's bespoke framework on (de-)professionalisation (see Section 3.5 for an overview of the framework), channelling the other elements of the professionalisation criteria, namely ethical professional behaviour, formal and academic routes to the profession, professional associations, and aspects relating to professional control, and then exploring them further in a translation context (see Table 3.3 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description). This contributes to this chapter's concluding discussion (Section 6.4.5) which ascertains, and to what degree, the professional attributes that can be associated with translation and the implications for translation's overall professional status.

6.4.1 Commitment to Ethical Professional Behaviour

As noted in the breakdown of the professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3), ensuring formal ethical professional behaviour is essential for maintaining a professional culture. In the case of translation, professional associations typically shoulder the responsibility to establish formal CoCs, serving their members by offering them professional and ethical guidance. Efforts to uphold ethical professional practice extends, nevertheless, beyond the mere drawing up and enforcement of CoCs. For example, ITI's Coffee House initiative[22] is a recent

[22] https://www.iti.org.uk/discover/policy/ethics.html

programme of seminars that was launched in order to engage practitioners in a range of open discussions relating to ethics. At the time of writing this thesis, some of the previous and upcoming discussion sessions revolved around topics including shaping a new CoC, translator wellbeing, environmental sustainability, working with challenging material, and evolving translation technologies.

Enforcing ethical codes and values is not only an essential step towards constructing a professional identity as depicted by the practitioner commentary, but it is also a key component of successful professionalisation which seeks the establishment and strict enforcement of formal CoCs for the purposes of regulating the workforce's actions and promoting an ethical professional culture (see Section 3.1.4 for summary of professionalisation approaches). On this note, it is worth referring back to Greenwood's (1957) distinction between formal and informal CoCs, of which the former is a written set of values that binds the professional community together and is explicit, regulatory, and systematic, while the latter is unwritten and unspoken.

Just because the practitioners deem compliance with ethical values crucial for the construction of a professional identity and that a large proportion of the practitioner survey respondents (84.2%, n=144) confirmed to adhering to a CoC (see Figure 6.3), this does not necessarily mean that they consider associations' CoCs to be the holy grail of professional and ethical guidance. In fact, the practitioner survey commentary indicates that the formal CoCs established by associations fail, in part, to bind the translator community together given that "we are not working for one company, we are freelancers" [P-S-90], and so standing by informal and personal CoCs or values is common practice. As such, the scope and hierarchy of values pertaining to one practitioner may certainly differ to the set of values of a different practitioner. Indeed, the practitioners' personal sets of values may certainly overlap with the CoCs that are enforced by professional bodies, but the practitioners take pride in their "USPs" [P-S-90] and their status as freelancers, finding strength in their individualism and leveraging their professional freedom to adhere to the values that are important to them. In this way, "a CoC doesn't add much" [P-S-111], especially since the practitioners that participated in this study advocated that unifying the professional translator community is not necessarily a requisite for sustaining a professional culture as long as the individual practitioners do their part in upholding their core professional values.

Generally speaking, my results show that the majority of practitioners strive to make choices that ensure that their businesses and clients are being handled as ethically and as responsibly as possible, and that they also strive to refresh and enhance their skillsets, attitudes that should be adopted by anyone wishing to project a sense of professionalism. The same conclusion cannot, however, be applied to amateur and non-professional translators who were criticised by the practitioners for "not [acting] wholly professional[ly]" [P-S-14] and for "cutting corners" [P-S-164], thus implying that such translators do not adhere to ethical

professional frameworks. In particular, questions regarding the ethics behind fan translation and fan subbing practices are often raised. One focus group participant touched on this subject by speculating that the appropriate measures are not taken by fan translators to ensure quality. Meanwhile, the literature discussed in Section 2.2.3 reveals that despite tolerance for fan translation and fan subbing, such practices are typically performed by those lacking qualifications and professional experience and that they tend to operate without any authorisation from the copyright owner (Evans, 2019). However, interviews with fansubbers reveal that they regard their activities and values as completely ethical, despite any copyright claims, as they insist that their endeavours are solely for serving fandom rather than for personal monetary gain (Evans, 2019; Wongseree et al., 2019). This example supports the argument that while professional codes emphasise a commitment to quality, development, and professionalism, there are no clear expectations amongst non-professionals other than a commitment towards community values (Drugan, 2011; see also Section 2.3.1 for literature relating to CoCs in a translation context). In turn, given that the "amateurisation" of translation is on the rise (Gümüş, 2024), any lack of conformity to ethical professional behaviour from amateurs and non-professionals could, hypothetically, have a knock-on effect on the perceived professionalism of the wider translator community.

According to Chesterman's (2001) Hieronymic Oath (see Section 2.3.1), a model that builds on the various ethical perspectives that shape the translation industry, ethical professional behaviour encompasses professional integrity, understanding, trustworthiness and striving for excellence, assets which the practitioners also advocated as essential for being a professional. Indeed, my practitioner findings indicate that maintaining and improving competences, being client-focussed, and taking responsibility for the work produced, for instance, are essential to be able to assert oneself as a professional and dedicated translator and to provide services of the highest standards. However, the oath also valorises the notion of working for reasonable fees as a way for a practitioner to demonstrate loyalty to their profession and it goes without saying that many practitioners struggle with low rates of pay. Not only did 47 practitioners report that they considered leaving the profession because of insufficient earnings (see Section 7.1.2 for practitioners' reasons for considering leaving the profession), but also a recurring theme throughout this thesis concerns the practitioners' frustration and disappointment that they are not paid nearly enough for what they are worth or for the work that they do. Although professions should be largely altruistic endeavours, this does not mean that they can be performed on a volunteer or underpaid basis (Flexner, 1915) or that the practitioners can be exploited. These scenarios are, however, all too familiar to many practitioners of this study who are frustrated about feeling undervalued and believe that they are "paid peanuts but held to disproportionately high standards" [P-S-147], a situation which is undoubtedly exacerbated not only by amateur and non-professional translators' price-dumping practices, but also by clients' decisions to opt for MT or amateur and non-professional translators even for professional requirements (see also Section 5.3.1 for discussion on practitioner-client relationships).

Taken together, the findings suggest that the professionalisation criterion relating to ethical professional behaviour is partially but not fully fulfilled in the translation context (see Table 3.3 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description). On the one hand, there is clear evidence of a strong ethical orientation amongst professional translators, reflected in a shared commitment to quality, responsibility, professional development and client care. These practices align closely with formal models of professional ethics, such as Chesterman's (2001) Hieronymic Oath, and indicate that ethical behaviour constitutes an important marker of professional identity within the practitioner community. On the other hand, the fragmented and freelance nature of the profession limits the unifying and regulatory force of formal CoCs, with many practitioners relying instead on personal or informal ethical frameworks. Moreover, the growing visibility of amateur and non-professional translation practices – often operating outside formal ethical frameworks – risks diluting public perceptions of professional ethical standards. As a result, while ethical professional behaviour is strongly endorsed and enacted at the individual level, a collective adoption of a formal and unifying CoC remains absent, constraining the extent to which this criterion can be considered fulfilled.

6.4.2 Quality Education

6.4.2.1 Scope of Translator Training

The establishment of formal and academic routes to the profession is not only a cornerstone of the professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3). This emphasis on structured education and training is also a pillar of the SDGs, notably SDG4 (see Section 1.3 for the SDGs relevant to this research). This goal aims to substantially increase the number of youth and adults possessing relevant training and proficiency that will help them to find employment with reasonable incomes or allow them to develop beneficial entrepreneurial skills. In this sense, translator training and professional development not only support the professionalisation of translation, but also contribute to broader social objectives concerned with education, employability and economic growth.

On the one hand, translation qualifications are available which demonstrates language and translation abilities (Chan, 2013; Lommel, 2013). Not only does TS exist as a university and research discipline where students can earn an undergraduate or a postgraduate degree in translation, but other professional-led qualifications such as a Certificate in Translation (CertTrans) or a Diploma in Translation (DipTrans) are also attainable through CIOL, for instance. Additionally, the practitioner findings reveal that there is an array of benefits to professional and academic translator training, of which the key benefits relate to proving one's professionalism and commitment, enhancing one's translation skills as well as distinguishing oneself from less qualified or unqualified translators. Aspiring translators, particularly those

based in the Anglophone world as well as in Europe and in East Asia, have abundant training opportunities to develop their translation and language competences (Hlavac, 2013) for which they can obtain certifications or academic qualifications that demonstrate to employers that a certain level of relevant language and translation skill has been acquired. Likewise, those who wish to maintain and further their professional careers have opportunities to pursue lifelong professional development, typically attainable via professional associations, to renew and update their scope of competences.

On the other hand, although research in translator competences and competence models indicates the importance of developing professional competences (see literature in Section 2.4.1), there is evidence to suggest that current translator training initiatives are lacking in preparing trainee translators regarding their employability and their entrepreneurialism. For instance, the studies addressed in Section 2.4 not only allude to an inherent lack of entrepreneurial skill with respect to business and freelance activity (i.e. service related tasks such as quoting, sales and marketing and also handling taxes) amongst early career and tenured translators (see Henter, 2016; Vigier Moreno, 2010; Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2017; Do, 2020; Gümüş, 2017 etc.), but that there is also lack of discussion with respect to translation and post-editing rate-setting in the translation classroom (see Walker and Lambert, 2024; Girletti and Lefer, 2024). Furthermore, debates persist on whether university programmes should continue teaching theoretical content or whether they should prioritise and focus on vocational training instead (see Esfandiari et al., 2019; Sela-Sheffy, 2023; Pym, 2011). The practitioners that participated in this research were also conflicted regarding the teaching of translation theory to students. Although 68.4% (n=117) thought that learning translation theory is valuable (see Figure 6.21), TS was described, nevertheless, as “nonsense” [P-S-23] and “separated from the real world” [P-S-103]. Collectively, these observations regarding entrepreneurialism, managing businesses and the application of theory support Jemielity’s (2018) argument that a “great divide” exists between TS and professional practice in that students are not always provided with the full professional reality of the translation industry.

To address the aforementioned limitations, an increasing number of translator education institutions are now adopting Situated Learning approaches (see González-Davies and Raído, 2018; Buysschaert et al., 2018; van Egdom et al., 2020 for some studies on Situating Learning in the translation classroom), exposing students to simulated work environments and tasks. In light of the argument that developing translator competence is nurtured though the translator’s involvement in actual translation experiences (Kiraly, 2013; see also Figure 2.6 for PACTE’s (2000) translation competence acquisition model), this immersive, simulated and context-driven approach to learning is arguably what students need to familiarise themselves with real-life professional demands and with translation custom and practice (i.e. market conditions, finances, resources, trends and traditions etc.) (González-Davies and Raído, 2018). STBs typically involve students setting up and running their own fictitious translation

companies (Konttinen and Salmi, 2025) for the purpose of encouraging student to think and act like competent professionals (González-Davies and Raído. 2018). In other words, STBs offer a solution for students to enhance their industry knowledge and to gain practical and relevant experience in project management, service provision, translation, revision, post-editing and in using translation technologies (Konttinen and Salmi, 2025). Despite the professional benefits of STBs, Lambert and Walker (2022) explain, however, that simulated learning in translator training is not as abundant as one might expect, at least in the UK (see also Section 2.4.3 for the challenges in running STBs).

Nevertheless, education institutions appear to be more proactive in equipping students with the technical skills that are required to remain competitive in the contemporary translation market. To elaborate, certain segments of work, namely PEMT, web, game and software localisation, and audiovisual translation (AVT), have become much more in demand in recent times. In other words, translating online content, audiovisual material, and software applications, in addition to using terminology management systems and localising, increase the pressure on translators to gain the technical skills needed to secure projects involving these file types and activities (Al-Batineh and Tenaijy, 2024; Esfandiari and Ebrahimi, 2025). Fortunately, the EMT framework was last updated in 2022 to reflect the new priorities of European translation programmes, i.e. to prepare graduates for a "dynamic and highly technologized workplace" (EMT, 2022, p.2; see also Section 2.4.1.1 for literature on competence models). Essentially, it is now common for universities, at least within a European context, to incorporate modules or develop entire programmes dedicated to, for instance, PEMT, terminology management, localisation and AVT. In this vein, translator training in Europe certainly strives to provide trainees with the relevant training to become competent translators in what is a very technologised industry, but translator training in general falls short, as depicted by the arguments in the preceding paragraphs, in preparing their students in thinking and acting like entrepreneurs, an asset that is indispensable in order to commercially succeed as a freelance translator (Jenner and Jenner, 2010).

Additionally, the crux of SDG4 is that one should engage in quality training in order to find decent employment that pays well. Unfortunately, my findings suggest that many practitioners were unconvinced that possessing translation qualifications correlates with the automatic or successful acquisition of respectable work, clients and particularly income. In fact, a significant proportion of the practitioners hold formal qualifications in translation or in related disciplines such as modern languages (see Figure 4.1), and while they generally regarded their education as useful for developing the foundations to translate at a high standard, recurring themes drawn from the results reported and discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are the realities of "customer instability" [P-S-131] and a "lack of work at certain times" [P-S-120], in addition to financial insecurities in the form of persistent haggling from "bottom-feeding" [P-S-42] and "unscrupulous" [P-S-48] translation agencies, and low rates that do not correspond with the expertise and value of a professional translator (see also Section 5.3.1

for discussion on practitioner-client relationships and Section 7.3.4 for discussion on sustainable employment). As such, translator training can certainly facilitate the prospect of setting oneself up as a competent translator, but such a qualification may not guarantee a consistent workload or maximise the possibility of receiving a decent and satisfying income.

As evidenced by the results reported in Section 6.3 and in response to this present discussion, SDG4 within a translation context has only been partially met. The practitioner findings coupled with previous studies on translator training (see Section 2.4) indicate that formal training and development opportunities are widely available and that they can, indeed, emphasise one's professionalism and commitment to their chosen profession as well as enhance one's ability to translate. In this vein, the professionalisation criterion pertaining to establishing formal and academic routes to the profession has been fulfilled in a translation context (see Table 3.3 for a breakdown of each criterion) given that students can earn an undergraduate or a postgraduate degree in translation, and this is in addition to the fact that other professional-led qualifications, such as CertTrans and DipTrans are also attainable. However, although university programmes equip students with all of the relevant technical skills and are beginning to modify their teaching approaches by incorporating simulations of real-world translation tasks into the classroom, the practitioners felt, nonetheless, that university training in particular is "just a dry piece of paper" [P-S-17] that neither guarantees a lucrative and productive career nor adequately equips students with the business mindset that is paramount to commercially succeed as a professional translator in the premium market.

6.4.2.2 Translation Qualifications as a Signalling Device

The signalling approach (i.e. a theory that is based on the premise that one party conveys some information about the status of its competence to another party) argues that the professionalisation of translation, unlike other well-recognised practices such as medicine and law, should not be about restricting the activity and controlling who can or cannot be paid for a service (Sulaiman et al., 2024; see also Section 3.3.2.2). Rather, it should be about the development of efficient competence-signalling mechanisms (Pym et al., 2012). It is important to reiterate that in a free market setting, such as translation, employers and clients are in control over who they wish to employ (Pym et al., 2012), and following the logic of the signalling approach, the ideal candidate would be an experienced translator who displays various efficient signals including, for instance, recognised qualifications. That being said, competition between practitioners and less qualified translators exists because, according to the practitioners, certain types of clients do not enforce barriers or minimum standards (i.e. mandatory qualifications) in order to filter the unqualified and the inexperienced from the qualified and the experienced, indicating that certain clients perhaps seek signals other than recognised qualifications.

For instance, as discussed in the review of literature pertaining to the platform economy (see Section 2.2.2), the prerequisites for joining these platforms as a linguist are minimal and only seem to be knowledge of two languages, an internet connection, a device to work from, and an e-mail address (Fırat, 2021; Fırat et al., 2024). In turn, those without attested professional translation experience or proof of translation qualifications are able to join such platforms and campaign for work. This observation aligns with the practitioner commentary in that the practitioners highlighted that there are “way too many scammers on translation platforms” [P-S-96]. Traditionally, a candidate’s suitability for a role is likely to be judged based on their professional and educational backgrounds. However, in relation to the translation projects available on digital labour platforms, projects are often automatically allocated to translators on a first-come-first-served basis or through an algorithm that considers aspects such as previous translation performance, availability, rates and reputational scores (Cukur, 2024). Therefore, within the context of online translation platforms, projects are not necessarily assigned based on whoever is more suitably qualified on paper. Rather, reputation can be considered a stronger signal than qualifications alone on the basis that translators participating on translation platforms rely on wielding a very good reputation in order to position themselves as more likely to secure projects.

Moreover, Cukur (2024, p.55) hypothesis that if “platformisation” continues to rise in the translation industry, then “conventional LSPs” might become increasingly pressured to implement similar practices, meaning that this would encourage an emphasis on speed, low costs, and availability rather than on experience, training and quality. The practitioner commentary pertaining to translation agencies’ recruitment practices supports this claim, suggesting that securing projects with such clients does not necessarily revolve around traditional criteria such as providing evidence of previous professional experience and qualifications. In fact, 57.9% (n=99) of practitioners believed that translation agencies do not recruit qualified professionals only (see Figure 6.15). As depicted by the results in Section 6.2, the practitioners suspected that translation agencies are tending to overlook practitioners with translation qualifications charging rates in line with their expertise and the quality of their work in pursuit of cheaper and quicker translators. The practitioners proceeded to report that qualifications and certifications do not guarantee work, especially with agencies, speculating that agencies prioritise cost over quality and so all one must do to secure projects with such clients is to offer low rates and quick turnaround times. In this vein, qualified translators “still get denied agency work […] effectively rendering […] qualifications redundant in those instances” [P-S-165].

Given the practitioners’ account of recruitment and assignment practices of translation agencies and online translation platforms, it was unsurprising to find that 64.3% (n=110) of practitioners believed that the separation between professional translators and amateur translators has become blurred in recent times (see Figure 6.8). In other words, the verification of translation qualifications is becoming an inefficient signal that has contributed

towards market disorder (see Section 6.4.4 for discussion on professional control). Although certifications and academic qualifications in translation constitute efficient signals of competence and knowledge, they are simply not necessary in order to perform translation or to enter the translation profession, failing, in part, to reinforce professional exclusivity.

Nevertheless, it is important to accentuate that lacking formal qualifications in translation does not equate to being a less competent translator. Despite the pedagogical milestones to systemise translators' expertise and to promote professionalism and professionalisation, many practitioners believed that "you can become a good translator without [translator training]" [P-S-150], with 63.7% (n=109) of practitioners agreeing or strongly agreeing that a formal qualification in translation is not necessary if you have acquired enough relevant experience (see Figure 6.19). In fact, having "an excellent background in [a] field (e.g. medicine, finance)" was argued to be more valuable [P-S-116] than a background in just translation as it is "very important to be a subject matter expert" if you want to succeed at specialised translation [P-FG1-1] or meet the expectations of the premium translation market. All things considered, the acquisition of translation certifications and qualifications may not be that strong or important of a signal as it perhaps could be because not only are they not a prerequisite to be able to secure projects with certain translation agencies and on certain translation platforms, but because it is also possible to integrate into the professional translation market as a competent translator without pursuing specialised training in translation.

6.4.3 Proactivity of UK Translator Associations

The network of professional translator associations and communities is evidently vast. There are already national (e.g. CIOL, ATA, TAC, SFT) and international translator (and interpreter) (e.g. IAPTI and FIT) associations, in addition to online translator communities (e.g. ProZ and Translators Café) as well as associations which cater to specific groups of translators and translation researchers[23]. Although not every practitioner is a member of a professional association (see Section 4.1.1.4.1 which reveals that 80.7% (n=138) of practitioners were a member of at least one association at the time of the survey) or may have the desire to obtain a membership, a membership is one of the clearest ways through which a practitioner can signal elements of perceived professionalism (Pym et al., 2012). In support of this, 86% (n=147) of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed that translator associations enhance the

[23] For example, IATIS (the International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies) is a forum designed to enable scholars from different regional and disciplinary backgrounds to debate issues relating to translation and other forms of intercultural communication, EST (the European Society for Translation Studies) is an international non-profit organisation that promotes research of translation, interpreting, and localisation, and TWB (Translators without Borders) is a non-profit organisation that was set up to provide translation services for humanitarian purposes or for non-profits.

professional image of translators (see Figure 6.7). In other words, the breadth of professional associations and communities, alongside high levels of practitioner engagement and strong belief in their role in enhancing professional image, suggests that the professionalisation criterion relating to the nurturing of a professional culture and organised professional bodies is largely fulfilled in the case of translation (see Table 3.3 for a breakdown of each criterion). While membership is not universal, the visibility and influence of these associations indicate that they play a central role in sustaining a collective professional identity.

Professional associations have a lot to offer their members (Cornelius, 2025), and by taking a closer look at the services and resources that a sample of translator associations extend to the translator community, we will be able to, in turn, ascertain the ways in which practitioners can professionally profit from their memberships. For the purposes of this present discussion, ITI and CIOL will serve as case studies given that the greatest proportion of practitioner survey respondents identified as UK-based translators (see Section 4.1.1.4.1 for practitioner demographic results) and there is therefore a fair chance that many of the practitioner survey comments in Section 6.1.3 pertained to the aforementioned associations. However, it is important to bear in mind that the below commentary may not completely align with the professional associations that exist outside of the UK.

Indeed, it cannot be ignored that several fees must be incurred when becoming a member to either association (i.e. application fees, assessment fees, annual fees) and this alone may dissuade prospective members from joining either of the communities. Despite the financial commitment, memberships offer various benefits, such as designations (e.g. MITI, MCIL), access to CoCs, discounts on training, products and insurance, as well as unrestricted access to webinar libraries. By engaging with, for example, the offered CPD and learning opportunities, members can boost their professional profiles and ensure that their skills remain current and relevant. Likewise, being allowed to use designations bestows professional credibility to the holder. In these ways, memberships are clearly beneficial. However, it is important to note that some of the courses and workshops offered by CIOL and ITI, for example, are paywalled, even for members. As such, when taking into account membership, application and assessment fees, then such training offered by associations may often become an expensive add-on to an already expensive membership (Walker and Lambert, 2022).

Despite the resources and services that associations offer to their members, the practitioner results revealed that a minority of practitioners had reservations regarding associations' management of the AI phenomenon. Understandably, the integration of AI into the translation industry is a cause of concern given the popular narrative that MT and AI are considered capable of replacing professional human translators and given the consequences that this perception has on the demand for their professional judgement (see Section 2.1.2 for literature on AI in translation). Therefore, one of the biggest challenges facing associations is how to address the real and perceived threats posed by advanced technologies (Cornelius,

2025). That being said, at the time of writing this thesis, both CIOL and ITI had sections of their websites dedicated to providing updates on the use of AI in the language industry[24]. Additionally, the aforementioned ITI Coffee House initiative is a series of seminars that was launched in order to engage practitioners in a range of open discussions relating to ethics and technology, including topics relating to issues with AI in an interpreting context and evolving translation technologies. Furthermore, both associations responded to this threat to the profession (see Section 7.2.1 for threats to the profession) by asserting that the deployment of AI is, indeed, inevitable, but that this development is creating new opportunities for translators and for translation companies. They accentuated that AI still has its limitations, and as such, the human translator will continue to be essential with linguists' skills (i.e. MTPE and interpretation of culturally specific texts) becoming even more valuable than ever. In other words, both CIOL and ITI have recognised the issues relating to AI and they are responding to them not only by engaging the translator community in discussions on the subject matter (e.g. CIOL's roundtable discussions on Generative AI, ITI's Artificial Intelligence Working Group meetings and ITI's Coffee House) and displaying information about the phenomenon on their respective websites (e.g. CIOL's whitepaper on AI[25]), but also by offering training on ways to handle the technology (e.g. as of January 2025, ITI has scheduled events and training relating to AI). As such, claims that associations are not doing enough to protect the profession against AI are not wholly justified within the context of UK associations who appear to be recognising their members and championing their value during an era where the necessity of a human translator may be questioned. Nevertheless, it is worth bringing to the fore the possibility that associations could enhance their outreach by engaging actively with stakeholders outside the translation profession, such as businesses in other sectors (e.g. hospitality, technology), chambers of commerce or even government agencies, to increase the visibility of professional translators and to raise awareness of the value of professional translation services.

My findings on the practitioners' experiences with associations revealed that complaints were also made in relation to associations not being vocal enough regarding the prevention of price-dumping (see Section 6.1.3). Both CIOL and ITI are openly vocal about the issues pertaining to AI, however, the same reaction was not demonstrated regarding the ongoing reality of falling rates. As previously mentioned, working for reasonable fees is a key component to demonstrating loyalty to professional standards as per Chesterman's (2001) Hieronymic Oath (see Section 2.3.1), however, strategising for change with respect to rates is not straightforward given that the freelance sector often lacks the regulatory frameworks, often present in more traditional employment settings, that help ensure fair compensation. Additionally, according to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), the UK's primary consumer protection and competition regulator, associations are unable to, for example,

[24] ITI's webpage covering information on AI: https://www.iti.org.uk/discover/policy/artificial-intelligence.html; and CIOL's webpage listing sources that provide updates on AI: https://www.ciol.org.uk/ciol-ai-updates.
[25] CIOL's White Paper on AI in translation: https://www.ciol.org.uk/ciol-ai-voices

stipulate minimum rates or issue formal or informal pricing recommendations to their members due to competition laws which prohibit price-fixing and distorting competition[26]. In other words, freelancers are not entitled to the same remuneration rights as traditional workers (e.g. minimum wage). Similarly, according to the UK government's Health and Safety Executive, employers of traditional employment settings must provide welfare facilities as well as a working environment that is healthy and safe for everyone in the workplace. However, similarly to the case with remuneration, employers are not necessarily responsible for the working environments of freelancers. As such, freelance translators typically find themselves responsible not only for their physical working environments but also for their work patterns, their choice of rates, and the amount of work that they commit to. Unfortunately, freelance translators struggle with low status due to their perceived poor working conditions and low pay (Dam and Zethsen, 2012). Even so, professional translator associations mostly still operate as communities that focus on notions broadly relating to professional development rather than campaigning for policy changes regarding freelancers' employment rights (Pym, 2014). As such, unless efforts towards unionisation are made, associations are perhaps restricted in terms of what they can actively do to negotiate better pay and working conditions, and in turn, contribute to enhancing the perceived low status of the freelance translator community.

6.4.4 Maintaining Professional Control

6.4.4.1 Validation from society

Successful professionalisation in accordance with the power approach (i.e. professionalisation through the acquisition and maintenance of power, autonomy and control) relies on the foundation that a service is essential, exclusive and complex and that society validates this (Forsyth and Danisiewicz, 1985; see also Figure 3.1). Without society forming this set of beliefs, professional authority cannot be granted (Forsyth and Danisiewicz, 1985). In relation to the framework on (de-)professionalisation developed for this study (see Section 3.5), three interrelated elements are considered central to achieving professionalisation: securing societal recognition, maintaining professional exclusivity, and upholding authority over clients. Each of these elements is formalised as a distinct criterion within the professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3 for a breakdown of each criterion).

Chapter 5 highlights that translation services, whether human or automated, are essential to the functioning of multicultural societies. While the non-practitioner survey respondents validated human translation services as essential (see Figure 5.6), it is equally clear that MT and AI are in vogue and that both clients and general users can profit from them because of

[26] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/competition-law-dos-and-donts-for-trade-associations/what-do-trade-associations-need-to-know-about-competition-law

their accessibility and their time- and cost-effectiveness. As reflected by both the practitioner and non-practitioner findings, human translation services remain crucial for specialised content that cannot yet be entrusted to MT and AI, but such a service may not always be employed or be considered essential by certain clients and certain members of the general public especially in a "day-to-day environment" [NP-S-70] or in a "non-professional capacity" [P-FG1-4] or in relation to low-priority or general translations that can be independently addressed through automated solutions.

As discussed in Section 5.3.2, translation involves a degree of complexity considering the need to delegate tasks, whether to professional translators, translation technologies, or even amateurs and non-professionals. Although the non-practitioner survey respondents generally advocated that translation is a complex task (see Figure 5.11) requiring specialised skills (see Figure 5.7), the practitioner findings allude to client preferences gradually shifting towards MT and AI translation solutions in addition to certain clients developing the tendency to outsource work to amateurs and non-professionals. These trends contribute to the impression that translation isn't complex enough to necessitate professional intervention. Indeed, certain clients may favour automated solutions, particularly MT coupled with post-editing, due to the assumption that it offers faster and cheaper results than translating from scratch. Likewise, less qualified translators may be preferred due to their perceived flexibility in rates and turnaround times. These choices do not necessarily reflect a belief that translation is simple or fully automatable; rather, there is scope to assume that clients are driven by budgetary and time constraints and therefore need to be as cost-effective and as time efficient as possible. In either case, while the complexity of translation is not explicitly denied, the practitioners suspected that clients view it as a task that does not always demand professional intervention (see Section 5.3.2 for discussion on necessity and complexity of the service).

Regarding exclusivity, 57.9% (n=49) of non-practitioners indicated that they would, if appropriate, still trust bi-/multilinguals without translation qualifications with their translation needs (see Figure 6.18) and 47.1% (n=40) believed that anyone who speaks a second language can be considered a translator (see Figure 6.11). While not representative of all non-practitioner respondents, these findings imply that second language competence is still widely viewed as sufficient enough to be able perform translation whether professionally or casually. Additionally, the literature discussed in Section 2.1.1 reveals that translation is often performed by non-translators with the assistance of translation technologies, typically engaging in MT gisting (see Nurminen, 2018; 2025; Nurminen and Papula, 2018 etc.) whether it's for education or for leisure or to verify their own understanding of information in a different language (see Robertson et al. 2021; Nunes Vieira et al., 2023; Nurminen and Papula, 2018 etc.). This reinforces the argument that professional translators are not always perceived as requisite, particularly for low-priority, causal or general translations. This argument is further supported by some of the focus group participants who advocated that professional translation is not necessary for all situations, citing holiday planning, friendly email exchanges

and reading certain websites as examples when utilising MT without professional intervention is appropriate. In other words, even some of the focus group participants, who are professional translators themselves, defer to MT in everyday contexts. Meanwhile, my practitioner results reveal that many practitioners are under the impression that clients prioritise speed and cost-effectiveness, often delegating projects to amateurs and non-professionals and/or to MT or AI. Additionally, the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC), the UK's regulator for immigration advisors considers a suitable interpreter or translator as one who is "competent to provide such a service taking into account the client's needs and the nature of the matter to be conveyed", explicitly stating that "a family member or friend may be suitable to help support the client"[27]. In other words, even certain sectors of the UK government are openly advising the use of unqualified interpreters and translators in certain high-stake situations. Collectively, these observations imply that practitioners cannot claim exclusivity or monopoly over their service given that active non-professional translator communities exist (see Section 2.2 for summary of relevant literature and Section 6.2 for results relating to amateur and non-professional translators) and that deferring to those less qualified, or even to MT and AI, is deemed acceptable and is practised in both low- and certain high-stake settings.

Given these realities, the foundation of the power approach (i.e. that the service area is essential, exclusive and complex and that society validates this) has simply not been established. On the one hand, the non-practitioner survey respondents validated human translation services as essential and complex, supporting the fulfilment of the criterion of securing societal recognition. On the other hand, it is implied that certain types of clients are not as validating in these regards. Moreover, the results reported throughout Chapters 5 and 6, coupled with this present discussion, postulate that a significant proportion of the non-practitioner survey respondents, certain types of clients and even certain sectors of the UK government do not fully endorse the need for full professional exclusivity, another key criterion. Instead, there appears to be a degree of acceptance regarding the use of automated solutions as well as amateur and non-professional translators under certain circumstances. With respect to clients of translation services specifically, although many clients still "invest in good translators" [P-S-54] and "care for their text enough to ask for quality" [P-S-36], my findings indicate, nevertheless, that a shift is taking place whereby amateur and non-professional translators are successfully securing projects particularly with translation agencies and that MT and AI are becoming increasingly relied on because they are now "good enough […] without human input" [P-S-60], both of which are scenarios that fuel the narrative that "translators are over-hyped or unnecessary" [P-S-69], and thereby challenging the criterion of upholding authority over clients. On the back of the non-practitioner dispositions and the apparent attitudes of clients discussed above, there is not enough evidence to suggest that society as a whole fully and explicitly validates the notion of human translation as a highly

[27] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/interpreters-and-translators-oisc-practice-note/interpreters-and-translators#translators

complex and indispensable service that should be practised exclusively by trained professionals.

6.4.4.2 Power Over Clients

From the power perspective, and as depicted by the professionalisation criteria devised for this thesis (see Table 3.3 for a breakdown of each criterion), professionalisation relies on the amount of power, control, influence and authority that practitioners wield over their clients (see Section 3.1.2 for an overview of the power approach to professionalisation). If a shift in power between practitioners and their clients occurs then certain properties of a profession, such as those relating to monopoly, autonomy and authority, can subsequently be affected (Haug, 1972; 1975; Toren, 1975).

On the basis of my findings, although the average practitioner is likely to display various efficient signals, such as relevant qualifications, attested work experience and membership of an association (see Section 4.1.1.4.1 for practitioner demographic results), and thus boast a strong professional identity, the power relations that govern practitioner-client relationships, particularly collaborations with translation agencies, are reportedly becoming increasingly imbalanced as a result of disempowerment and threats to translators' agency.

As outlined in Section 5.3.1, the practitioner commentary suggests that clients of translation services are profiting from the availability and the capabilities of modern translation technologies. In particular, CAT tools, online platforms and MT have facilitated deeper client involvement in the translation process, not only granting them greater control over the practical and financial conditions that influence how their translation requirements are fulfilled, but also enabling them to micromanage. Notably, modern CAT tools (especially cloud-based tools) are often designed to be used by clients too, incorporating features such as client-server interfaces that enable collaboration, project oversight, and progress monitoring. On top of this, clients "dictate" [P-S-41] which CAT tools their vendors should use and how they should translate. Likewise, online translation platforms "move control from the translator to the purchaser" [P-S-23], offering clients real-time progress updates and access to reputational scores of the translators. This increased oversight has led some translators to feel micromanaged, with clients reportedly "looking over my shoulder, checking when, how, how long for, etc. I work on a project" [P-S-31]. Moreover, many practitioners expressed concern about the growing pressure to accept post-editing workflows, which they view as reducing their professional discretion and driving down costs. Refusing such requests risks losing clients in an increasingly competitive market, which one practitioner described as "leaving translators to their own luck" [P-S-163].

Setting aside their impact on professional agency and on client relations, it is equally important to clarify, in brief, how online platforms, CAT tools and MT also contribute in distinct

ways to the wider processes of (de-)professionalisation. CAT tools function as an assistive technology which are primarily adopted by professional translators, require a degree of expertise and training to use effectively, and are widely associated with quality assurance, consistency and productivity. In this vein, CAT tools appear to support the idea of professional practice by reinforcing the need for certain specialised skills (i.e. technological competences) and by assisting translators in meeting industry standards as well as the expectations set by the client. The influence of online platforms, by contrast, lies more in the ways that they restructure recruitment, pricing, workflows and project allocation, often prioritising speed, availability and cost over qualifications and experience, thereby weakening professional autonomy and control. MT and AI represent a different trajectory altogether, directly challenging the perceived necessity, complexity and exclusivity of human translation. Although MT and AI can be integrated into professional workflows, their widespread accessibility and improving performance democratise translation and encourage the perception that translation can be performed without professional expertise. In this sense, CAT tools, online platforms and MT are not only influencing practitioner-client relationships and thus the extent of professional agency, but they are also contributing to (de-)professionalisation in a broader sense in distinct ways: CAT tools reinforce the need to become technologically-competent in order to meet industry standards and client needs; online platforms are reconfiguring workflows and professional roles, giving clients greater control over project specifications; and MT and AI risk undermining professional boundaries and expertise (see also Section 7.3.5 for a discussion on how each of these technologies distinctly contribute to de-professionalisation).

While translators may retain some influence over the workflow, their professional agency is, nevertheless, eroding. Rates and turnaround times are often negotiated so that they favour the clients' budget and time constraints, and clients are exerting greater influence over project specifications, including the tools, methods, and resources used. In these ways, many practitioners reported struggles to exert professional authority regarding workflow management and remuneration, especially when dealing with more demanding and technology-driven clients.

6.4.4.3 Power Over Subordinates

From the power perspective, and again as depicted by the professionalisation criteria devised for this thesis (see Table 3.3 for a breakdown of each criterion), professionalisation also relies on the amount of control that practitioners wield over subordinate groups (e.g. paraprofessionals, amateurs, non-professionals). Although memberships of professional associations and the acquisition of translation qualifications signal quality, professionalism, and commitment to the profession, and they are factors that should, hypothetically, filter the "hobbyists" [P-FG1-4] from the committed and the professional, at the same time, they are

not pre-requisites to be able to identify as a professional translator and/or to offer translation services in a professional context.

Moreover, non-professional translator communities exist. As reviewed in the summary of literature in Section 2.2, the last decade has witnessed an increasing number of individuals, who may not possess professional translation experience or translation qualifications but flaunt adequate fluency in a foreign language, volunteer their linguistic and cultural knowledge online. In particular, the translation industry has experienced a rise in amateur and non-professional contributions in the areas of collaborating with translation agencies and of the platform economy (see Section 2.2.2), as well as in non-profit translation approaches, namely free crowdsourcing and volunteerism (see Section 2.2.1) and fan translation (see Section 2.2.3).

In the context of online translation platforms, the pre-requisites for joining many of them as a linguist are minimal (Fırat, 2021; Jiménez-Crespo, 2021; see also Section 2.2.2 for literature on platform economy). If such is the case, then this aligns with the practitioners' speculation that they are increasingly forced to compete with "scammers" [P-S-96] who exploit these platforms by offering low rates and rapid turnaround times to secure projects. If access to such platforms was truly restricted to those with approved qualifications and demonstratable professional experience, then the level of competition from those who may neither be trained or experienced nor professional or ethical would decrease. In turn, adjusting the recruitment and project assignment criteria on these platforms could, therefore, help elevate the standards and reputation of the profession while also ensuring fairer opportunities and remuneration for qualified and experienced translators.

Similarly, the practitioner results reported in Section 6.2 reveal that even translation agencies are increasingly compromising on quality by developing a tendency to delegate work to those who can fulfil requests as quickly and as cheaply as possible. According to the practitioners, this pursuit of cheaper and quicker translators, primarily amongst translation agencies based in the Anglophone world or in Europe, is often realised by delegating to local translators who are not suitably qualified or experienced, or even to translators, qualified or not, based in countries with a lower cost of living who can ultimately afford to work in return for lower rates. The practitioners reported that they have felt the repercussions of this globally competitive free market, not only remarking that quality is suffering as a consequence, but also that market rates are being severely undercut and that it has become much harder in recent times to negotiate decent rates and turnaround times.

As implied, the amateur and non-professional translator community is thriving, primarily as a result of the internet, the presence of translation technologies and the lack of formal measures that control recruitment and admission to the profession facilitating the prospect of practically anyone being able to equip themselves with the tools required to translate

(Gümüş, 2024) whether professionally or casually. As such, it was unsurprising to have found that over 40% of the practitioner survey respondents did not believe that professional translators can withstand competition from and maintain autonomy over the increasing contributions of amateurs and non-professionals (see Figure 6.14) given the reality that non-professional translator communities exist and volunteer their services, as well as the fact that practically anyone can set themselves up and identify and practise as a professional translator.

6.4.4.4 Image Building

In response to the lack of societal recognition and of professional monopoly, Forsyth and Danisiewicz (1985) state that image building activities (i.e. efforts to display that the service area is essential, exclusive and complex), such as establishing associations and enforcing ethical values, are essential in order to convince society that the service is, indeed, essential, complex, and should be handled by trained professionals only. In fact, as evidenced by the results reported in Section 6.1, adhering to ethical values, whether personal values or CoCs established by professional bodies, and joining professional networks as committed members are already common practices amongst professional translators. However, despite these efforts, my results and this discussion indicate that societal recognition, particularly amongst certain clients, are still lacking, with the practitioners also reporting that they feel overshadowed by amateurs and non-professionals and that their skills and contributions are always being overlooked and undervalued by their clients and by the wider public. Further image building is, therefore, recommended in order to showcase that translation is, indeed, an essential service that demands professional input in order to complete specialised activities. Yet, the potential for successful image building is constrained by two key limitations: translation is simply not an exclusive profession and that the practitioners lack agency and control. These challenges are unlikely to be resolved given the current landscape of the translation industry which is characterised by an inherent lack of regulation, a growing presence of amateur and non-professional translators and translation practices, an ongoing expansion of automated translation solutions, and that modern translation tools are catered to serve clients too (see also Section 5.3.4 for discussion on the current landscape of the translation industry).

All things considered, translation is, in Forsyth and Danisiewicz's (1985) terms, a mimic profession (i.e. a profession with unsuccessful societal recognition that needs to engage with image building activities). Not only do the practitioners lack power, authority and control over the organisation and conditions of the service, their clients, subordinate groups and their profession as a whole, but they have also been unsuccessful at winning full validation from both the general public and their clients of the fact that human translation is complex and essential and that it should be performed by trained professionals only. According to the practitioners, the lack of validation from the general public and clients ultimately stems from the belief that "people think they don't need professionals anymore" [P-S-24], a disposition

that arose as a result of widespread amateur and non-professional contributions within both interpreting and translation contexts, as well as "machine translation […] reducing demand across the board" [P-S-19]. Indeed, image building efforts are apparent, such as the existence of professional networks and of ethical codes, but the practitioners are still a long way from wielding full control over and validation of their service and thus reaching and solidifying the status of a semi-profession (i.e. a profession with successful societal recognition and some, but not full, autonomy from clients and/or from employing organisations).

The following section analyses the professionalisation of translation from the perspective of the professionalisation criteria developed specifically for this thesis (see Table 3.3 for a breakdown of each criterion). By systematically aligning the empirical findings and discussions presented thus far against these criteria, the following analysis provides an original contribution to literature by identifying which professional attributes are demonstrated within translation and assessing the extent to which translation is professionalised through the lens of this study's framework (see Section 3.5 for an overview of the framework). This approach not only consolidates the results previously discussed, but also offers a structured, theory-informed framework for evaluating the professionalisation of translation, allowing for a clearer and more nuanced understanding of translation's current status as a profession.

6.4.5 Summarising Translation's Constellation of Professional Traits

Whether it's through pursuing translator training and CPD to improve their overall skillset and to further their professional careers, adhering to professional ethical behaviour, or becoming a member of a professional translator association, the practitioners of this study take various measures to improve their own professional standing and to signal their professionalism. Given the rise of amateur and non-professional translators, who are seemingly encroaching on the professional sphere of translation by collaborating with translation agencies and competing for projects on online translation platforms, it is unsurprising that practitioners take pride in and reinforce their professionalism in order to distinguish and separate themselves from the growing body of less qualified translators. However, just because the individual practitioners take measures to construct a strong professional identity for themselves, this does not necessarily mean that the profession itself is also able to enjoy a sustainably high professional status.

To ascertain the professional traits associated with translation, and thereby begin addressing RQ3 which concerns the extent to which translation is (de-)professionalised (see Section 8.1.3), we can refer back to this study's original framework on (de-)professionalisation of which a central component is the professionalisation criteria (see Section 3.5 for an overview of the framework) that were established by deconstructing various sociological theories and approaches for professionalisation to ascertain the most frequently recurring professional

attributes (see Section 3.1.4 for summary of professionalisation approaches; see also Table 3.3 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description). By articulating explicit criteria, this bespoke framework provides analytical clarity and enables a more systematic conceptualisation of the professionalisation of translation. As a reminder, the criteria are: sustaining a professional culture (ethical professional behaviour and the existence of professional translator communities), pursuing translator training and professional development (certifications, university degrees and CPD), campaigning for recognition of the profession (societal recognition and licensure procedures), and maintaining professional control (monopoly over the service-area, professional authority, and controlled admission to the profession).

The professional traits that can be associated with translation on the basis of my findings and the subsequent discussions are the existence of professional networks that bolster translators' professional image, the existence of professional and academic training that signals commitment and that a certain level of skill has been acquired, and the existence of CPD opportunities whereby the practitioners' commitment to lifelong professional development conveys dedication to the profession and to professional standards. However, some professional traits have only been partly acquired. These include, firstly, the acquisition of a specialised skillset that, while necessary for professional translation, does not necessarily need to encompass the ability to apply the theoretical knowledge typically taught in higher education institutions. Secondly, ethical and professional values tend to be guided by individuals' personal values rather than by a binding and regulatory CoC. Thirdly, the profession has not yet acquired full recognition from the general public and certain clients, who may fail to fully and explicitly acknowledge that translation is not only essential and complex, but also a task that should be entrusted exclusively to trained professionals. Meanwhile, the professional traits requiring the most development centre on securing formal recognition of the profession, as well as establishing and maintaining professional exclusivity and professional authority in practitioner-client relationships.

According to the trait approach, which views professionalisation as the accumulation of specific attributes, translation has made notable progress and can be placed within the realm of an emerging profession, namely an occupation that exhibits evidence of having acquired some professional attributes yet still lacks full professional autonomy. This status and further progression are, however, conditional on accumulating additional attributes. Achieving this may involve efforts towards unionisation and introducing public sanctions and licensure procedures[28] to secure further recognition of the profession, enforcing stricter regulation regarding recruitment and entrance to the profession as a means to establish a degree of

[28] Although CIOL can issue chartered status, it refers to "Chartered Linguist" (CL) as opposed to "Chartered Translator". A CL could, therefore, be a translator, an interpreter, a language, translation or interpreting teacher at either a secondary school or university, a translation or interpreting project manager, or even a frequent user of languages at a high level in business, industry or the government.

professional exclusivity, or even establishing a sense of professional authority in practitioner-client relationships. This conclusion aligns with the outcome from the power perspective discussed in Section 6.4.4, with emphasis placed on the need to convince society of the necessity, complexity and exclusivity of translation services, and for translators to gain and maintain authority over all aspects of the service and the profession. Without sustained image building, professional authority and public validation, translation risks remaining a mimic profession. These findings echo the analyses made by Tyulenev (2015) and Gümüş (2024), who argue that while translation is on the path to professionalisation, it has not yet achieved full professional status (see Section 3.4 for previous theorisations of translation as a profession).

However, as explained in Section 6.4.4 and as concluded by Gümüş (2024), maintaining professional exclusivity, or professional closure in Gümüş' (2024) terms, remains out of reach due to the inherent lack of regulation and the increasing integration of amateur and non-professional translators into the professional sphere of translation. Similarly, translators' limited agency, particularly when collaborating with translation agencies and on translation platforms, makes full control over the workflow and remuneration unlikely. While my non-practitioner results indicate some recognition of translation as a specialised and essential service, there is no guarantee that this evaluation will endure especially in the wake of ever-enhancing and democratised automated translation solutions. Meanwhile, there is little evidence that all types of clients fully and explicitly recognise the value and contributions of professional translators. As such, this thesis argues that the professionalisation of translation is currently suspended on the basis that further professionalisation is unlikely under the current circumstances. Further professionalisation is only achievable with full societal recognition, stricter regulation of entry and quality standards, and greater practitioner control over all aspects (internal and external) of their profession, including clients, workflow, remuneration and subordinate groups.

This chapter has reported and discussed the results that enabled us to depict the ideal professional translator in addition to the factors that facilitate or inhibit professionalisation. The following chapter reports the third theme of results, made up of two sub-themes, that pertain to evaluating the sustainability of the translation profession and whether it is at risk of de-professionalisation.

7 Theme Three: Sustainability of the Translation Profession

This chapter evaluates the sustainability of the translation profession. Sub-theme one presents the practitioners' job security (Section 7.1), reporting results relating to the practitioners' motivation to become a translator and their overall job satisfaction (Section 7.1.1), whether they have ever considered leaving the profession (Section 7.1.2), their reasons for job precarity (Section 7.1.3), as well as measures currently in place to protect the profession (Section 7.1.4). Sub-theme two concerns the risk of translation becoming de-professionalised (Section 7.2), reporting results relating to the general threats to the profession (Section 7.2.1), the level of risk of de-professionalisation from the perspective of the practitioners (Section 7.2.2), as well as the triggers of de-professionalisation (Section 7.2.3). This chapter closes with a discussion of the results, exploring the deskilling of translation (Section 7.3.1), whether bilingualism is enough to translate (Section 7.3.2), an hypothesis of the future of human translation services (Section 7.3.3), and sustainable employment (Section 7.3.4) before closing with an evaluation of the extent to which translation is at risk of becoming de-professionalised (Section 7.3.5).

7.1 Sub-Theme: Job Security

7.1.1 Motivation to Become a Translator and Job Satisfaction

When prompted, the practitioners detailed what inspired them become a translator. The most frequently cited motivator was intrinsic in nature, namely having a strong passion, love, enjoyment and interest for languages, translation and communication (57.3%, n=98). Additional sources of motivation revolved around the prospects of utilising one's natural aptitude for languages and translation (16.4%, n=28) in addition to benefitting from and enjoying a freelance lifestyle (14.6%, n=25). Regarding the latter motivator, the practitioners specified independence, flexibility, accommodating to a family-orientated lifestyle, working from home and being one's own boss as the particular points of appeal of freelancing. Furthermore, being able to use language and translation related university degrees was another recurring motivator (15.2%, n=26). Essentially, many practitioners considered translation the ideal opportunity to directly make use of the knowledge and skills that they gained from their translation- and language-related qualifications in a professional context. Meanwhile, thirty-eight (22.2%) practitioners looked to translation as either an opportunity to try something new or because of a desire to change careers. Finally, for fourteen (8.2%) practitioners, their careers as translators occurred "by happenstance" [P-S-111] or they simply "fell into the profession" [P-S-26].

To gauge whether translation is a satisfying career (see also studies by Courtney and Phelan, 2019; Moorkens, 2020b; Rodríguez-Castro, 2015; 2024; Ruokonen and Svahn, 2024; Ruokonen et al., 2020; Pielmeier and O'Mara, 2020, Ruokonen and Mäkisalo, 2018; Sakamoto et al., 2024 etc.), the practitioners were asked to rate both their experience as a translator when they first started out and also their experience as a translator now (see Figure 7.1).

Half of the practitioners (50.3%, n=86) described their initial experiences as either satisfying or very satisfying, meanwhile only 4.1% (n=7) found no satisfaction at all. When reflecting on their current experiences, the proportion of positive ratings increased, with 66.4% (n=113) rating them as satisfying or very satisfying. However, 14.1% (n=24) expressed dissatisfaction, rating their current experiences as either not satisfying or not satisfying at all.

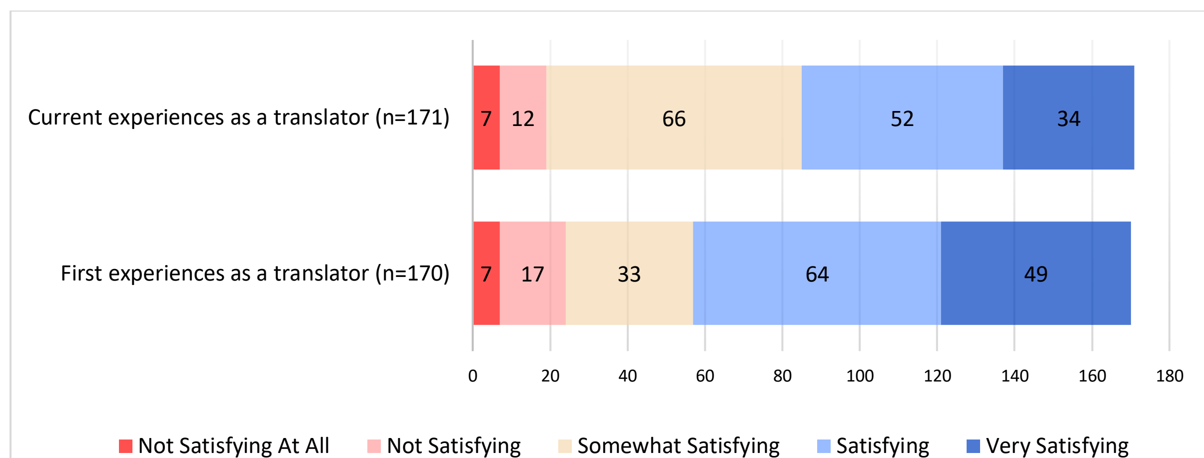

Figure 7.1: First and current experiences as a translator.

The practitioners elaborated on their experiences as translators and provided details on the key contributing factors towards positive experiences which can be summarised as: translation as a morally and an "exceptionally rewarding" [P-S-160] profession, translation as an "intellectually satisfactory" [P-S-65] activity, and as a result of the overall enjoyment and satisfaction that the practitioners have gained from their careers so far. At a more granular level, the practitioners cited a flexible lifestyle and the opportunity to specialise in interesting subjects as the factors that contribute towards satisfaction specifically. Despite "some ups and downs" [P-S-80] and despite "changes in technology" [P-S-19], many practitioners advocated that translation can still be a particularly rewarding and fulfilling career, especially when collaborating with clients who respect the efforts that are required to translate.

There were, however, an equal number of negative experiences that were shared by the practitioners and these pivoted around feelings of financial insecurity, lack of acknowledgement from clients and the general public, and uncertainty about the future of the profession. More specifically, translation was reported by the practitioners to be an "unsustainable profession" [P-S-52] that is characterised by a lack of regulation, clients who have poor MT literacy and are willing to compromise on linguistic quality for the sake of cost savings, a drop in work volume, increased competition, and difficulties to earn a decent living.

7.1.2 Leaving the Profession

When the practitioners were asked if they have ever considered leaving the profession (see Figure 7.2), the ratio between those who have considered leaving and those who have not considered leaving was almost 50/50. However, the difference between the observed frequencies is not statistically significant ($\chi^2[1]=0.15$, $p=0.702$, $\phi=0.03$). Surprisingly, even those who considered their current experiences as a translator either satisfying or very satisfying have previously considered leaving the translation profession. To elaborate, out of the 51.4% (n=88) practitioners who have previously contemplated their professional futures as translators, almost half (46.6%, n=41) rated their current experiences, nevertheless, as satisfying or very satisfying.

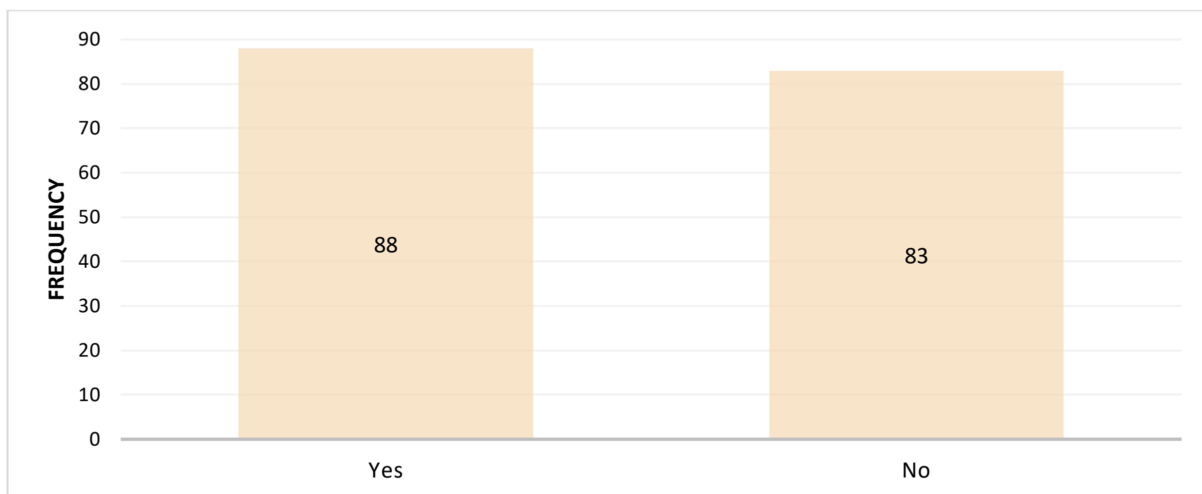

Figure 7.2: Considered leaving the profession (P, n=171).

When prompted, the practitioners elaborated on their reasons that justify why they have or have not considered leaving the profession. Three reasons for staying in the profession were put forward by the practitioners, the first of which is based on the ideas of benefitting from a freelance lifestyle and the ability to fit translation work around, for example, a second occupation, other interests, and/or family commitments (15.2%, n=26). In other words, the flexibility of the career in terms of setting one's own working hours and being one's own boss appeared to be particularly enticing. As per the practitioner survey commentary, the second reason for staying relates to income potential and consistent work volume. 15.2% (n=26) of practitioners specified that they are satisfied with their workload and that they earn a decent amount money for what they do. For this group of practitioners, their work volume and income potential have remained unaffected despite the recent global pandemic and the growth of translation technologies. The third and most frequently cited reason for staying in the profession relates to satisfaction. Simply put, 29.2% (n=50) of practitioners stated that they actively choose to stay in their profession because they have managed to establish a rewarding and satisfying career from engaging with work that they genuinely enjoy.

Several reasons for leaving the profession were also put forward, of which the most frequently cited reason concerns falling rates. 27.5% (n=47) of practitioners have considered leaving the profession because of insufficient earnings, in addition to a constant pressure, particularly from agencies, to reduce their rates. Essentially, this group of practitioners believed that it has become much harder in recent times to earn a decent living and that they are not paid near enough for what they are worth or for the work that they do. In addition to insufficient earnings and "chronic low pay" [P-S-52], challenging relationships with agencies and clients constituted another trigger that has led to practitioners questioning their future in translation (7.6%, n=13). In particular, it is the difficulty in finding respectable and well-paying clients, clients' poor MT literacy, and agencies' poor business practices (i.e. haggling over price and imposing MTPE work) that some practitioners no longer wish to tolerate. Furthermore, difficulty of distinguishing oneself in a competitive market, fear for the future of certain languages, a drop in work volume, a lack of career progression and stability, and general dissatisfaction were the additional challenges that have previously dissuaded some practitioners from remaining in the profession.

7.1.3 Reasons for Job Precarity

When discussing the future of the translation profession, some of the practitioner survey respondents and focus group participants exhibited strong feelings of insecurity. Reportedly, for some practitioners, it has been difficult to remain in the profession full-time since the pandemic, and also since Brexit for those who were based in the UK during the transition period. In light of these changes, 60.8% (n=104) of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed, however, with the statement that the freelance translation profession can withstand challenges and fully recover from future local and global setbacks such as lockdowns and recessions (see Figure 7.3). One practitioner justified this by explaining that translation is based on communication and communication never ceases, particularly during national and global crises. However, poor job security is apparently not a new phenomenon, and it is believed, by some practitioners, that job security is not completely bound by or influenced by what transpires in the world; rather, job security grows with experience.

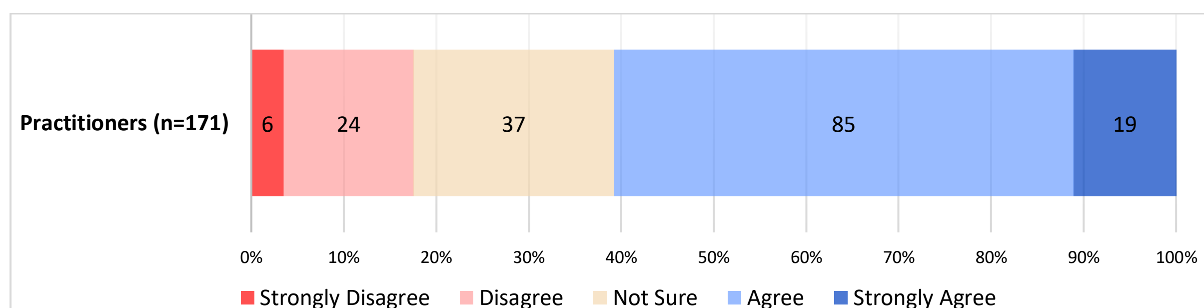

Figure 7.3: The freelance translation profession can withstand challenges and fully recover from future local and global setback (e.g. recession, pandemics, lockdowns etc.) (P, n=171).

That being said, a number of reasons were put forward by the practitioners to explain why they have been experiencing increasing moments of precarity. For instance, in addition to fears over the survival of certain languages and fears over being replaced by technology, “wage insecurity for freelancers is one of the main issues” [P-S-130]. Essentially, “there is no financial security” [P-S-163], income is “irregular” [P-S-113], and the rate of pay is “not sustainable at present” [P-S-147]. Similarly, the practitioners have also been experiencing “customer instability” [P-S-131] in the form of a “lack of work at certain times” [P-S-120] and that “there is a lot of stress as to when the next job will come in and from where” [P-S-147]. One practitioner was particularly worried about the translation profession coming “to an end” and whether the profession would “still be viable in another 25 years until” their retirement [P-S-61]. This commentary aligns with the result that almost the entire practitioner survey population (93.6%, n=160) thought that freelance translation is not a well-protected and secure career (see Figure 7.4). The difference between the observed frequencies is statistically significant ($\chi^2[1]=134.92$, $p < 0.001$), and the effect size is large ($\phi=0.89$). In short, translation was described as an “unsustainable profession” [P-S-52] and it is “not something to do if you need to make a living out of it” [P-S-34].

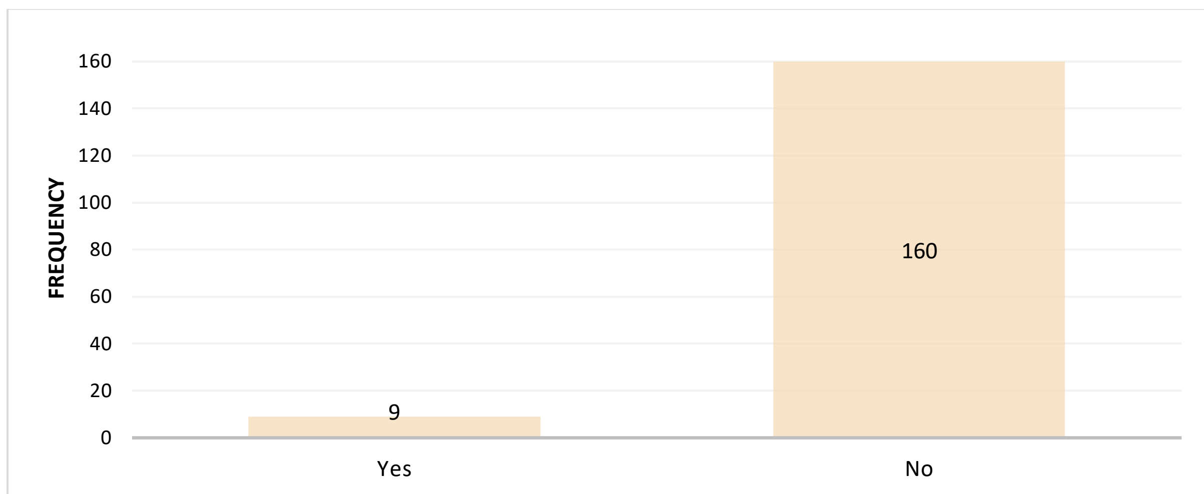

Figure 7.4: Freelance translation is a well-protected and secure career (P, n=169).

7.1.4 Measures to Protect the Profession

According to the practitioner commentary, as noted in Section 6.2, translation also suffers from a lack of regulation and that it is simply “not protected” [P-S-14]. This corresponds with the results that over three quarters (79.5%, n=136) of the practitioner survey respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that measures are in place to protect translators’ careers (see Figure 7.5).

A protected title was, however, considered essential and helpful by many practitioners, and would, therefore, be welcomed by them. To illustrate this, around two thirds (65.5%, n=112)

of the practitioner survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that legal requirements should be implemented in order to be able to use "Translator" as a job title (see Figure 7.5). More specifically, apart from financial protection in terms of establishing measures that enforce a basic income, the practitioners primarily called for professional protection against the growing number of amateur and non-professional translators who identify as professionals and participate in the profession (see Section 6.2 for more results relating to amateur and non-professional translators).

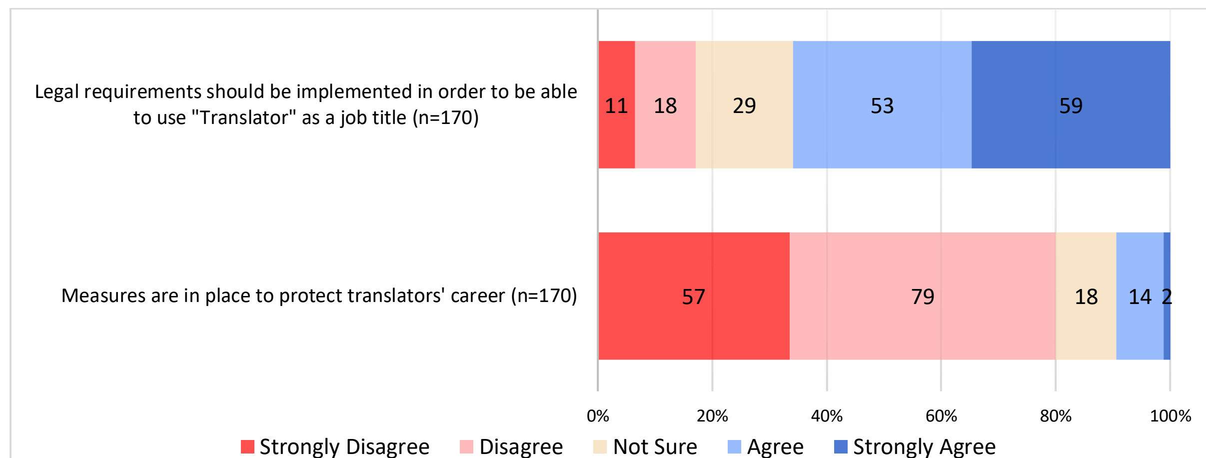

Figure 7.5: Legal requirements should be implemented in order to be able to use "Translator" as a job title (P, n=170) and measures are in place to protect translators' careers (P, n=170).

A significant number of practitioners also expressed doubt, nevertheless, over "how it could ever be made a legal requirement for translations to be carried out by a professional" [P-S-41]. Although some practitioners maintained that a protected title is essential and that "there is a growing need to establish a trade union" [P-S-79], others strongly questioned whether such efforts would be worth it, advocating that legal protection is "not a solution" [P-S-71]. To illustrate, one practitioner stated that "legal protection for a dying profession is silly" [P-S-23], meanwhile a further practitioner reckoned that a potential consequence would be that "people will come up with a synonym and continue to trade under that" [P-S-71].

7.2 Sub-Theme: Risk of De-Professionalisation

7.2.1 Threats to the Profession

As depicted by the practitioner survey commentary, the focus group discussions, and supporting statistics throughout this thesis, the translation industry has undergone significant change and continues to evolve in parallel with advancing technology and its impact on the professional, social and financial value of human translation services. Reflecting this shifting landscape, 80.1% (n=137) of practitioners indicated that they felt that freelance translation is under threat (see Figure 7.6). The difference between the observed frequencies is statistically

significant ($\chi^2[1]=65.24$, $p < 0.001$), and the effect size is large ($\phi=0.62$). Out of this group of practitioners (n=137), almost every practitioner (98.5%, n=135) also rejected the notion of freelance translation as a well-protected and secure career (see Figure 7.4).

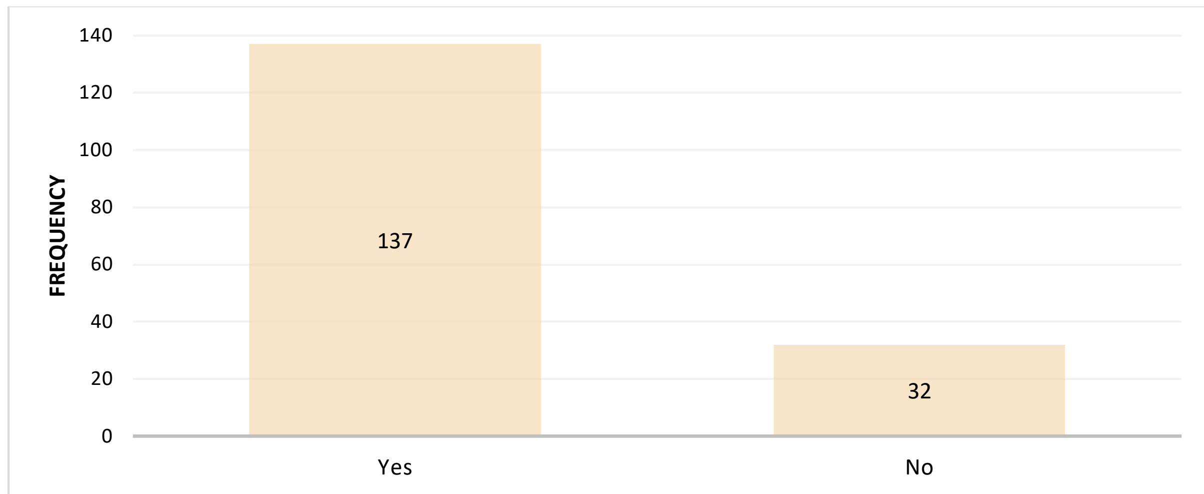

Figure 7.6: The freelance translation profession is under threat (P, n=169).

Various threats to the profession were discussed in the practitioner survey commentary. The most frequently cited threats were, by far, and perhaps unsurprisingly, overreliance on technology as well as poor MT literacy amongst clients and the general public (60.2%, n=103). Essentially, the "overuse" [P-S-2], "rise" [P-S-63], "increasing sophistication" [P-S-84], and "easy access" [P-S-168] of AI and MT technologies were the specific causes of concern in the eyes of the practitioners, who were also under the impression that their clients and the general public are misinformed about the effectiveness and quality of machine learning technologies. On this note, clients and the general public were regularly characterised by the practitioners as "ignorant about translation" [P-S-22] because of their apparent lack of understanding of the shortcomings of translation technologies in addition to their "implicit beliefs" [P-S-27] that anything performed digitally is more reliable and efficient than professional and experienced humans. As a result of the growing deployment of AI and MT and any subsequent "misconceptions" [P-S-34] about such technologies, the practitioners feared marginalisation because AI and MT are supposedly not only trusted and relied on by their clients, but they are also being used more frequently instead of commissioning a professional human translator. In turn, the practitioners predicted that increasing amounts of translation work will be swallowed by machine learning technologies, hence why AI and MT were labelled as serious threats to the profession (see Section 7.2.3 for translation technologies as contributors to de-professionalisation).

Furthermore, the practitioners criticised online translation platforms and crowdsourcing methods as well as translation agencies' recruitment practices for encouraging individuals, especially those who do not treat translation seriously or professionally, to enter the profession. This trend was reported by the practitioners to be damaging the image of professional translators and so amateur and non-professional translators were classified as an

additional threat to translation (19.3%, n=33). In particular, amateurs and bilinguals who "think that they qualify as translators" [P-S-165], "cheap, low quality human translators" [P-S-7], and "intruders" [P-S-115] were identified as the culprits who are responsible for the high levels of non-professional contributions that are currently present in the industry. In relation to crowdsourcing and those who participate in this type of work, one practitioner summarised that they "steal the true professionals' thunder and work opportunities" [P-S-31]. Translation agencies were also criticised for enabling this situation because they collaborate, according to the practitioners, with many unqualified and unskilled amateurs and non-professionals who offer derisory fees. With the spike of amateur and non-professional contributions, there is now "fierce competition from people who are not necessarily translators" [P-S-75] in addition to an "oversupply" [P-S-10] of translators to the point of "market oversaturation" [P-S-72]. Essentially, amateurs, and to a certain extent volunteers too, were argued to be "undermining professional [translators'] efforts" [P-S-29] by offering very low rates, lacking business skills and professionalism, treating translation as a side hustle, and supplying low-quality translations (see Section 7.2.3 for amateur and non-professional translators as contributors to de-professionalisation).

An overreliance on translation technologies and the growing presence of amateur and non-professional translators have created the "impression that translation isn't worth paying for" [P-S-5]. In response, the practitioners designated low rates and "budget restrictions" [P-S-164] as secondary threats to the profession (22.2%, n=38). On the one hand, the practitioners accused their clients and the general public of not being ready to pay decent rates because they were perceived to believe that AI and MT will do "everything better and faster" [P-S-66] and that they "do not understand why human translation costs what it does" [P-S-47]. In addition, translation agencies were also criticised for capitalising on the popularity of AI and MT and for creating a race to the bottom culture that was described by the practitioners as exploitative, "bottom-feeding" [P-S-42], and "predatory" [P-S-103]. On the other hand, amateurs and non-professionals "charge too little" [P-S-79] which is setting a new "benchmark for all translations" [P-S-147]. In turn, this has supposedly led to an undercutting of professional market rates and has also made it harder for established professionals to remain competitive, particularly on price. Indeed, every business looks for ways to cut costs, however, the practitioners were not only concerned that "translation is seen as an annoying extra that is begrudged" [P-S-147], but they also speculated that it is translation work that has fallen victim to being done as quickly and as cheaply as possible through the use of AI and MT or by commissioning amateur and non-professional translators (see Section 5.2.5 for more results about client relations).

The remaining, yet less frequently cited, threats can be summarised as: the implicit belief that those who speak a second language are automatically qualified to be translators; the lack of a unified framework where professional translators are regarded as professionals and remunerated for their complex skills and knowledge; the general lack of public recognition

and appreciation; and the international use of a selected few languages (i.e. English) and the consequences that this has on the use and status of minority languages.

7.2.2 Level of Risk of De-Professionalisation

Only two fifths (40.4%, n=69) of the practitioner survey respondents felt confident that freelance translation is or will one day be considered a fully-fledged profession (see Figure 7.7). In fact, ten practitioners explicitly questioned, or in one case was "becoming increasingly disillusioned" [P-S-48], regarding freelance translation's status as a profession. To illustrate, one practitioner labelled freelance translation as "just a side profession" [P-S-81], meanwhile a further practitioner stated that freelance translation "does not exhibit the characteristics of a traditional profession" [P-S-53]. This contrasts significantly with Figure 7.8, which indicates that 89.4% (n=74) of non-practitioners considered freelance translation a fully-fledged profession, and the difference between the observed frequencies is statistically significant ($\chi^2[1]=55.05$, $p < 0.001$, $\phi=0.81$), with one non-practitioner describing it as a "challenging and niche occupation" [NP-S-62]. It is perhaps noteworthy to mention that out of the non-practitioners who have previously sought translation services (12.9%, n=11), only one did not consider freelance translation a fully-fledged profession whereas the others considered otherwise (see Section 3.4 for previous evaluations of freelance translation's occupational status).

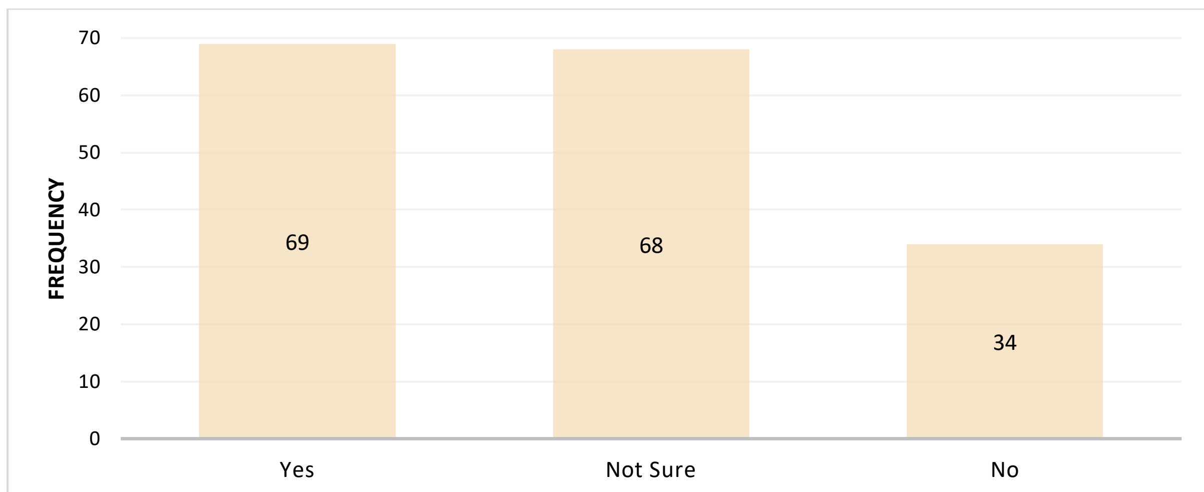

Figure 7.7: Freelance translation is / will one day be considered a full-fledged profession? (P, n=171).

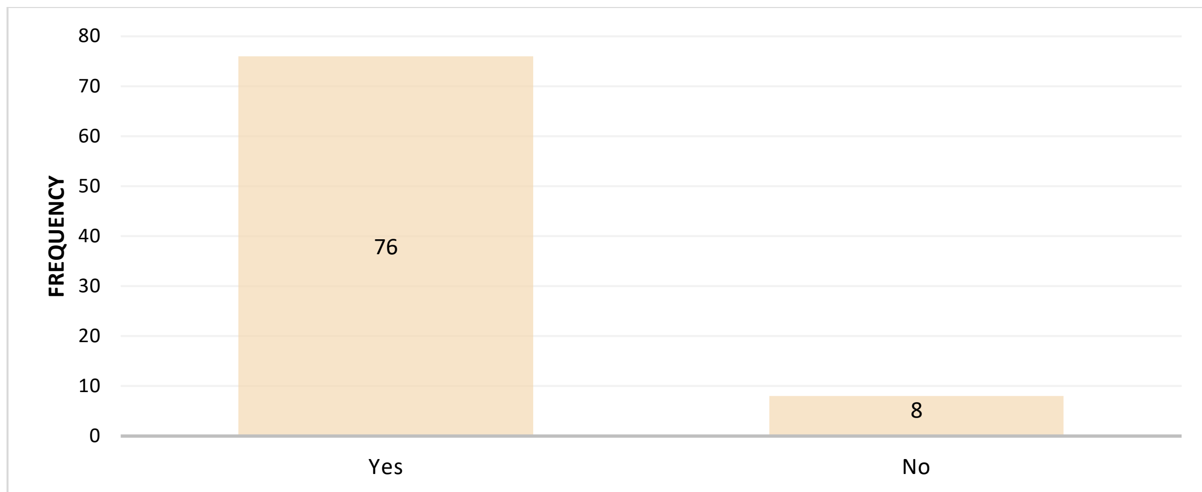

Figure 7.8: Freelance translation is a full-fledged profession (NP, n=84).

Regarding de-professionalisation (i.e. the dismantling of an established professional service of their necessity and professionals of their authority, exclusivity and control), just over one third (38.6%, n=66) of the practitioners suspected that there is a high risk or very high risk of freelance translation becoming de-professionalised (see Figure 7.9). Taking a closer look at Figure 7.6 and Figure 7.9, out of those who believed that freelance translation is under threat (80.1%, n=137), the majority attributed at least a moderate risk of de-professionalisation to freelance translation. Interestingly, only one practitioner thought that freelance translation is not under threat, yet thought, nonetheless, that it is still at a very high risk of becoming de-professionalised. Furthermore, six (3.5%) practitioners were convinced that freelance translation has already de-professionalised and is, therefore, no longer a profession. However, the moment when freelance translation de-professionalised differs significantly between these practitioners, with one practitioner stating that it has always been de-professionalised, a second saying that it happened within the last five years, a third believing that the profession has been de-professionalised for at least ten years, and a fourth saying that freelance translation is fairly de-professionalised in comparison to twenty years ago. One focus group participant shared a similar point of view, explaining that "in a sense, de-professionalisation has been there all the time" [P-FG2-2].

On the other end of the spectrum, around one fifth (20.5%, n=35) of the practitioners believed that there is no risk at all or only a little risk to freelance translation becoming de-professionalised (see Figure 7.9), with one practitioner stating that they "see no factors that make the risk feasible" [P-S-82]. The main reasons that were put forward to justify this were that "people who need translation will still need translators" [P-S-4] and that, in particular, there is "no risk for highly qualified professionals" [P-S-20]. Even in light of the growing deployment of AI and MT technologies, "there will always be a demand for highly specialised translation" [P-S-36] because such technologies are not good enough to replace humans and that AI and MT output still necessitate professional treatment. That being said, the small group of practitioners who believed that there is little to no risk of de-professionalisation also

attested to the fact that the human translation market will survive, but it will be much smaller and will likely end up coexisting alongside AI and MT translation solutions.

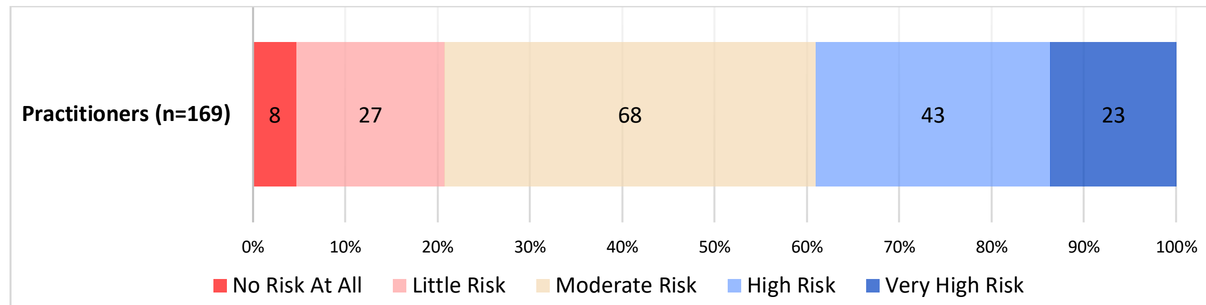

Figure 7.9: The extent to which freelance translation is at risk of becoming de-professionalised (P, n=169).

7.2.3 Reasons for De-Professionalisation

The practitioner survey respondents and the focus group participants were prompted to explain why translation may or may not be at risk of de-professionalisation. Similarly to the discourse relating to general threats to the profession, “automatisation” [P-S-31] and the idea of “machines taking over” [P-S-21] were, perhaps unsurprisingly, considered key contributors to a potential de-professionalising effect (32.1%, n=55) (see Section 7.2.1 for technology as a threat to the profession). As a result of the growing popularity of and demand for AI and MT translation solutions, the practitioners claimed to be witnessing a segmentation of the translation market in the sense that increasing amounts of content, particularly at the lower end of the market, are being handed over to such technologies. Meanwhile, professional human translators are being reduced to post-editors only, or as one practitioner illustrated it, as “cogs in a machine” [P-S-87]. With these scenarios currently unfolding, the practitioners have experienced that their role in the translation workflow is being devalued and that this devaluing is, in turn, fuelling de-professionalisation. The practitioner survey commentary and focus group participants emitted an air of defeat, with some practitioners ultimately conceding that “AI has already come to us […] and we just have to accept it” [P-FG1-1].

Furthermore, poor public perceptions were reported as additional contributors to de-professionalisation (14%, n=24). To elaborate, the rise of AI and the advancement of MT have democratised access to basic translation services, and the practitioners suspected that these developments have led certain clients and the general public to view translation as a commodity rather than a professional service. In particular, the practitioners referenced the belief of “why hire a translator when machine translation can do an adequate job” [P-S-7] for free. In other words, an assumption shared by many practitioners concerns the general public becoming “entranced” [P-S-139] by AI and MT, technologies which are “too tempting” [P-S-102], regarded by the general public as “the panacea for everything” translation-related [P-FG1-2], and “give people the false impression that they can do [translation] themselves” [P-S-

24]. On a related note, the practitioners also referenced the belief of "you know two languages – why don't you become a translator?" [P-S-105]. Essentially, the practitioners were under the impression that too many people think that they can translate simply because they understand two or more languages and so "the general public doesn't see it as a profession" [P-S-143]. This is in addition to AI and MT supposedly enabling bilinguals, who have some knowledge of languages, but little-to-no knowledge in relation to translation, to translate almost as well as professionals who have both exceptional language and translation skills. In turn, considering that "anyone can have a bash at using Google Translate" [P-S-44], people don't always see the value of those who perform translation as their full-time professional career. These points of view were described by the practitioners as "lethal" [P-S-27] and "dangerous" [P-S-138] to the profession and were also held partly accountable for the overall downgrading of the profession.

With regard to regulation, the practitioners reported poor admission control and lack of quality control as additional contributors to a de-professionalising effect (15.8%, n=27). More specifically, translation "is not a regulated profession" [P-S-3], "there is no barrier to entry" [P-S-3], and many translation agencies, reportedly, do not enforce quality assurance measures. Furthermore, it has become "easier for people to give [translation] a go over the internet" [P-S-69] and "the bar for entry is getting lower with the ability for anyone to market themselves online" [P-S-85]. These factors combined have facilitated "lots of unskilled people" [P-S-72] to enter the profession which has, consequently, led to "cut-throat competition with non-professionals" [P-S-31]. With all this in mind, it has evidently become difficult to exclude the unqualified and the unskilled from the profession. In fact, some of the practitioners pointed out that establishing regulation is unlikely to alleviate this fierce competition given that translation operates as a free market and so there are no strict restrictions that prevent price-dumping or amateurs and non-professionals from competing in the market. In short, as one practitioner summarised, "the lack of widespread professional standards weakens its status as a profession" [P-S-153] (see Section 7.2.1 for amateurs and non-professional translators as threats to the profession).

The final main reason for de-professionalisation can be summarised as the downward pressure on rates and the race to the bottom culture of many "destructive" [P-S-65] and "unscrupulous" [P-S-48] translation agencies (7%, n=12). The practitioners felt strongly that although there is a move to professionalise, efforts are counter-balanced by the downward spiral of rates and how this makes the profession much less attractive. Consequently, "if you can't make money from something, it is arguably no longer a profession" [P-S-12].

7.3 Discussion

Translation professionals have previously reported preliminary concerns about the possibility of de-professionalisation (i.e. the dismantling of an established professional service of their necessity and professionals of their authority, exclusivity and control) (Katan, 2009), while other reports categorise translation as a semi-profession (Sela-Sheffy, 2008; Gümüş, 2024), as professionalising (Tyulenev, 2015), as a practice rather than a true profession (Chesterman, 2001), or as a profession whose professionalisation has already been suspended (Dam and Zethsen, 2016; Pym et al., 2012).

In relation to the practitioners of this present study, a lot of concern was picked up over the future of translation, a profession that they reported as neither financially secure nor legally protected. In the wake of the range of threats to translation (see results in Section 7.2.1), of which many of these threats also constitute potential triggers of de-professionalisation (see results in Section 7.2.3), the practitioners are bracing for the "challenges ahead" [P-FG2-2], expressing fear that there may come a "point where it will not be possible to maintain [translation] as a full-time occupation" [P-S-19].

Similar to the discussion of results in Chapter 5 (see Section 5.3) and in Chapter 6 (see Section 6.4), this present discussion continues to operationalise the framework on (de-)professionalisation developed for this study (see Section 3.5 for an overview of the framework). For this chapter, the de-professionalisation criteria is central and are examined in the specific context of translation (see Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description). This analysis directly informs this chapter's concluding discussion (Section 7.3.5) which evaluates the extent to which translation is at risk of de-professionalisation and identifies the mechanisms through which this risk is amplified. Overall, this study's framework provides a structured, multi-dimensional approach for evaluating both the professionalisation and the de-professionalisation of translation, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of current industry dynamics and also contributing original insights into how professional attributes are maintained, eroded or challenged within translation.

7.3.1 Deskilling of Translation

As depicted by the de-professionalisation criteria devised for this thesis (see Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion), deskilling is considered a key indicator of de-professionalisation. My findings show that the growing popularity of and the "blind belief" [P-S-167] in MT and AI-assisted translation solutions constitute the greatest threats to the profession (see results in Section 7.2.1) and also the main triggers of de-professionalisation (see results in Section 7.2.3) in the eyes of the practitioners, who also accused those who rely on automated translation of being "ignorant of translation" [P-S-22] and having poor MT literacy. That being said, "whether to use AI or MT is a decision for the client, not the translator" [P-S-38], and as discussed in Section 5.3.2, whether clients are aware or not about the shortcomings of

translation technologies is up for speculation since it can be assumed that the time- and cost-effectiveness of MT and AI are likely to sway potential clients to adopt such translation solutions.

Deskilling refers to the implementation of machines and technology for the purpose of concentrating the level of skill required to perform certain tasks which are then typically required to be completed within designated timeframes and costs (Malin, 2017). The practitioner findings demonstrate that deskilling may be occurring within a translation context. Although 60.8% (n=104) of practitioners disagreed or strongly disagreed that the quality and ease of access to MT and AI reduce the demand for professional judgement (see Figure 5.13), the accompanying practitioner commentary indicates, however, that clients devalue the purpose and role of a professional human translator as a result of their “unthinking application of MT” [P-S-170]. More specifically, the practitioners speculated that clients are developing a tendency to simplify the task of translation by delegating to machines and by requesting that their translators post-edit the automated output in order to save time and money, a situation that closely aligns with the notion of deskilling described above. In turn, the practitioners feared that they are being marginalised and reduced by their clients to checkers or post-editors (see also Section 5.2.3 for results relating to the transition to post-editing). Additionally, it is important to reiterate that an implicit consequence of deskilling is the transfer of control from the worker to the manager, a power struggle that is all too familiar to the practitioners of this present study (see also Section 3.2.1 for the impact of neoliberalism and Taylorism; see also Moorkens, 2020a and Baumgarten and Bourgadel, 2024). To illustrate, my practitioner results show that two trends following the integration of MT into professional translation have emerged, namely that MT is being used as a justification to drive down costs and to shorten timeframes, and that clients are becoming increasingly vocal and stricter in terms of the method of translation (i.e. translating from scratch or post-editing) (see also discussion in Section 5.3.1). In these ways, the current dynamics between practitioners and their clients are seemingly laying the foundations for the deskilling of translation to occur in that certain clients are increasingly imposing MT or AI to simplify the translation process and thus reduce human intervention and cut costs and timeframes, and that certain clients are also reportedly taking more of the decisions on the conditions under which their translations are produced.

Moreover, according to Monzó-Nebot (2023), translation was one of the first skilled occupations subjected to widespread automation which is characterised by deskilling and a simplification of what it means to translate a text. More specifically, as MT and AI take over the more mechanical aspects of translation, from translating individual and basic sentences to translating general and repetitive texts and to handling large volumes of content, translators may find themselves doing less practical translation work and more post-editing or quality control related tasks instead (Chen, 2024). While these tasks still require a degree of linguistic expertise, they sometimes involve less creative or intellectual engagement

compared to the traditional process of translating from scratch (see Section 5.2.3 for results relating to practitioners' reception of post-editing). Over time, this shift towards PEMT practices may diminish the richness of human expertise in the field, reducing and redefining the translator's role to that of an editor rather than a mediator of communication and a "creator of meaning" (Chen, 2024, p. 7).

As implied, a deskilled job creates the impression that the tasks involved are non-essential and also no longer complex. It is important to consider, however, the counter argument to post-editing as a deskilled task. For instance, although post-editing is supposed to be a less time-consuming and less intense task than translating from scratch, the reality is that, under certain circumstances, post-editing can actually require more time and effort than the traditional translation process. For example, the domain of the source text and its complexity as well as the language combination of the task are known to have an impact on MT quality, which in turn, affect the level of effort required to complete any subsequent post-editing (Nunes Vieira, 2019; Koponen, 2016). In other words, when the raw MT output is of poor quality, then this is likely to result in translators having to expend more effort to enhance the quality of the end product (see also Section 5.1 for practitioner commentary on the limitations of MT). Moreover, errors in NMT output are reportedly more difficult to identify by both translation students and by professionals due to poor error visibility (Moorkens, 2018; Castilho, 2017a; Vieira, 2019). Essentially, a fluent target text may not always indicate that content may be missing or has been mistranslated, posing problems especially for post-editing or for monolingual quality control (Ragni and Nunes Vieira, 2022; Nunes Vieira, 2019). These challenges highlight the need to educate new and current translators on the ways to handle NMT output appropriately, and this includes when to intervene and to what extent (see also Section 2.1 for a review of literature on technology and automation).

In Nitzke and Hansen-Schirra's (2021) comprehensive guide to post-editing, they suggest that post-editors should be skilled translators, irrespective of whether they engage with the actual process of translating from scratch or not, as they share the same basic skill set. As such, post-editors should seek to acquire translation competences such as mastery of at least two languages and of translation technologies as well as of other extralinguistic skills such as problem-solving and the ability to research as the bare minimum. Apart from these basic competences, post-editors need some additional ones too, such as error-handling (dealing with errors in MT output through error -spotting, -classification, and -correction), MT engineering (knowledge about MT systems and the ability to train and evaluate them), and MT consulting (risk assessment and the ability to inform clients about potential risks and provide them problem-solving strategies) (Nitzke and Hansen-Schirra, 2021). In other words, cultural fluency, language mastery, and the ability to interpret context and nuance are areas where MT and AI still lag behind professional human translators and are perhaps unlikely to reach parity with the quality of human-produced translations (Way, 2020; Rechtman, 2018).

For this reason, strong post-editing competences are likely to remain essential even in an industry that is undergoing further attempts at automation.

When considered through the lens of the de-professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion), interrogating the notion of PEMT as a deskilled task is a lot more nuanced than perhaps anticipated given that perceptions of PEMT differ greatly depending on standpoint (i.e. client or practitioner, or even between practitioners). On the one hand, it is implied that clients deem PEMT a simpler, cheaper and quicker process than translating from scratch. On the other hand, post-editing is, in the eyes of many practitioners, actually a rather complex task that demands “constant attention” [P-S-170] and effort in addition to both transferable soft skills and specialised skills that are crucial for the specific act of post-editing. Despite the differences in perception, the basic principle of PEMT, notably using “machine translations as raw versions to be further post-edited by human translators” (Koponen, 2016, p.2), aligns with the underlying notion of deskilling, namely the implementation of machines and technology whereby tasks are simplified and the tools are standardised (Malin, 2017). In other words, even if the reality may be that PEMT is a specialised process that necessitates strong writing and translating skills under certain circumstances (do Carmo and Moorkens, 2020), PEMT is often portrayed as a deskilled alternative to translating from scratch in the sense that MT, or perhaps even AI, is used with the purpose of streamlining the translation process and reducing the overall amount of professional translation required to successfully complete tasks.

7.3.2 Is Bilingualism Enough?

The de-professionalisation criteria introduced in Section 3.5 (see Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion) indicate that the democratisation of knowledge and the overall weakening of recognition of the profession signal de-professionalisation. A further threat to the profession and also a cause of de-professionalisation is therefore “the common belief that anyone can translate; it’s enough to know two languages” [P-S-72]. This belief is provisionally evidenced by Figure 6.11 which depicts that 47.1% (n=40) of non-practitioners agreed or strongly agreed that anyone who speaks a second language can be considered a translator, and also by Figure 6.18 which depicts that 57.9% (n=49) stated that they would trust a bilingual or multilingual, who doesn’t possess any translation qualifications or certifications, with their translation needs. In other words, these results suggest that it is still a fairly common belief amongst the general public that second language competence is sufficient enough to partake in translation activities. On this note, it is relevant to refer back to a comment made by one focus group participant who stated that “being multilingual is just normal […] to a lot of people around the world […] and it isn’t a big thing” [P-FG2-3], many of whom are perhaps also naturally adept at navigating their personal and professional lives using more than one language. Indeed, researchers estimate that approximately half of the world’s population, if not more, exhibits

some degree of bilingualism, with bilingualism found in all age groups, in all levels of society, and in most countries (Grosjean, 2013).

Those of us who have the skills to communicate in another language may have certainly been asked to translate or interpret to help family and friends. In fact, a small proportion of the practitioner survey respondents was motivated to become translators as a result of their prior informal experiences translating for their friends and family (4.7%, n=8) or as a result of their naturally acquired language competences (16.4%, n=28) (see Section 7.1.1 for practitioners' motivations to becoming a translator). However, translating or communicating when, for example, on holiday is a far cry from the tasks that professional translators engage with. Indeed, an individual with second language competence may certainly be able to express their own ideas in more than one language, but professional translators often work with complex, specialised or technical texts, taking someone else's ideas and messages and then relaying them in writing in a second language and in a way that is representative to the original message.

At this point, it becomes important to discern between bilingualism and biliteracy, of which the former is the ability to speak two languages, while the latter refers to the additional abilities to read and write proficiently in two languages. In this regard, the former skill has more pertinence within an interpreting context, yet it is the latter which is more akin to a professional translator's skillset. For example, a professional French to English legal translator must not only be highly proficient in reading in the source language and writing in the target language, but they must also be culturally literate in the various legal systems of different French- and English-speaking countries. As evidenced by the translator competence models in Section 2.4.1.1, these skills are in addition to the business acumen and professionalism that they must possess in order to successfully manage their businesses, as well as the ability to use various general and translation technologies to optimise productivity (see also Section 6.1 for results on the characteristics of a professional translator). As such, we can debunk the notion that "you know two languages – why don't you work as a translator" [P-S-105] since bilingualism or biliteracy alone is evidently insufficient when engaging in the role of a professional translator.

That being said, in order to prove or disprove the practitioners' assumptions regarding the public's perception of the correlation between bilingualism and the ability to translate, we would need insights into what the general public actually considers to be translator competences. Fortunately, this study also sought the opinions of non-practitioners, and we can refer back to their discourse to clarify whether they consider bilingualism to be enough to translate. The non-practitioner results in this regard are, however, somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, as mentioned at the beginning of this sub-section, just less than half of the non-practitioners agreed that anyone who speaks a second language can be considered a translator (see Figure 6.11) and that 57.9% (n=49) would trust a bilingual or multilingual

without translation qualifications or certifications with their translation needs (see Figure 6.18). These findings suggest that it is still a common belief to assume and to accept that second language competence is sufficient enough to be able perform translation whether professionally or casually. On the other hand, many clarified that translation is, nevertheless, a specialised activity (see Figure 5.9), citing a comprehensive understanding of the nuances, slang, cultures, and histories of the languages involved, good attention to detail, and knowledge of a subject field as some of the additional competences that should be acquired by a professional translator (see results in Section 5.1.2). Regardless of this emerging contradiction, the non-practitioner survey respondents seemed to be reasonably aware that although language competence is the crux of translation (and interpreting) activities, performing professional translation to a high standard requires more than just knowing the languages involved.

In short, some degree of bilingualism is an important part of any language-related role, particularly for interpreting, but both the practitioner and non-practitioner results indicate that bilingualism alone does not guarantee success as a professional translator. Rather, it is biliteracy in addition to various other professional, extralinguistic and technical skills that are requisite to be able to translate at a level that satisfies professional translation requirements and standards (see results in Section 6.1.1 for the desirable profile of a professional translator; see also Section 2.4.1 for literature on competences). Nevertheless, when viewed through the lens of the de-professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.4), the tendency to equate bilingualism with translation competence points to a perception that translation expertise is increasingly viewed as general knowledge, thereby undermining calls for professional exclusivity and weakening recognition of the profession. Although professional translation evidently requires more than just language competence, any failure to recognise the broader competence profile required for professional translation aligns closely with certain byproducts of de-professionalisation as outlined by the criteria described in Table 3.4, namely potential deskilling and delegation to amateur and non-professional translators, as the profession's knowledge base is simplified and standardised to that of bilingualism alone, and also an overall weakening of professional recognition.

7.3.3 Hypothesising the Future of Human Translation Services

The growing popularity and deployment of AI and MT translation solutions are, as evidenced by my findings for the threats to the profession (see Section 7.2.1) and the main causes of de-professionalisation (see Section 7.2.3), very much in vogue and constitute the greatest challenges to the sustainability of translation. With reference to the de-professionalisation criteria outlined in Table 3.4, these technologies align most directly with the criterion of the automation of work practices which risks the substitution of professional labour by machines and technology. As one practitioner summarised, these AI and MT are "very popular, and

translators are not as popular” [P-S-71]. Although there was initially scepticism and doubt about the perceived usefulness of MT in professional contexts during the technology’s inception (Kenny, 2020), the current automation of translation activity is a phenomenon that should not be overlooked given that the worst-case scenario would be characterised by significant job losses as a result of machines and technology acting as substitutes for trained professionals (see Section 3.2.3 for technological roots of de-professionalisation).

Within this context, Lester’s (2020) spectrum of four possible scenarios is particularly useful to hypothesise the future of translation, an industry that is currently being reshaped in the face of the integration of general and translation technologies (see also Section 2.1 for a review of literature relating to technology and automation in a translation context). As a reminder, Lester’s (2020) four possible outcomes are: firstly, minimal change to the structure of professional environments because the profession is not susceptible to automation or substitution; secondly, a straightforward transition to incorporating technology because the profession hosts enough work that is either not susceptible to automation or substitution; thirdly, considerable disruption, resulting in both a transforming workplace and job losses; and fourthly, an environment where there is no longer a continuing purpose for the profession’s skills and expertise in their current form (see Section 3.2.3).

Lester’s (2020) first outcome, minimal change to the structure of professional environments, and second outcome, a straightforward transition to incorporating technology as the profession encompasses enough work that is not susceptible to automation or can be substituted, are not pertinent to the case of translation given that modern life is becoming increasingly intertwined with technologies (Gümüş, 2024) and that elements of the translation workflow and certain segments of the translation market have already been subjected to some degree of automation. On the basis of the summary of literature on technology and automation in Section 2.1, technology has already caused significant disruptions affecting professional translators in that that MT is beginning to act as a substitute for human translators in certain segments of the market, particularly the lower end, that translators’ working conditions are negatively impacted by the industry’s technology-driven and cost-cutting approach (Sakamoto et al., 2024), and that further disruptions are foreseeable on the back of the rapid and ongoing enhancements of AI that are eliciting more radical hypotheses about the replacement of human translators (Gümüş, 2024). In other words, we are currently navigating an increasingly digitising society that sees MT and AI not only as dominating trends (ELIS Survey, 2024; 2025), but also as technologies which embody so much potential. In fact, this technologisation of the industry is, reportedly, creating an environment whereby the practitioners are concerned that they are becoming a “dying breed” [P-S-18] and that their professional role is being “eliminated” [P-S-23] or deskilled (see discussion on deskilling in Section 7.3.1) to that of checkers or post-editors. These claims are supported by a recent study conducted by Microsoft (2025) on the applicability of generative AI to occupations, concluding that this evolving technology is the most useful for and has the

most applicability to interpreting and translating. Similarly, Hassan et al. (2018) suggest that their NMT system has already reached parity with professional human translation on the WMT 2017[29] Chinese to English news task. However, this assertion has been critiqued by Läubli et al. (2020), who argue that the MT output still contained incorrect words, omissions, mistranslated names as well as errors in word order, cautioning that such evaluations do not fully capture the complexities of language. Taken together, these findings and the above practitioner perspectives indicate, as it will be further explained in the following paragraphs, that professional translation has, indeed, already been subjected to notable transformations triggered by the integration of technology, but that limitations still exist. That being said, it is reasonable to anticipate that MT and AI will be further refined, potentially reshaping the translation profession further in the future.

As such, the hypothesised future of translation lies in either of the latter two outcomes, either considerable disruption which results in both a transforming workplace and job losses; or, an environment where there is no longer a continuing purpose for the profession's skills and expertise in their current form. Either of these outcomes are foreseeable given that modern professional translation has swept away the idea of the translator as a "solitary craftsman surrounded by piles of paper dictionaries" since virtually all instances of translation production now involve and are assisted by digital resources and tools of some kind (Palumbo, 2019, p.220). The pivotal questions now concern how translation technologies will be improved further and the extent to which they will substitute professional human translators.

On the one hand, my findings suggest that MT is a viable option for assimilation purposes in a "day-to-day environment" [NP-S-70] or in a "non-professional capacity" [P-FG1-4], but not yet for dissemination when high stakes are concerned. On the other hand, it is the advent of AI technology that deepens the ongoing technology revolution within a translation context (Moorkens and Guerberof Arenas, 2024; Gümüş, 2024) and the practitioners of this present study appear to be very well aware of the threat that this technology poses for the sustainability of translation as a service and as a satisfying and fulfilling profession. The practitioners' concern is justified given that the current trajectory of AI development predicts even higher translation accuracy rates than current MT systems in addition to being envisioned to handle complex language and structures (i.e. cultural context, slang, and jokes) quicker and more appropriately (Strach, 2022; Xiao, 2021; Benmansour and Hdouch, 2023). Although machines in their current form are incapable of processing language and cultural and contextual nuances in the same ways that humans can, addressing these limitations and working towards a future whereby AI will become better at emulating human logic, emotions and thinking may certainly result in a steep reduction in the need for human intervention.

[29] WMT 2017 refers to the Second Conference on Machine Translation, held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in September 2017, as part of the EMNLP conference, It shared research papers along with system evaluations across various MT types, including news and biomedical translations, building on years of previous workshops.

Whether the future of translation leans more towards Lester's (2020) third outcome or whether it leans towards the most pessimistic outcome ultimately depends on the extent to which MT and AI will be able to, if ever, emulate human thinking and also on the extent to which these technologies will be further incorporated into the translation industry. When viewed through the lens of the de-professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.4), this is particularly relevant to consider given that the automation of work practices is one of the primary causes of de-professionalisation. Indeed, it goes with saying that AI and even MT outperform humans at the levels of cost, speed and capacity. However, many practitioners were quite "sceptical" [P-S-157] about whether machines will ever attain the "cultural knowledge and sensitivity" [P-S-157] that humans possess, and with this in mind, 54.4% (n=93) of practitioners believed that human translation services can withstand competition over future technological enhancements (see Figure 5.14). In other words, we are yet to witness machines outperforming humans at the level of capturing and disentangling, for instance, cultural nuances, emotions, humour, bias, or context-specific meanings. As explained above, although Hassan et al. (2018) argue that their NMT system reaches parity with humans on specific tasks, critique by Läubli et al (2020) highlight persistent errors and limitations, demonstrating that MT still cannot fully replicate the depth and complexity of human translation. On the back of current limitations, Palumbo (2019) suggests that an evolved translation process will most likely parallel a more automated version of what we have today, involving pre-editing the source texts followed by post-editing the output, and for content of low-priority or with lower stakes, either pre-editing or post-editing would probably suffice. With this in mind, we can provisionally reject Lester's (2020) most pessimistic outcome on the basis that it is projected that there will still be a continuing purpose for a translator's skills and expertise in their current form (i.e. pre- and post-editing, quality assurance, handling highly specialised content, domain specific knowledge etc.). Therefore, it is the third possible outcome, considerable disruption in the form of a transforming workplace and job losses in certain segments of the market, which is perhaps the most probable outcome as accommodating to more advanced technologies is inevitably the future of the industry (Gümüş, 2024). The future of translation is thus likely to witness increasingly capable systems gradually becoming responsible for more and more of the tasks that we associate with traditional translators, but a professional's intervention, in the form of supervising automated processes (i.e. pre- and post-editing), assuring quality, training MT and AI systems, as well as translating hyper-specialised content, is hypothesised to still be, at least for the foreseeable future, indispensable (see also Section 5.1 for practitioner discourse on the limitations of MT and AI technology and Section 3.4.2 for Gümüş' (2024) analysis of the impact of technology on the institutionalisation of translation).

7.3.4 Sustainable Employment

Against the backdrop of the results presented and discussed in this chapter, it becomes pertinent to refer back to SDG8 (decent work and economic growth) which seeks to promote sustainable economic growth as well as full and productive employment and decent work for all (see Section 1.3 for the SDGs relevant to this research).

According to Carreira (2024), although the language industry has enjoyed consistent economic growth over the past 15 years[30], not all language professionals have reaped its benefits as they are contending with low rates of pay and reduced job security. This is supported by a blog post by CSA Research (2024) which outlines that while the demand for translation remains steady, the per word rate has dropped and the demand for cost-saving services continues to rise. In fact, my findings support the preceding claims given that recurring themes drawn from Chapters 5, 6 and 7 concern falling rates, pressure from "unscrupulous" [P-S-48] translation agencies to reduce prices as well as general sentiments of financial insecurity amongst the practitioners. In other words, the practitioners made it abundantly clear that translation is not a lucrative career in the current climate and that their income does not align with their value and expertise. Unfortunately, the lack of financial rewards and the difficulty in establishing a lucrative career encouraged a sizable proportion of the practitioners to reconsider their futures as translators. To illustrate, out of the 88 practitioners that have previously considered leaving the profession (see Figure 7.2), 44 (50%) cited reasons relating to low rates and insufficient earnings (see Section 7.1.2 for results on reasons for leaving or staying in the profession). Essentially, this group of practitioners, amongst many others within the wider practitioner sample, believed that it has become much harder in recent times to earn a decent living, experiencing "chronic low pay" [P-S-52] and feeling undervalued that they are not paid near enough for what they are worth or for the work that they do.

Moreover, both Carreira (2024) and CSA Research (2024) explain that the financial insecurity currently experienced by many translators is exacerbated by the disruptions brought about by certain technologies, predominantly MT and generative AI. As explained in Section 7.2.1 and Section 7.2.3, my findings revealed that the growing popularity and deployment of AI and MT translation solutions are very popular and constitute the greatest challenges to the sustainability of the profession. As one practitioner summarised, these technologies are "very popular, and translators are not as popular" [P-S-71]. Furthermore, in my discussion hypothesising the future of human translation services (see Section 7.3.3), I concluded that the future is likely to be met with considerable disruption brought about by ever-enhancing automated translation solutions. On the one hand, it can be argued that a highly-skilled and dedicated professional translator workforce remains requisite to support the ongoing growth of the industry. On the other hand, translators' working conditions are negatively impacted by the industry's technology-driven approach and cost cutting efforts (Sakamoto et al., 2024). In this vein, there is scope to assume that translation is not a sustainable career given that

[30] The 2025 Nimdzi 100 report estimates that the language industry reached 71.7 billion USD in 2024, and that the industry is projected to grow to approximately 75.7 billion USD during 2025.

increasingly capable systems and machines are likely to gradually take on more and more of the tasks that we associate with traditional translators.

That being said, the practitioners as well as the non-practitioners remained firm that human translation will remain an essential service (see Figure 5.6). Although there was some lingering doubt amongst both samples regarding whether human translation services can withstand competition from future technological enhancements (see Figure 5.14), the practitioners asserted, nevertheless, that human translators enhance low-quality MT and AI output, and that they are also essential when handling specialised or high-stakes content that cannot be entrusted to translation technologies. The non-practitioners displayed a similar train of thought, explaining in their survey comments that such technologies are not accurate enough and could pose serious risks particularly within high-stake settings such as healthcare and law. For this reason, the non-practitioners generally believed that such technologies are suitable in a "day-to-day environment" [NP-S-70], but translations produced by humans will always be more trustworthy and accurate. Essentially, a professional's intervention is likely to remain indispensable, not necessarily in the form of translating from scratch, but rather for supervising automated translation processes via pre- and post-editing, assuring quality and training MT and AI systems (Palumbo, 2019).

Aside from the fact that income is "irregular" [P-S-113], that the rate of pay is "not sustainable at present" [P-S-147] and that translation technologies are supposedly "deceiving clients and killing the profession" [P-S-34], the practitioners offered additional reasons to explain why they have been experiencing moments of precarity. For instance, the practitioners also face "customer instability" [P-S-131] in the form of a "lack of work at certain times" [P-S-120] and that "there is a lot of stress as to when the next job will come in and from where" [P-S-147] (see Section 7.1 for results relating to job security). It is important to clarify that the practitioners were largely addressing a decline in the amount of available translation work against the backdrop of a substantial increase in the demand for PEMT services. Essentially, the practitioner commentary alludes to a notable drop in translation work volume in recent times and that some practitioners have even experienced extended periods without being commissioned translation jobs. My findings align with those from a recent survey conducted by CIOL[31], whereby CIOL members were asked if their work volume changed in 2024, with 49% reporting a significant decrease in their work volume and an additional 21% reporting a small decrease. The respondents justified their observation by explaining that translation work is drying up in the wake of an increase in demand for PEMT. This surge in demand for PEMT services has led do Carmo and Moorkens (2020) to state that an implicit message is being sent to translators, and that is to "post-edit or perish", a question that is evidently in mind for many translators, with one practitioner even stating that they "worry there will be a point when I will have no work left unless I take it on" [P-S-77]. However, given that attempts

[31] https://www.ciol.org.uk/work-volumes-freelance-translators-interpreters

to further automate translation activities are likely to persist (see Section 7.3.3 for discussion on the hypothesised future of translation), one can only assume that the amount of available translation work will only decline further.

With reference to SDG8 within a translation context, translation is "not something to do if you need to make a living out of it" [P-S-34] on the basis that many practitioners appeared trapped in this perpetual cycle of fluctuating workloads which result in fluctuating incomes. Perhaps for the reasons addressed in this present discussion, namely dwindling rates, automation, increase in PEMT and irregular workloads, 94.7% (n=160) of practitioners rejected the notion of freelance translation as a well-protected and secure career (see Figure 7.4). In short, SDG8 within a translation context has simply not been achieved given that my findings ultimately suggest that translation does not guarantee decent employment. As one practitioner summarised, freelance translation is an "unsustainable profession" [P-S-52], with an additional practitioner expressing particular concern about freelance translation as a profession coming "to an end" and whether the profession would "still be viable in another 25 years" [P-S-61]. Although the value of the language industry continues to grow and despite the passion that many practitioners have for translation, translation professionals are persistently facing low rates of pay, a lack of recognition particularly from translation agencies, and a decline in available translation work, all of which are arguably outcomes to MT and AI becoming increasingly ever-present and deployed within the translation industry.

7.3.5 Is Translation De-Professionalising?

The attitudes towards the level of risk of de-professionalisation (i.e. the dismantling of an established professional service of their necessity and professionals of their authority, exclusivity and control) were mixed, with 38.6% (n=66) of practitioners suspecting that there is a high risk or very high risk of freelance translation becoming de-professionalised. Meanwhile 20.5% (n=35) believed that there is no risk at all or only a little risk of de-professionalisation (see Figure 7.9). Nevertheless, there was still an air of angst and uncertainty amongst the majority of practitioners regarding the precarious future of their profession as 80.1% (n=137) of practitioners indicated that they felt that freelance translation is under threat (see Figure 7.6; see also results in Section 7.2.1 for threats to the profession). Furthermore, although 89.4% (n=74) of non-practitioners considered freelance translation a fully-fledged profession (see Figure 7.8), the practitioners thought differently (see Figure 7.7), showcasing doubt over the professional status and sustainability of their profession and how there is no denying the fact that "the way the translation profession is going is taking a sad turn for professional translators" [P-FG1-1].

Before we broach the de-professionalisation criteria, a central component of the study's framework on (de-)professionalisation, introduced in Section 3.5 (see also Table 3.4 for a

breakdown of each criterion along with is description), it is important to first point out that the functioning of the contemporary translation industry is shaped by neo-liberalism (i.e. a political and economic policy model that favours privatisation and free market capitalism) and Taylorism (i.e. optimising work processes to reduce costs and to improve overall productivity) (Moorkens, 2020a; Moorkens, 2020b; see also Section 3.2.1 for neo-liberalism and Taylorism in a translation context), both of which are movements that could potentially lead a profession down the path towards de-professionalisation (Malin, 2017). As discussed in Section 3.2.1, such movements have resulted in unsustainable working conditions for translators by establishing a working environment that is now characterised by disempowerment, the imposition of technologies, the constant downward pressure of price, low professional visibility, reduced ability to exercise the full scope of translation abilities, lack of interpersonal relationships, and a lack of job security (see also discussion in Section 5.3.4 for overview of the current landscape of the translation industry). In other words, the tendencies towards neo-liberal trends and Taylorism have fostered an environment for de-professionalisation to manifest, resulting in issues relating to automation, deskilling and occupational purpose, for instance, to intensify further.

Reverting our attention back to the study's original de-professionalisation criteria (see Section 3.5; see also Table 3.4), which offer an explicit conceptual lens to analyse the potential de-professionalisation of translation, some of the main indicators of this process include the automation of traditional work processes, deskilling, and the redefinition of professional roles. Within the translation industry, it is difficult to refute the growing sentiment that "machines are taking over" [P-S-21]. In addition, as discussed in Section 7.3.3, the future of the industry is likely to become even more reliant on technology and even more automated than it is at present. In this context, we are already witnessing efforts to deskill the translation profession by shifting focus towards PEMT and by redefining the translator's role to that of a post-editor (see Section 7.3.1 for discussion on the deskilling of translation). These changes are reflected in a growing tendency amongst clients to opt for automated translation solutions and then commissioning translators with the "tedious editing bit" [P-S-8]. This trend is also accompanied by diminishing professional control over translation processes, by an erosion of rates and by a decline in available translation work. Indeed, the intention of PEMT is to streamline and simplify the process of traditional translation, and in this regard, it is fair to consider PEMT a deskilled alternative to translating from scratch. Nevertheless, PEMT in its current form, as evaluated in Section 7.3.1, encompasses effort as well as the acquisition of various transferable and specialised skills in order to be able to handle the MT and AI output appropriately, in turn challenging the notion of PEMT as a deskilled task. However, if MT and AI were to reach a level of sophistication capable of consistently producing output equivalent to that of a professional human translator, even when content of a complex or specialised nature is concerned, then there may certainly come a time when post-editing is nothing more than "a style-polishing exercise" [P-S-8]. In such a scenario, further attempts at deskilling and

at redefining the translator's role to something that is more akin to editing appear not only likely, but perhaps inevitable.

Another key indicator of de-professionalisation, according to the de-professionalisation criteria devised for this study (see Table 3.4), is the democratisation of knowledge. At this point, it is relevant to refer back to the example of digital assistants (e.g. Siri at Apple, Google, Alexa at Amazon, Cortana at Microsoft), alongside generative AI chatbots (e.g. ChatGPT), which continue to be retrained to be able to provide answers to virtually any question regardless of complexity (Susskind and Susskind, 2018; see also Section 3.2.3 for technological roots to de-professionalisation). A comparable situation is unfolding within translation, where increasingly accessible and often free MT and AI translation tools are constantly being advanced in order to be able translate texts, no matter how complex and nuanced, from one language into another on the fly (see Section 2.1 for a review of literature relating to MT and AI). In fact, my findings show that the democratisation of translation, which has primarily resulted from public access to MT and AI, has not only led to the automation of certain segments of the translation market, but it has also contributed to the generalisation of translation skills. These tools not only promote the perception that automated solutions are on par with human translators, but they also make the act of translation accessible and familiar even to those who are simply not translators. As one practitioner noted, "anyone can have a bash at using Google Translate" [P-S-44], and for this reason many practitioners rightfully felt that translation technologies "give people the false impression that they can do [translation] themselves" [P-S-24]. In support of this, not only is translation widely performed in an everyday context with the assistance of translation technologies (i.e. MT gisting) (see also related literature in Section 2.1.1), but Gümüş (2024) also states that it is the expansion of the internet in addition to the accessibility of translation technologies that have enabled amateurs and non-professionals to equip themselves with the digital tools required to translate, to market themselves online, and ultimately to engage in translation projects. Furthermore, as discussed in Section 7.3.2, second language competence itself is inherently widespread, and "being multilingual is just normal […] to a lot of people around the world" [P-FG2-3]. In this sense, both translation and interpreting often occur informally in daily life, particularly amongst bilinguals and multilinguals. All things considered, translation is highly democratised, an activity that is neither exclusive nor confined to professionals. It is increasingly performed across both professional and non-professional contexts by both translators and non-translators alike, further contributing to the de-professionalisation of translation.

On a related note, de-professionalisation is also characterised by the delegation or subordination to those less qualified and/or to external parties (see also Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description). A recurring observation across Chapters 5, 6 and 7 is the practitioners' concern about amateur and non-professional translators encroaching on the professional sphere of translation as these individuals compete

for the same projects alongside trained professionals. Their participation is, however, inevitable given the free market and accessible nature of translation and the limited enforcement of recruitment criteria or professional standards (see also Section 6.4.4 for discussion on professional control and exclusivity). Above all, the "amateurisation" of translation is on the rise (Gümüş, 2024), with such translators contributing to both professional assignments (e.g. collaborating with translation agencies or finding work on translation platforms) and to community translation projects (e.g. fan translation, crowdsourcing and volunteering). While their contributions may be well-intended, they pose, nonetheless, a threat to the professional image of experienced and qualified translators. The practitioners reported that contributions from amateur and non-professional translators not only risk lowering the standards of the industry in terms of quality, professionalism and rates, but they also reinforce the argument that you don't need to be qualified or a professional to translate (see also section 2.2 for literature on amateur and non-professional translation practices).

Furthermore, the loss of professional control, the declining need for professional judgement, and weakening professional recognition are all hallmarks of de-professionalisation (see also Table 3.4 for de-professionalisation criteria). As discussed in Sections 5.3.1 and 6.4.4, many practitioners expressed strong sentiments of feeling "powerless" [P-S-25] as well as "undervalued or overlooked" [P-S-160]. Specifically, the practitioner findings suggest that translation agencies are increasingly prioritising cost and speed over experience and qualifications, often favouring MT and AI and/or outsourcing projects to cheaper and faster translators who may or may not be suitably qualified or experienced. In tandem with these tendencies, translators' professional agency is being challenged, with decisions around rates, turnaround times, tools, and methods (i.e. translating from scratch or post-editing) becoming increasingly directed by clients. Similarly, concerns were raised by the practitioners in relation to online translation platforms. These platforms, as argued by the practitioners, direct control to clients rather than to translators, "pay peanuts" [P-S-80], and do not offer fulfilling work. These platforms also create a competitive environment where qualified and experienced professionals are forced to compete with those who "want a bit of extra money" [P-S-165], while also offering features that enable close monitoring of translators' progress. On the back of these situations, the practitioners concluded that they are, consequently, struggling to exert professional authority over the practical and financial conditions of the workflow. Additionally, many stated that their expertise is not always deemed essential, reporting that that they are not always successful in securing projects or winning certain types of clients despite being qualified, experienced and professional in their conduct. Moreover, although the non-practitioners generally acknowledged that translation is a specialised activity and that human translation services are pivotal for the functioning of society (see Section 5.3.2.1), there is no guarantee that this recognition will persist, particularly in the wake of ever-enhancing automated translation solutions. In other words, the growing loss of professional control, diminishing demand for professional intervention, and weakening recognition of translators'

value – driven by demanding client practices and micromanagement, cost-cutting measures, marginalisation, automation and the growing deployment of technologies – are key signs of de-professionalisation, consequently leaving professional translators feeling powerless, undervalued and unable to maintain authority over their work.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the realities discussed in this chapter, such as deskilling, democratisation of translation, redefining professional roles and weakening recognition, are the direct consequences of exposure to and reliance on accessible and robust MT and AI systems. These technologies are becoming "good enough [...] without human input" [P-S-60], handling certain translations quicker and more cheaply than traditional alternatives. Additionally, the expansion of the internet and the accessibility of translation technologies enable amateurs and non-professional translators to position themselves in the translation profession. As Gümüş (2024) notes, such translators can easily equip themselves with the digital tools required to translate, to market themselves online, and to engage in professional and community translation work. Essentially, there are two interconnected factors at the heart of the de-professionalising effect: the attempts to automate and democratise translation, and the broad accessibility of various general (e.g. internet, cloud functionalities), translation (e.g. CAT tools, TMs, MT, AI) and quality assurance (e.g. spellchecker, QA functions within CAT tools) tools that assist all types of translators with offering translation services. These findings align with Gümüş' (2024) application of the concept of professional project (i.e. the steps taken by an occupational group to turn their occupation into a profession and to create professional closure) in relation to translation (see Section 3.4.2). She concludes that although translation can be provisionally categorised as a semi-profession, complete professional closure and further institutionalisation (i.e. the process through which an occupation solidifies its status and standards and regulates its practices within society) are, nevertheless, challenged by the rapid improvement of AI and also by technology facilitating the rise of non-professional practices (Gümüş, 2024).

In summary, each criterion outlined in the de-professionalisation section of this study's framework (see Section 3.5) has, for the most part, been met. To elaborate, the translation industry is experiencing the automation of traditional work processes and a gradual reduction in the need for professional human intervention. There is also a growing generalisation of language and translation skills, accompanied by the democratisation of translation. In tandem, we observe attempts at deskilling translation to PEMT or to quality assurance, and at redefining a translator's role to that of a post-editor or a quality assurer. Further contributing to de-professionalisation are the growing tendencies to defer to machines, and in some cases, to those less qualified in efforts to reduce turnaround times and costs. Each of the observed trends has, in turn, led to power struggles over the conditions under which translations are produced, including control over tools, methods, rates and deadlines. Ultimately, there is likely to also be a decline in societal recognition of the value, complexity and necessity of professional human translation.

Against this backdrop, we can begin to critically assess the professional status of translation. As concluded in Chapter 6, which operationalised the professionalisation criteria (see Table 3.3) to assist with the evaluation of translation's professionalisation, translation may be viewed as an emerging profession from the trait perspective and a mimic profession from the power perspective. Further progress towards full professionalisation relies on the industry's stakeholders securing widespread societal recognition (at the levels of exclusivity, necessity and complexity) alongside official recognition, complete monopoly over the service and the profession, professional exclusivity, and also professional authority in client relationships. Despite this identified scope for advancement, the professionalisation process is, arguably, currently suspended instead. This suspension is largely due to several challenges: the inherent lack of professional agency, the free market nature of translation, the virtually non-existent barriers that control recruitment and who enters the profession, the often free and public access to automated translation tools, and the lack of official recognition from the government and judicial organisations. Compounding this is the ongoing advancement of AI and the looming prospect of automation, which are likely to further threaten monopoly over the service, professional agency, demand for the service or for professional input, and public perceptions even further, making further progress towards professionalisation increasingly uncertain.

Therefore, in response to the claim that the professionalisation of translation is currently suspended (see discussion in Section 6.4.5), and coupling this conclusion with the fact that each of the indicators of de-professionalisation, as outlined in the set of de-professionalisation criteria that was devised for this study (see Table 3.4), is partially or fully present in a translation context, the profession is, arguably, regressing into a less-professionalised state. In other words, the successful professionalisation of translation does not seem feasible under the current and projected circumstances of the service.

Whether this shift towards a state of de-professionalisation is irreversible or whether translation will be able to make strides towards becoming an established emerging or semi profession is a question that remains unanswered until we see how MT and the AI phenomenon unfold further and see their influences on, for example, clients' preferred translation solutions, translators' agency and their level of monopoly, and the general public's perceptions of the need, speciality and exclusivity of the service. Fortunately, the processes of (de-)professionalisation are not unidirectional, meaning that it is possible to reverse the de-professionalising effect. On the one hand, this reversal seems feasible given that the human translator is predicted to remain indispensable in the translation workflow on the basis that professional intervention is still necessitated to enhance both MT and AI output and that professional translators are more suited to translate hyper-specialised content. On the other hand, we must not overlook that researchers and engineers are likely to pursue the ongoing perfection of MT and AI technology and continually address their limitations. Against the

backdrop of the endeavour to polish MT and AI translation solutions further and of any subsequent implications, the long-term sustainability of translation as a service and as a satisfying and fulfilling profession is ultimately up in the air. On that note, we can likely conclude that translation is an “unsustainable profession” [P-S-52], with the prospect of further de-professionalisation in the future outweighing the prospect of resuming professionalisation and making strides towards the status of an established emerging or semi profession and ultimately fully-fledged profession.

This chapter discussed translation’s professional status and the extent to which it is at risk of becoming de-professionalised. The following chapter brings this thesis to a close, responding to each of my RQs in detail (Section 8.1) in addition to presenting the limitations (Section 8.2) along with the potential avenues for future research (Section 8.3).

8 Conclusion

An occupation's status is constantly in motion, evolving in accordance with the social, economic, political and technological movements that define a particular era. From the perspective of the sociology of professions, such changes, as the incorporation of technology into the workplace, new methods of distributing and democratising knowledge, and changes to employment practices, can trigger shifts in a service's position on the occupation-profession spectrum.

We are currently navigating an increasingly digitised world that is provoking the emergence of a new reality regarding the manner in which translation is performed as well as how it is perceived by the lay public. In light of an ever evolving and technologising industry, this study aimed to comprehensively explore the (de-)professionalisation of translation, and this was achieved by mapping out the translation industry in terms of attitudes and practices as well as how translation's (de-)professionalisation journey is currently unfolding in accordance with (de-)professionalisation criteria that were established as part of this study's original framework on (de-)professionalisation (see Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description). The framework developed for this thesis (see Chapter 3) ultimately extends sociological theories of (de-)professionalisation to the translation context, also offering a foundation for future research into the (de-)professionalisation of comparable fields or of other professions within the wider language industry.

This concluding chapter commences by addressing each of the RQs (Section 8.1). This is followed by a brief discussion of the main limitations of this research and my recommendations for similar studies (Section 8.2). Finally, this chapter and this thesis conclude with potential avenues for future research (Section 8.3).

8.1 Reflections on Research Questions

This thesis employed survey- and focus-group based methods to gather practitioners' and non-practitioners' views on the contemporary translation industry and the translation profession. The findings presented and discussed throughout Chapters 5, 6 and 7 provide the foundations to comprehensively address each of the RQs which were first introduced in Section 1.4. Although many of the points of discussion correspond with more than one RQ, the reflections below are based on the most relevant findings and discussions only.

8.1.1 How are contemporary industry practices and attitudes reshaping the translation industry?

The translation industry has evolved significantly and is continuing to evolve in line with the ongoing advancements of general and translation technologies. While CAT tools, MT and TMs have long been part of professional practice, their widespread use remains indispensable for managing the growing demand for fast, cost-effective translation across varied content types.

One emerging trend is the use of online translation platforms to find projects. Although these platforms offer greater connectivity and flexibility as well as incorporate AI to automate client-side processes, the practitioners expressed dissatisfaction with them, citing issues relating to low pay, fragmentation, low standards and the competitive first-come-first-served allocation process (see related results in Section 5.2.4).

Regarding MT and AI, both the practitioner and non-practitioner findings reveal that machines still fall short in handling cultural nuance, emotions, humour, bias, or context-specific meanings (see results in Section 5.1). Nevertheless, improvements in these technologies, along with their democratisation, have led to increased reliance on them in certain segments of the market and in non-professional translation contexts. While the practitioners viewed translation as a specialised activity necessitating human intervention, there is a growing acceptance that MT and AI can adequately handle bulk, low-priority, general and perishable content without human intervention.

On a related note, the advancement of MT has also driven the rise of post-editing workflows, subsequently resulting in a drop in available translation work. As debated in Section 7.3.1, perceptions of PEMT differ. On the one hand, it is implied that clients deem PEMT a quicker, cheaper and less skill-intensive process, reinforcing the idea that PEMT is a deskilled task compared to translating from scratch. On the other hand, many practitioners argued that post-editing requires distinct expertise, effort and time. Even if the reality may be that PEMT is a complex and specialised process, PEMT is nevertheless portrayed and often understood by non-translators as a streamlined, deskilled task enabled by automation, reducing the perceived value of professional intervention.

In response to concerns around automation, deskilling and the assumed perceptions that anyone can translate with MT or with second language competence (see also Section 7.3.2 for discussion on bilingualism), the practitioners felt that the majority of non-practitioners (clients and the wider general public) no longer valorise the quality, expertise and professionalism that a professional human translator would bring to translation workflows. However, the non-practitioner survey respondents, mostly composed of those who do not engage with professional translation services (see Section 4.1.1.4.2 for non-practitioner demographics), were favourable of professional human translators as well as nuanced regarding the limitations of translation technologies. While many still assumed that second language competence is enough to translate professionally or casually, most recognised the complexity of translation and viewed human experts as more trustworthy and essential than machines.

As discussed in Section 5.3.3, both the practitioners and the non-practitioners also attributed low prestige to freelance translation. Meanwhile, the practitioner commentary conveyed that many clients, particularly translation agencies, show little respect or admiration for translators. If the practitioners were to enjoy respect and admiration from their clients, then it could be hypothesised that they would also profit from decent remuneration and automatic discretion for all projects, outcomes which are typical byproducts of occupational prestige yet seemingly far from reality for many practitioners. In other words, translation services, whether human or automated, can still be considered essential and valuable to society, yet lacking significantly in prestige.

On a related note, as concluded in Sections 5.3.1 and 7.3.1, the practitioner findings also indicate that current client practices are not only diminishing the role of the professional translator, but that they are also challenging translators' professional agency. In essence, clients have been afforded greater control over the translation workflow following the integration of client-server systems within CAT tools and the capabilities of MT and AI. Specifically, clients are increasingly requesting post-editing workflows, suggesting a trend towards deskilling translation by relying on MT and then requesting their translators to post-edit the automated output in order to save time and money. There is also a growing pressure to accept lower rates and tighter deadlines, while clients are also becoming increasingly demanding in terms of the tools, methods and resources that their translators should employ. Consequently, the practitioners felt that they have lost significant control over both the practical and financial conditions of projects.

Moreover, in response to the growing capabilities of MT and AI and any subsequent attempts at deskilling and at automating translation processes, the practitioners observed the market fragmenting, with specialised or human translation at the premium end of the market and MT and AI-assisted translation or PEMT dominating the lower end of the market. It was generally accepted by the practitioners that the translation industry is transitioning through an era where human intervention is no longer required for all translations. To remain competitive and to access the premium market, the practitioners emphasised the need for hyper-specialisation and strong client focus, warning that without this, aspiring translators risk falling behind.

Amid rapid technological change, UK-based professional associations have taken steps to address the rise of AI and to support their members. Although a minority of practitioners had reservations regarding associations' handling of the AI phenomenon (see Section 6.1.3 for results relating to associations), both CIOL and ITI have actively engaged the translator community through discussions on the subject matter (e.g. CIOL's roundtable discussions on Generative AI, ITI's Artificial Intelligence Working Group meetings and ITI's Coffee House), published resources (e.g. CIOL's whitepaper on AI), and also by offering relevant training (e.g. as of January 2025, ITI has scheduled events and training relating to AI). As concluded in

Section 6.4.3, claims that associations are not doing enough to protect the profession against AI are not relevant with respect to UK associations who appear to be championing the value of their members during a time of growing uncertainty about the role of human translators.

Furthermore, a recurring theme throughout Chapters 5, 6 and 7 is the intensifying competition from amateur and non-professional translators. While such competition has always existed, it has become fiercer due to the expansion of cloud-based tools, accessible translation technologies, online work opportunities and the lack of regulation and entry standards (i.e. translation certifications or qualifications). Although amateurs and non-professionals can contribute positively to non-professional contexts like fan translation and fan subbing, the practitioners criticised those operating in professional spaces (i.e. those collaborating with translation agencies or claiming work on online platforms) for undermining the profession by undercutting market rates, offering unrealistic turnaround times, displaying unprofessional or unethical behaviour and delivering low-quality work.

The practitioners also criticised the recruitment and assignment practices of platforms and translation agencies, arguing that they often disregard qualifications and that they fail to distinguish between professionals and those who are inexperienced or unqualified. They speculated that platforms and translation agencies favour speed and affordability instead of expertise and quality. As a result, although certifications and academic qualifications in translation constitute efficient signals of commitment, competence and knowledge, they are simply not necessary in order to secure projects with certain types of clients (see also Section 6.4.2.2 for related discussion). Additionally, global competition, enabled by digital connectivity, have led to the practitioners becoming mindful that translators who live in countries with a higher cost of living are at risk of losing work to those living in countries with a lower cost of living who can ultimately afford to offer or accept lower rates. In these ways, translation is simply not an exclusive profession given that market disorder exists and that the already competitive nature of the translation market has only intensified further in recent times (see related results in Section 6.2).

At this point, it becomes pertinent to revisit SDG4 (quality education) which has only been partially met within a translation context (see Section 1.3 for SDGs pertinent to this study). On the one hand, formal translator training and development opportunities (certifications, CPD and academic programmes) are abundant in certain locations across the globe (i.e. UK, Europe and East Asia), and they can, indeed, emphasise one's professionalism and commitment to their chosen profession as well as enhance one's ability to translate. On the other hand, although university programmes equip students with all of the relevant technical skills and are beginning to modify their teaching approaches by incorporating simulations of real-world translation tasks into the classroom, the practitioners felt, nonetheless, that university training neither guarantees a lucrative and productive career nor adequately equips students

with the business mindset that is paramount to commercially succeed as a professional translator in the premium market (see whole discussion in Section 6.4.2.1).

In short, the translation industry has evolved and is continuing to evolve in step with the ongoing advancements of general and translation technologies, reshaping client practices, societal recognition, training needs and professional monopoly and exclusivity. Although specialised translation work is still widely available, translation is neither as lucrative nor as creative as it used to be as poorly paid and less creative jobs, such as post-editing and revision, are becoming increasingly common and that the middle market is gradually shrinking. As the translation workflow becomes even more automated, fragmented and transferred to the cloud, the practitioners have found that they are losing professional control, fearing micromanagement, deskilling and marginalisation. Technology has also facilitated the prospect of practically anyone being able to gain access to online translation tools, to market themselves online and thus reach clients and compete for work. This is further exacerbated by the general lack of regulation around recruitment and entry to the translation profession. Consequently, market disorder persists, and the current translation market is highly competitive and is composed of a global network of translators of all abilities and backgrounds. While the practitioners acknowledged that the technologisation of the industry is an inevitable change, not everyone perceived it as a positive one since this new way of working (i.e. via online platforms, post-editing workflows, haggling over rates, assignments on a first-come-first-served basis, competing with amateurs and non-professionals etc.) seems to threaten translator agency and diminish the importance and role of the professional human translator. Nevertheless, both the practitioner and non-practitioner populations maintained that translation is a specialised activity that should not be delegated to machines and that human translation services will remain indispensable.

8.1.2 In what ways have translators' attitudes towards their profession changed in response to the ongoing transformation of the translation industry?

Despite the ongoing technological developments and any subsequent attempts at automation and at deskilling, the practitioners, and for the most part the non-practitioners too, maintained that translation is still a specialised activity that needs to be performed by professional translators. Arguably, professional human intervention, as deemed by the practitioners and even by UK professional translator associations, has become even more essential now on the basis that MT and even AI output still falls below professional standards and that it needs to be treated before it's ready for dissemination. Additionally, the practitioners also maintained that an ideal professional translator, as described in Section 6.1, must be, amongst other requirements, qualified in translation, equipped with domain-specific knowledge, fully competent in reading and writing in their working languages as well as professional and ethical in their business conduct. Essentially, the practitioners' attitudes

towards the necessity of their service and towards the desirable profile of a professional translator were not impacted by the ongoing automation of the industry or by the subsequent influences on the perceived role and value of professional translators. In other words, despite the current wave of technologisation enveloping the translation industry, the practitioners remained firm in their conviction that they are, indeed, professional experts and that the professional translation services that they offer are indispensable in order to produce high-quality, reliable and professional translations.

Nevertheless, the practitioners' attitudes towards their perceived value seem to have taken a toll. As should have become evident from the response to RQ1, the translation industry is not only characterised by low occupational prestige, market disorder, falling rates and power struggles, but it has also become even more automated and fragmented than it was a decade ago (see also results in Section 5.3.4). Under these circumstances, the practitioners have felt their value and role as a professional translator diminishing, expressing uncertainties about sustaining their careers as translators as well as strong sentiments of feeling powerless, overlooked and undervalued. To elaborate, according to the practitioners, an overreliance on and trust in translation technologies, the perception that bilingualism is enough to translate, and the growing presence of amateur and non-professional translators are some of the main factors that have reportedly contributed towards the perceived impressions that translation isn't always worth paying for and that it isn't always worth seeking a professional for.

In terms of the practitioners' perception of their perceived social and professional value, the rise of AI and the advancement of MT have not only resulted in attempts to deskill professional translators to post-editors (see whole discussion in Section 7.3.1), but they have also democratised access to basic translation services. Consequently, many practitioners expressed concern about potential marginalisation, fearing that AI and MT are becoming trusted and relied on by their clients. They also suspected that developments of these technologies have led to a growing number of clients and large swathes of the general public to view translation less as a professional service and more as a commodity (see Section 5.3.2 for discussion on how the non-practitioners actually valued human translation services). These beliefs were compounded by the practitioners' additional concerns that such technologies also give people the false impression that they can do translation themselves at a fraction of the cost and in a fraction of the time compared to professional translation services. In particular, the practitioners noted that AI and MT enable bilinguals, who have knowledge of languages but may have little to none in relation to translation, to produce translations perceived as comparable to those produced by professionals with both exceptional language and translation skills. Consequently, the practitioners feared that bilingualism, when paired with access to MT or AI tools, is increasingly seen as sufficient enough for translation (see Section 7.3.2 for discussion on bilingualism). In response to these trends, many practitioners reported feeling devalued and disempowered, as their roles within the translation workflow have been challenged and, in some cases, reduced. In essence, the

practitioners' attitudes towards professional identity and their perceived social and professional value have been negatively impacted by the availability of free and accessible automated solutions, and also by the growing normalisation of translation being performed by amateurs and non-professionals. As a result, the practitioners expressed deep scepticism and are largely distrustful about whether clients and the wider public truly recognise the value of professional translation.

In terms of the practitioners' attitudes towards their perceived financial value, a recurring theme across Chapters 5, 6 and 7 is the practitioners' accusation that their clients and the general public are unwilling to pay fair rates for professional translation. The practitioners frequently claimed that clients, particularly translation agencies, fail to appreciate the cost of human translation, often viewing AI and MT as more cost-effective alternatives without understanding why human translation costs what it does. Translation agencies were also criticised by the practitioners for capitalising on the popularity of AI and MT and for creating a race to the bottom culture that was described as exploitative. This culture, as the practitioners argued, prioritises speed and cost over quality, driving down rates across the board. Additionally, the presence of amateurs and non-professionals, who often charge significantly less, was seen as further undermining professional market rates. According to many practitioners, this has a knock-on effect on client expectations by setting a lower financial benchmark for all translations and by also making it harder for established professionals to remain competitive, particularly on price. While it is acknowledged that cost-efficiency is a priority for most businesses, the practitioners' attitudes towards their perceived financial value embodied a great amount of pessimism about the financial opportunities for translators. Many felt that translation is now seen as an unwanted expense, often outsourced to the lowest bidding translator or handled by automated tools. In the practitioners' view, the financial devaluation of their work stems directly from the perception that translation can be done quickly and cheaply, whether through the use of translation technologies or by commissioning the work to amateur and non-professional translators.

Unfortunately, the current state of the translation industry has urged many practitioners to re-consider their professional futures as translators. As reported in Section 7.1.2, several reasons for leaving the profession were put forward, of which the most frequently cited reason revolves around the realities of falling rates, insufficient earnings in addition to a constant pressure, particularly from agencies, to reduce their rates. Essentially, the practitioners believed that they are not paid nearly enough for what they are worth or for the work that they do. In turn, they have found that it has become much harder in recent times to earn a decent living and to sustain a full-time career as a translator.

The erosion of rates was not, however, the only factor that contributed towards many of the practitioners' uncertainty about remaining in the translation profession. In fact, agencies' poor business practices (i.e. haggling over price and imposing MTPE work), difficulty of

distinguishing oneself in a competitive and technologised market, fear for the future of certain languages, a drop in work volume, and a lack of career progression and stability were cited as the additional factors that led many practitioners to question the long-term viability of their careers in translation, with approximately half of the practitioners having considered leaving the profession entirely. Nevertheless, what remained evident was a strong underlying passion for languages, communication and translation. This passion is clearly the driving force behind their motivation to remain in this challenging industry.

Turning to SDG8 (decent work and economic growth), it is a goal which has simply not been achieved within a translation context (see Section 1.3 for SDGs pertinent to this study). Although the value of the language industry continues to grow, translation professionals are persistently facing low rates of pay, a lack of recognition particularly from translation agencies, and a decline in available translation work, all of which are arguably outcomes to MT and AI becoming increasingly ever-present and deployed within the translation industry. In light of the aforementioned reasons and of the depiction of the current landscape of the translation industry (see response to RQ1), the majority of practitioners rejected the notion of translation as a well-protected and secure career, concluding that translation does not guarantee decent employment and that it is not a sustainable profession particularly if one's goal is to enjoy a lucrative, productive and respectable career (see also discussion in Section 7.3.4).

In short, while the practitioners' beliefs about the necessity of human translation services and their depiction of the professional translator remained largely unaffected by the ongoing automation of the industry, their attitudes towards their perceived social, professional and financial value have been noticeably impacted. Despite the growing presence of MT and AI, the practitioners continued to assert that they are highly trained experts and that professional human translation is indispensable for producing high-quality translations. However, this confidence coexists with concern and pessimism. The practitioners reported feeling increasingly marginalised, undervalued and disempowered, citing industry trends such as persistent haggling over prices, competition from amateur and non-professional translators and their price-dumping habits, as well as clients' growing reliance on automated solutions. These trends were perceived by the practitioners to challenge their financial worth, while also eroding their social and professional recognition. Despite these difficulties, the practitioners' passion for translation, language and communication remained strong.

8.1.3 To what extent is there a risk of translation becoming de-professionalised as a result of contemporary industry practices and changing attitudes?

In light of the range of threats to the translation profession (see Section 7.2.1), of which many also constitute potential triggers of de-professionalisation (see Section 7.2.3), the practitioners indicated that they are bracing for the challenges ahead, expressing fear that

there may come a point where it may no longer be possible to pursue translation as a full-time career.

Before evaluating the risk of translation becoming de-professionalised, it is worth first determining the extent to which translation is already professionalised so that we can set the foundations for ascertaining whether translation is even susceptible to a de-professionalising effect in the first place. When bringing together the data reported and discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 and aligning it against this study's original professionalisation criteria outlined in Section 3.5 (see also Table 3.3), the professional traits associated with translation, as listed in Section 6.4.5, are the existence of professional networks that enhance translators' professional image, access to professional and academic training that signals commitment and that a certain level of skill has been acquired, and CPD opportunities that reflect dedication to maintaining standards. However, some professional traits have only been partly acquired. These include, firstly, the acquisition of a specialised skillset that, while necessary for professional translation, does not necessarily need to encompass the ability to apply the theoretical knowledge taught in higher education institutions. Secondly, ethical and professional values tend to be guided by individuals' personal values rather than by a binding and regulatory CoC. Thirdly, the profession has not yet acquired full recognition from the general public and certain clients, who may fail to fully and explicitly acknowledge translation as a complex, essential service best handled by trained professionals. Meanwhile, the professional traits requiring the most development centre on securing formal recognition of the profession, as well as establishing and maintaining professional exclusivity and professional authority in practitioner-client relationships.

Following the logic of the trait approach, which views professionalisation as the accumulation of specific attributes, translation has made notable progress and can be classified as an emerging profession – one that has acquired some professional traits yet still lacks full professional autonomy. However, sustaining and advancing beyond this status depends on continued efforts from the industry's stakeholders to acquire additional professional traits. Achieving this may involve initiatives such as promoting unionisation and introducing public sanctions and licensure procedures to enhance the recognition of the profession, enforcing stricter regulation regarding recruitment and entrance to the profession as a means to reinforce professional exclusivity, or even establishing a sense of professional authority in practitioner-client relationships.

This conclusion aligns with the outcome from the power perspective (professionalisation through the acquisition and maintenance of power, autonomy and control). According to this perspective, translation is a mimic profession – lacking full societal recognition – and must therefore engage with image building efforts to demonstrate that translation is an essential and complex service best performed by trained professionals. Full professional status, according to this perspective, requires translators persisting with image building until they

receive full validation from society (both general public and clients) as well as greater control over both the internal and external conditions of their service, such as client relationships, subordinate groups, workflows, and their profession as a whole.

However, this thesis suggests that the full professionalisation of translation remains unlikely. Maintaining professional exclusivity is, for the most part, unlikely given the inherent lack of regulation around recruitment and entrance to the profession and that there is a growing acceptance of automated translation solutions and amateurs and non-professionals within the professional translation context. Similarly, the lack of translator agency, especially in the context of collaborating with translation agencies and the platform economy, casts doubt on the possibility of ever gaining full professional control over workflow organisation and the conditions of the project (see discussions in Sections 5.3.1 and 6.4.4). Moreover, while the non-practitioner respondents generally recognised translation as a specialised activity and human translation services as essential, this perception may not endure in light of ever-enhancing and increasingly democratised automated translation solutions (see discussions in Sections 5.3.2 and 6.4.4.1). As such, the professionalisation of translation is, for the time being, suspended, and further progress hinges on and is only achievable if full societal recognition has been gained, if regulation pertaining to quality standards and to controlling who enters the profession is enforced, and if practitioners wield full control and authority over all aspects of the service and their profession, including their clients, their remuneration, the workflow and subordinate groups.

Against this backdrop, questions regarding the possibility of de-professionalisation are, therefore, raised. However, before we broach my de-professionalisation criteria that was introduced in Section 3.5 (see also Table 3.4), it is important to first reiterate that neo-liberal trends and Taylorism have fostered an environment for de-professionalisation to manifest as these movements have resulted in unsustainable working conditions particularly for freelance translators. To illustrate, the standard conditions under which freelance translators work are characterised by disempowerment, the imposition of technologies, the constant downward pressure of price, low professional visibility, reduced ability to exercise the full scope of translation abilities, lack of interpersonal relationships, and a lack of job security. In short, these neo-liberal trends and Taylorism have resulted in relenting issues relating to automation, deskilling and occupational purpose to intensify further.

Building on the results and discussions in Chapter 7, we can conclude that each criterion that makes up the de-professionalisation framework introduced in Section 3.5 has largely been met. To elaborate, in the face of automation, the industry has witnessed attempts at deskilling the task of translation to PEMT for cost- and time-saving purposes and at redefining the role of a professional translator to that of a post-editor (see Section 7.3.1 for discussion of deskilling). Consequently, the translators have been subjected to a drop in volume of professional translation work and to an erosion of rates. In fact, when hypothesising the future

of human translation services (see Section 7.3.3), the future is likely to witness increasingly capable systems gradually taking on more and more of the tasks that we associate with traditional translators, but a professional's intervention, in the form of supervising automated processes (i.e. pre- and post-editing), assuring quality, training MT and AI systems, as well as translating hyper-specialised content, is hypothesised to still be, at least for the foreseeable future, indispensable. However, if MT and AI were to truly reach a standard that matches that of a professional human translator, even when content of a complex or specialised nature is concerned, then there may certainly come a time when the translation profession encompasses nothing more than post-editing and quality assurance like activities. Furthermore, translation is a democratised activity in that MT and AI translation solutions are accessible and often free, thus not only generalising translation skills by creating the impression that human translators and MT and AI are at parity, but also making the act of translation accessible even to those who do not possess language and translation capabilities. As a result, translation has become an activity that is practised in both professional and, arguably more so, non-professional capacities. Aside from the threat of automation and any subsequent repercussions, translation also lacks regulation. A recurring observation across Chapters 5, 6 and 7 relates to the practitioners' concerns that amateur and non-professional translators are encroaching on the professional sphere of translation as they compete for work alongside trained professionals and undercut professional market rates. Participation from such translators is, however, inevitable given the free market and accessible nature of translation and that regulation and recruitment criteria do not seem to be strictly enforced. In particular, translation agencies and online translation platforms were criticised for compromising on quality in pursuit of quicker and cheaper translators who may or may not be suitably qualified or experienced and/or be professional or ethical in their conduct. Aside from questionable recruitment practices, the power relations that govern practitioner-client relationships, as discussed in Sections 5.3.1 and 6.4.4, are becoming increasingly imbalanced as a result of disempowerment and threats to translators' agency. Although the average practitioner is likely to display various efficient signals, such as relevant qualifications, attested work experience and membership to an association (see Section 4.1.1.4.1 for practitioner demographic results; see also Section 6.1.1 for results regarding the characteristics of a translator), and thus boast a strong professional identity, the practitioners have found that they are not only struggling to secure projects with certain types of clients, but that they are also losing the ability to exert professional authority over the conditions of the workflow (i.e. turnaround times and which tools, methods and resources that translators can employ) and their renumeration.

In summary, the modern translation industry is witnessing the inevitable automation of traditional work processes along with a gradual reduction in the need for professional human intervention. There is also a growing generalisation of language and translation skills, coupled with the democratisation of translation. Meanwhile, there are also ongoing attempts to deskill translation to PEMT or to quality assurance tasks. Related to this is the effort to redefine the

translator's role by increasingly framing it as that of a post-editor or quality assurer rather than as a skilled and specialised translator. Moreover, there is continued deference to machines or to less qualified individuals in order to cut down on time and costs. On the back of this approach towards allocating translation projects, power struggles persist over the practical and financial conditions under which translations are produced. Finally, these trends are likely to further undermine the recognition of professional human translation as a necessary, specialised and exclusive service.

Therefore, noting the conclusion that the professionalisation of translation is currently suspended and coupling this with the fact that each of the indicators of de-professionalisation is partially or fully present in a translation context, translation is, arguably, regressing into a less-professionalised state. In other words, the successful professionalisation of translation does not seem feasible under the current and projected circumstances of the industry.

Ultimately, it remains uncertain whether this current shift towards de-professionalisation is set in stone or whether translation will one day be able to firmly establish its status as an emerging or semi profession. The future of translation, both as a service and as a productive and fulfilling profession, is dependent on how the current technological revolution unfolds and the extent to which it shapes clients' preferred translation solutions, translators' level of monopoly over the service and thus the profession, the demand for professional intervention, and public perceptions of the necessity, complexity and exclusivity of professional translation services.

Returning to Amitai Etzioni's (1969, p.ix) assertion that "yesterday's non-professions may be tomorrow's professions", this thesis recognises the dynamic nature of professions. However, from a sociological perspective, translation currently lacks the attributes necessary to claim full professional status. While professionalisation is not a one-way process, and reversing de-professionalisation is possible, the outlook remains uncertain. On the one hand, the human translator is predicted to remain indispensable, especially for enhancing MT and even AI output in order to reach professional standards and for handling hyper-specialised content. This suggests some potential for regaining any lost professional status. On the other hand, translation lacks regulation and it is not an exclusive profession. Also, the ongoing effort to perfect MT and AI raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of translation as both a service and as a satisfying and fulfilling profession. These technological advancements continue to democratise translation, while risking automation and threatening professional monopoly, demand for the service, and recognition. On that note, Etzioni's (1969) optimism does not fully apply to the case of translation as all evidence points to the conclusion that translation is, in the current and projected climate, an unsustainable occupation. Essentially, the likelihood of further de-professionalisation in the future outweighs the likelihood of recommencing professionalisation and making strides towards the status of an emerging or semi profession and ultimately towards the status of a fully-fledged profession.

8.2 Limitations of Study

My thesis harbours potential limitations, and it is important to consider these potential limitations as factors that may have influenced the outcomes of this study. The first limitation relates to the fact that the age demographics of my non-practitioner survey population were somewhat unbalanced. The majority of respondents fell into the 34 and under category (78.8%, n=67) at the time of the survey. Hence, it can be argued that my non-practitioner results were not wholly indicative of general public perceptions as they predominantly represented the attitudes and experiences of the younger demographics who are likely to be more conversant with and critical of technology. With this in mind, it is fair to assume that my non-practitioner results and the key attitudes and themes that represented the dataset would have been a bit more varied if I were to have accumulated data from a much more diverse survey population. While a representative dataset cannot always be guaranteed, measures can certainly be taken to maximise participation. For example, using multiple channels for distribution, attempting further snowball sampling, issuing gentle reminders, and offering small incentives may all help to maximise participation and increase response rates. Additionally, with appropriate funding, it would also become possible to recruit companies that will collect data from a large pool of potential survey respondents.

The second limitation concerns the fact that this project was conducted by an individual researcher. To enhance the credibility of a study's results, it is recommended to have the coding of a thematic analysis peer reviewed by a co-researcher or by someone external in the event that project is conducted individually. Despite this crucial step in the data analysis process, implementing this measure was not possible within the parameters of my methodology or of a doctoral project. Although I completed a full review of my initial coding twice with at least two weeks between each review for the purpose of maintaining accuracy and consistency, there was still the possibility that I overlooked errors or missed alternative interpretations of the data. This limitation also applied to the development of my proposed framework. In other words, it was also not possible to have my list of extracted professional attributes (see Table 3.1 and Table 3.2) and my (de-)professionalisation criteria (see Section 3.5; see also Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 for a breakdown of each criterion along with is description) peer reviewed. In turn, this may have risked some implicit attributes being accounted for while others may have remained unaccounted for. Similarly to the situation with my coding, I reviewed my (de-)professionalisation thrice in order to maintain consistency and to heighten the chances of accurate depictions of the various approaches to professionalisation that were introduced in Chapter 3. That being said, this thesis was conducted for exploratory reasons, and so further research on this subject matter is necessary.

The third limitation relates to the absence of data from clients of translation services. This is an important limitation to address on the basis that the foundations of professionalisation rely on securing positive societal recognition and authority over clients. As such, what clients have to say about translation services is fundamental for navigating holistic discussions on the (de-)professionalisation of translation. Unlike the non-practitioner narrative, for which I collected data from relevant participants, enabling me to compare and contrast actual non-practitioner views with those assumed by the practitioners, speculations were made about client attitudes and perceptions towards, for instance, the complexity of translation skills and their MT literacy. In turn, the conclusions made about client attitudes and perceptions are provisional and are contingent upon the acquisition of relevant data from such participants. As a result, if I had also collected data from clients of translation services, then it is very possible that the conclusions made about practitioner-client relationships, deskilling and their perceptions of human translation services would be different. However, I made the decision to not collect data from clients because there were already several facets to my methodology, namely my practitioner survey coupled with focus groups and my non-practitioner survey. Hence, committing to collecting and analysing a sufficient amount of reliable data from a perhaps difficult-to-reach third population may have resulted in time constraints and pressure to complete my thesis within the stipulated timeframe.

8.3 Future Research

To recap, this thesis contributes to the existing body of TS research on the professionally-orientated aspects of the translation industry (namely Translation Industry Studies) by aligning sociological understandings of (de-)professionalisation against practitioner and non-practitioner perceptions of the contemporary translation industry in order to ascertain the extent to which translation is professionalised and is potentially being de-professionalised. The key finding of this thesis is that despite persistent efforts to professionalise translation, namely the academisation of translation, the setting up and renewing of certifications and CoCs, as well as the establishment of professional translator associations and their efforts to champion the value of their members, it is a profession that is, nevertheless, struggling with furthering professionalisation and is seemingly undergoing gradual de-professionalisation instead. As this thesis suggests, although translation is, from a sociological standpoint, susceptible to further de-professionalisation, there is no denying that professional translators are currently still required to handle specialised content and to prevent the dissemination of unreliable or inaccurate translations. That being said, the de-professionalisation of translation, as discussed in Chapter 7 and in Section 8.1.3, is unlikely to reverse given the persistent efforts to perfect MT and AI technologies and the consequences that the growing deployment of these technologies seem to be having on the practitioners' professional monopoly as well as on their perceived social, professional and financial value.

Therefore, this thesis justifies the need to focus more attention on the ways to adapt oneself to what is a globally competitive and increasingly technologising industry, as well as on establishing possible measures that we can realistically implement to improve the working conditions and the long-term security of our translators. However, before we start arbitrarily recommending and campaigning for modifications to translation practice and policies (i.e. education, technology, ethics and recruitment etc.) with a view to enhancing the experiences of current and future translators, more research and discussions need to take place to ascertain what changes actually need to be made in order to protect the service from unthinking reliance on automation and to ensure that translation remains a profession in which it is worth investing one's time and energy. Additionally, it may also be worth evaluating whether reversing the de-professionalising effect of translation is even necessary for the survival of the service and thus the profession.

Reflecting the limitations of this study (see Section 8.2), an additional avenue for future research includes liaising with clients of translation services to verify their actual attitudes towards translation as a professional service. Obtaining such data could prove to be beneficial in order to narrate their experiences of their practitioner-client relationships as well as to ascertain what clients actually expect and desire from professional translation and automated translation services respectively. With such data, it will become possible to either challenge or justify the practitioners' assumptions on clients' perceptions of translation services as well as to reassess the dynamics between practitioners and their clients. After reassessing this relationship dynamic, it would, in turn, become pertinent to also re-evaluate the (de-)professionalisation of translation, in particular from the power perspective which relies on the acquisition of power over clients and subordinates.

As a final remark to bring this thesis to a close, the majority of practitioners appeared proud to be translators, displaying much passion for languages and translation as well as commitment to their craft. For many, translation is more than just a job, acting as a source of fulfilment and satisfaction, financial stability, opportunities for personal and professional growth, as well as a sense of purpose and meaning. Given how deeply translators' livelihoods are rooted in this profession, it is both timely and necessary to find meaningful ways to protect this passion, uphold the value of their expertise, and create conditions in which their careers can not only survive, but thrive in an evolving industry.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Practitioner Survey Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet – Online Survey

Study title: To what extent do modern practices and attitudes deskill or de-professionalise the freelance translator profession?

Invitation

Thank you for your interest to participate in this online survey, which is part of a PhD research study investigating the professionalisation of freelance translation. The aim of this project is to investigate the professional identity of the modern freelance translator in light of new and emerging practices in the industry.

Please take the time to read through the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If you would like more information about the study, please approach the researcher using the contact details below.

What do I have to do?

The questions will ask for your opinions regarding the impact of modern translation practices and attitudes on the professionalisation of the freelance translation career.

Please answer as many questions as possible. However, if there are any questions that you do not wish to answer, then please leave them blank.

There will be a combination of open-ended and multiple-choice questions, with each set of questions accompanied by additional space should you wish to elaborate on your selected answers or to provide information that was not offered by the pre-populated choices.

This survey can be completed on any device that has access to the internet. No additional resources will be required. This survey should take no more than 20 minutes to complete.

Do I have to take part?

Please note that participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will not affect you in any way.

If you agree to participate but then change your mind once you have started the survey, then you may withdraw at any given time before final submission of your responses by closing the browser and you do not have to provide any reason for your withdrawal. Your data will not be stored and will not be used as part of this study. However, once you have submitted your survey, it will not be possible to exclude your responses from analysis.

Although there are no intended benefits to participation, the survey results will contribute to and be reported in my thesis as well as other academic outputs that focus on ascertaining the occupational status of freelance translation.

Confidentiality and security of information

There are no known risks associated with this study. I will not collect any data that could directly identify you, and your IP address will not be stored. Personal identifiers, such as names, date of birth, gender, addresses, and phone numbers, will not be requested from you. In the event that any personal information has been voluntarily provided, such information will not be disclosed and the data will be anonymised.

The results from the survey will be shared in the post-survey report that will be distributed to participants who have completed the survey. The results will also be reported in my thesis and may contribute to other academic outputs. All information will, however, be completely anonymised.

During the research project, all data will be stored as encrypted files on an online server that is protected by the university's secure systems. This complies with the University of Leeds' data management protocols.

Once the research project has ended, the collected data will likely be stored indefinitely as well as deposited in a repository so that it can be re-used for future research endeavours.

Post-survey report

If you would like to receive this report, we will request your email address only. You may, however, decline this offer.

At the end of the survey, there will be a "yes" or "No" checkbox for you to decide whether you would like to receive the post-survey report by e-mail.

Project oversight

This research is overseen by the University of Leeds, and has received ethics clearance by the University's Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures Research Ethics Committee (Ethics application number: LTSLCS-160)

Requesting information and filing complaints

If you have any questions about any aspect of the study which have not been answered by this Participant Information Sheet, please contact me, the researcher, Mariah Hussain, via the email address: mlmhu@leeds.ac.uk

If you do not wish to speak to the researcher directly, then please contact the researcher's supervisor via the email address: c.m.walker@leeds.ac.uk

Further information is available via the University of Leeds Research Participant Privacy Notice.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you agree to participate, please click "Next" to gain access to the survey.

Appendix II: Non-Practitioner Survey Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet – Online Survey

Study title: To what extent do modern practices and attitudes deskill or de-professionalise the freelance translator profession?

Invitation

Thank you for your interest to participate in this online survey, which is part of a PhD research study investigating the professional attributes associated with freelance translation. The aim of this project is to investigate the professionalisation of the modern freelance translator in light of new and emerging practices in the industry.

Please take the time to read through the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If you would like more information about the study, please approach the researcher using the contact details below.

What do I have to do?

The questions will ask for your opinions regarding the professional status, value, and speciality of translation practices. Please answer as many questions as possible. However, if there are any questions that you do not wish to answer, then please leave them blank.

There will be a combination of open-ended and multiple-choice questions, with each set of questions accompanied by additional space should you wish to elaborate on your selected answers or to provide information that was not offered by the pre-populated choices.

This survey can be completed on any device that has access to the internet. No additional resources will be required. This survey should take no more than approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Do I have to take part?

Please note that participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will not affect you in any way. If you agree to participate but then change your mind once you have started the survey, then you may withdraw at any given time before final submission by closing the browser. Your data will not be stored and will not be used as part of this study. However, once you have submitted your survey, it will not be possible to exclude your responses from analysis.

Confidentiality and security of information

There are no known risks associated with this study. I will not collect any data that could directly identify you, and your IP address will not be stored. Personal identifiers, such as names, dates of birth, addresses, and phone numbers, will not be requested from you.

The results from the survey will be reported in my thesis and may contribute to other academic outputs. All information will, however, be completely anonymised. All data will be stored as encrypted files on an online server that is protected by the university's secure systems. This complies with the University of Leeds' data management protocols.

Project oversight

This research is overseen by the University of Leeds, and has received ethics clearance by the University's Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures Research Ethics Committee (Ethics application number: LTSLCS-160)

Requesting information and filing complaints

If you have any questions about any aspect of the study which have not been answered by this Participant Information Sheet, please contact me, the researcher, Mariah Hussain, via the email address: mlmhu@leeds.ac.uk

If you do not wish to speak to the researcher directly, then please contact the researcher's supervisor via the email address: c.m.walker@leeds.ac.uk

Further information is available via the University of Leeds Research Participant Privacy Notice.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you agree to participate with the understanding that the data you submit will be processed accordingly, please click "Next" to start the survey.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you agree to participate, please click "Next" to gain access to the survey.

Appendix III: Focus Group Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet – Online Focus Group

Study title: To what extent do modern practices and attitudes deskill or de-professionalise the freelance translator profession?

Invitation

Thank you for completing the online survey. You are now invited to participate in an online focus group to elaborate on the themes introduced in the survey.

Please take the time to read through the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If you would like more information about the study, please approach the researcher using the contact details below.

What do I have to do?

The focus group will expand on the issues raised in the survey, providing a platform for you to further discuss your opinions regarding the professionalisation of freelance translation, as well as to raise awareness of the sources that impact the career's perceived professionalism. Potential topics include societal and professional recognition, the value of qualifications, the expansion of artificial intelligence in translation practices, and the circumstances surrounding non-professional translators.

Please note that active participation and engagement with the other members of the group are advised. There will be a maximum of 8 participants per session in addition to the researcher who will act as the moderator to provide discussion prompts when necessary.

The focus group session should take no more than 60 minutes and can be accessed on any device with an internet connection. The session will require audio and you may decide whether you would like your video turned on or off. Unless you wish to use headphones, no additional resources will be required.

Will the focus group be recorded?

The focus group will be audio- and video-recorded, and the recordings will be used for transcription purposes only. Recordings will be deleted from all locations as soon as the transcription process has been completed and verified. The recordings will not be used for any other purposes.

Do I have to take part?

Please note that participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will not affect you in any way.

If you agree to participate but then change your mind after you have provided your consent, you may withdraw at any given time until midday of Tuesday 2. January 2024. If you withdraw after the focus group has taken place, your direct quotes will not be used. However, during the focus group discussion, your contributions may have affected other people's contributions and these responses will continue to be a part of the research data set.

Confidentiality and security of information

Personal identifiers, such as dates of birth, addresses, and phone numbers, will not be requested from you. However, your name and email address will be held for communication purposes and to confirm availabilities. This data will be kept confidential and will not be passed on to third parties. During the focus group, you do not need to disclose your real name.

The results from the focus group will be reported in my thesis and may contribute to other academic outputs. All information will, however, be completely anonymised.

All data will be stored as encrypted files on an online server that is protected by the university's secure systems. This complies with the University of Leeds' data management protocols.

Project oversight

This research is overseen by the University of Leeds, and has received ethics clearance by the University's Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures Research Ethics Committee (Ethical application number: LTSLCS-160).

Requesting information and filing complaints

If you have any questions about any aspect of the study which have not been answered by this Participant Information Sheet, please contact me, the researcher, Mariah Hussain, via the email address: mlmhu@leeds.ac.uk

If you do not wish to speak to the researcher directly, then please contact the researcher's supervisor via the email address: c.m.walker@leeds.ac.uk

Further information is available via the University of Leeds Privacy Notice.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. A consent form will also have been provided so that you can confirm that you are happy with the arrangements of the focus group.

Appendix IV: Focus Group Consent Form

Consent Form – Online Focus Group

Study title: To what extent do modern practices and attitudes deskill or de-professionalise the freelance translator profession?

Statement:	Yes/No
I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time until midday of Tuesday 2. January 2024 without giving any reason and without there being any consequences.	
I understand that if I withdraw, my direct quotes will not be used. However, during the focus group discussion, my contributions may have affected other people's contributions and these responses will continue to be a part of the research data set.	
I understand that my responses will be anonymised, and I will not be identifiable in the reports that follow.	
I understand that the data collected from me may be stored and used in relevant future research in an anonymised form.	
I understand that the focus group will be audio- and video-recorded which will be used for transcription purposes only.	
I agree to actively take part in the focus group, and will inform the researcher should my contact details change.	

Please sign and date the consent form below to confirm that you are happy with the arrangements of the focus group:

Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	

Appendix V: Practitioner Survey Questions

Asterisk (*) denotes mandatory question.

Profile questions

1. What type of translator are you?*
   [Freelance], [In-house], [Other, please specify]

2. Please select your age bracket.*
   [18-24], [25-34], [35-44], [45-54], [55-64], [65 or over]

3. Which country are you based in?*
   [Drop down list of all official countries]

4. For how long have you been working as a freelance translator?*
   [Less than 3 years], [3-5 years], [5-10 years], [10-15 years], [More than 15 years]

5. Do you work full-time as a translator?*
   [Yes] or [No]

6. Which areas of translation do you specialise in? Tick all that apply.*
   [Audiovisual], [Business], [Finance], [General], [Literary], [Legal], [Marketing], [Medical], [Scientific], [Technical], [Other(s), please specify]

7. Please state your main language pair(s).*

8. Which qualifications in translation have you earned? Tick all that apply.
   [Undergraduate in translation, or similar], [Master's in translation, or similar], [Certificate in Translation (CertTrans)], [Diploma in Translation (DipTrans)], [Other(s), please specify]

9. Are you a member of any professional / translator associations?*
   [Yes] or [No]

10. Through which sources do you apply for / find translation work? Tick all that apply.*
    [Translation agencies], [Direct clients], [Your own website], [ProZ and/or Translators Café], [General-purpose marketplaces], [Online / cloud-based platforms], [Other(s), please specify]

[Next page]

1. Briefly, what made you want to become a translator?

2. Please indicate your response to the following questions by using the rating scale (Not satisfying at all – not satisfying – somewhat satisfying – satisfying – very satisfying):

    a. How would you rate your experience as a translator when you first started out?
    b. How would you rate your experience as a translator now?

3. Have you ever considered leaving the translation profession?
    [Yes] or *[No]*
    a. If yes: why did you consider leaving?
    b. If no: why have you not considered leaving?

Additional comments relating to your experience as a translator (optional):

[Next page]

1. In what ways do you think that general and translation technologies have influenced, if at all, the autonomy of freelance translators in recent times?

2. Please indicate your position to each of the following statements (Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree – Not sure):
    a. Delegating low priority jobs to collaborative / volunteer / community translators is an ideal solution.
    b. The quality and ease of access of machine translation and artificial intelligence tools reduce the demand for professional judgement.
    c. Translation work is becoming standardised and less complicated because of technological developments.
    d. Online / cloud-based translation platforms (e.g., Unbabel, Smartling, Smartcat etc.) exhibit a professional image and professional standards.
    e. Online / cloud-based translation platforms provide a great opportunity for professionals to find meaningful work.

Additional comments relating to machine translation, artificial intelligence, and online / cloud-based platforms (optional):

[Next page]

1. Based on your experience, do you think that translator associations' admission criteria enables the selection of qualified and professional members only?

[Yes], [No], or *[Not sure]*

2. Based on your experience, do you think that translation agencies' recruitment criteria employs qualified professionals only?
   [Yes], [No], or *[Not sure]*

3. Do you think that the translation profession is oversaturated and overly competitive?
   [Yes] or *[No]*

4. Please indicate your position to each of the following statements (Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree – Not sure):
   a. The separation between professional translators and amateur translators has become blurred in recent times.
   b. Translation is an exclusive profession.
   c. All members listed in translator associations' directors are qualified or experienced professionals.
   d. Translator associations enhance the professional image of translators.

Additional comments relating to admission to the profession (optional):

[Next page]

1. Do you follow a code of conduct?
   [Yes] or *[No]*
   a. If yes, could you provide brief details of the code(s) of conduct that you adhere to?

2. Do you think that codes of conduct are well enforced by the practitioners within the freelance translation profession?
   [Yes], [No] or *[Not sure]*

Additional comments relating to codes of conduct (optional):

[Next page]

1. Are you aware of any institutions or authorities that offer Continuous Professional Development for freelance translators?
   [Yes] or *[No]*
   a. Do you / would you partake in Continuous Professional Development?
      [Yes] or *[No]*

2. Do you think that learning Translation Theory at university is valuable?
   [Yes] or *[No]*

3. Please indicate your position to each of the following statements (Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree – Not sure):
   a. A formal qualification in translation should be mandatory for those who wish to become translators.
   b. A formal qualification in translation is not necessary if you have acquired enough relevant experience.
   c. A university degree in translation is overrated.
   d. Translator training programmes cater towards the labour market and equip aspiring translators with the specialised knowledge required to practice the trade successfully.
   e. It is easy to find translation work even without the proper credentials.
   f. Translation requires the strict application of specialised and exclusive knowledge.
   g. Only qualified translators are capable of applying the knowledge and skills required to translate.
   h. Professional translation skills are just as valuable and exclusive now as they were during pre-machine translation times.
   i. The demand for professional translators' judgement is decreasing over time.

Additional comments relating to training and qualifications (optional):

[Next page]

1. In relation to the country that you are based in, do you think that the public's perception of the value and prestige of freelance translation has become better, worse, or has not changed at all in recent times?
   [Better], [Worse], [Not changed] or *[Not sure]*

2. Please indicate your response to the following questions by using the rating scale (not valuable at all – not very valuable – somewhat valuable – valuable – very valuable):
   a. How would you rate the value of human translation services?
   b. How do you think the general public would rate the value of human translation services?

3. Please indicate your response to the following questions by using the rating scale (not prestigious at all – not very prestigious – somewhat prestigious – prestigious – very prestigious):
   a. How would you rate the prestige of your profession?

b. How do you think the general public would rate the prestige of your profession?

4. Please indicate your response to the following questions by using the rating scale (not specialised at all – not very specialised – somewhat specialised – specialised – very specialised):
    a. How would you rate the speciality of the skills required to translate?
    b. How do you think the general public would rate the speciality of the skills required to translate?

5. Do you think that freelance translation is a well-protected and secure career?
[Yes] or *[No]*

6. Do you think that the freelance translation profession is under threat?
[Yes] or *[No]*
    a. In your opinion, what are the greatest threats and sources of competition to freelance translators?

7. Briefly, what makes translation a profession?

8. Do you think that freelance translation is / will ever be considered as a full-fledged profession?
[Yes] or *[No]*

9. Please indicate your response to the following questions by using the rating scale (no risk at all – little risk – moderate risk – high risk – very high risk):
    a. To what extent do you think that freelance translation is at risk of becoming de-professionalised?
    b. Please explain the reasoning to your previous answer.

10. Finally, please indicate your position to each of the following statements (Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree – Not sure):
    a. I consider myself a professional.
    b. Measures are in place to protect translators' careers.
    c. Human translation services can withstand competition and maintain autonomy over future technological enhancements.
    d. The translation profession can withstand challenges and full recover from local and global setbacks (e.g., recession, lockdown etc.)
    e. Professional translators can withstand competition from and maintain autonomy over the increasing contributions of non-professional / amateur translators.

f. Human translation is and will remain an essential service.
g. Legal requirement should be implemented in order to be able to use "Translator" as a job title.

Additional comments relating to societal recognition, job security, and freelance translation as a profession (optional):

[Next page]

1. Would you like to receive a post-survey report by e-mail?
   [Yes] or [No]
   a. If yes, please provide the e-mail address you would like the post-survey report to be sent to:

2. Would you like to participate in a follow-up focus group (remote via Teams)?
   [Yes] or [No]
   a. If yes, please select your availabilities: [Link to Eventbrite page]

Appendix VI: Non-Practitioner Survey Questions

Asterisk (*) denotes mandatory question.

1. Please select your age bracket.*
   [18-24], [25-34], [35-44], [45-54], [55-64], [65 or over]

2. Which country are you based in?*
   [Drop down list of all official countries]

3. Please select your employment status?*
   [Employed], [Self-employed], [Student], [Currently out of work], [Due to start a new job within the next month], [Prefer not to say], [Other, please specify]

4. Please state your occupation.*

5. Have you ever purchased professional translation services?*
   [Yes] or [No]
   a. If yes, did you purchase your translation based on price or on perceived quality?
      [Price], [Quality], [Both], or [Neither]

6. Please indicate your response to the following questions by using the rating scale (not valuable at all – not very valuable – somewhat valuable – valuable – very valuable):
   a. How would you rate the value of human translation services?

Additional comments relating to purchasing translation services (optional):

[Next page]

1. In your opinion, what do you think the role and tasks of a freelance translator entail?

2. Please indicate your response to the following questions by using the rating scale (not prestigious at all – not very prestigious – somewhat prestigious –prestigious– very prestigious):
   a. How would you rate the value of human translation services?

3. Do you consider freelance translation a full-fledged profession?
   [Yes] or [No]

4. Do you consider freelance translators a professional group of experts?
   [Yes] or [No]

5. Do you think that translation is a complex task?
   [Yes] or [No]

6. Please indicate your response to the following questions by using the rating scale (not specialised at all – not very specialised – somewhat specialised – specialised – very specialised):
   a. How would you rate the speciality of the skills required to translate?

7. Do you think that it is easy to become a freelance translator?
   [Yes] or [No]

8. Please indicate your position to each of the following statements (Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree – Not sure):
   a. Anyone who speaks a second language can be considered a translator.
   b. A university degree in translation is overrated.
   c. Translation requires the strict application of specialised and exclusive knowledge.

Additional comments relating to translation skills (optional):

[Next page]

1. Please indicate your response to the following questions by using the rating scale (not trustworthy at all – not very trustworthy – somewhat trustworthy – trustworthy – very trustworthy):
   a. To what extent do you trust Google Translate, or other similar online translation tools, with your translation needs?

2. Do you consider machine translation (e.g., Google Translate) and artificial intelligence (e.g., Chat GPT) as competitors to professional human translators?
   [Yes] or [No]

3. Would you trust a bi- / multilingual, who doesn't possess any translation qualifications, with your translation needs?
   [Yes] or [No]

4. Finally, please indicate your position to each of the following statements (Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree – Not sure):
   a. Human translation services can withstand competition from future technological enhancements.

b. Paying for translations is an unnecessary expense.
c. Human translation is and will remain and essential service.

Additional comments relating to translation as a paid service (optional):

Appendix VII: Focus Group Discussion Prompts

Introductions:

- General introductions (name, language pairs etc.)
- Briefly, what attracted you to the translation profession?

Topic 1: The Professional Translator:

- What characteristics make up a professional translator?
- Is there a place for amateur translators and hobbyists? How do they influence, if at all, the perception of freelance translation as a profession?

Topic 2: Freelance Translation as a Profession:

- Do you consider freelance translation a profession? Why / why not?
- Is translation de-professionalising? Why / why not?

Topic 3: Modern Practices:

- Over the course of your career, how has the landscape of the freelance translation profession changed?
- Are there any industry developments or trends that influenced your career plans or made you change the way you view the freelance translation profession?

Wrap-up:

- What are your general thoughts regarding the future of the freelance translation profession?

Appendix VIII: Post-Survey Report

Study title: To what extent do modern practices and attitudes deskill or de-professionalise the freelance translator profession?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in my online survey that explores the professional attributes associated with the freelance translator career in light of new and emerging practices in the industry.

This present report provides a snapshot of some of the initial findings. If you would like further clarification or would like to simply offer your thoughts in response to the below results, feel free to contact me via mlmhu@leeds.ac.uk

Survey sample and demographics

A total of 171 participants took part in this survey (with n=x representing the number of responses).

A wide range of ages were represented in the sample, from 25 and under to 65 and over. And in regard to location, a total of 31 countries of residence covering all continents were selected. 59.9% (n=101) of respondents selected the UK as the country that they are based in, and in terms of frequency, the countries that followed were France (5.8%, n=10), Germany and Italy (4.1% each, n=7 each), and Spain (2.9% n=5). Many other countries were represented in the sample by just one or by up to four respondents.

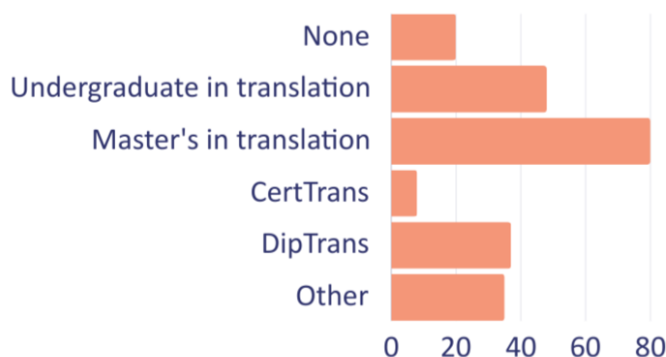
The below illustrations provide further details of the survey sample.

TOP WORKING LANGUAGES

In addition to English, the most prominent languages that respondents translate from or into are French, Spanish, and German.

EXPERIENCE

47.4% (n=81) of respondents have more than 15 years of experience working as a translator.



TRANSLATOR TRAINING

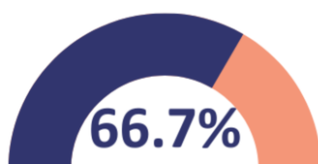
The most commonly held qualification is a Master's in translation or in a similar subject (46.8%, n=80), which is followed by an Undergraduate in translation or in a similar subject (28.1%, n=48), and then by DipTrans (21.6%, n=37).

FREELANCER VS. IN-HOUSE

164 out of 171 (95.9%) respondents identified as a freelance translator, meanwhile the remaining identified as an in-house translator or as retired.

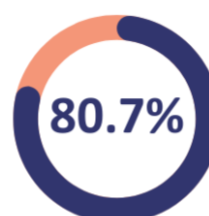
FULL-TIME VS. PART-TIME

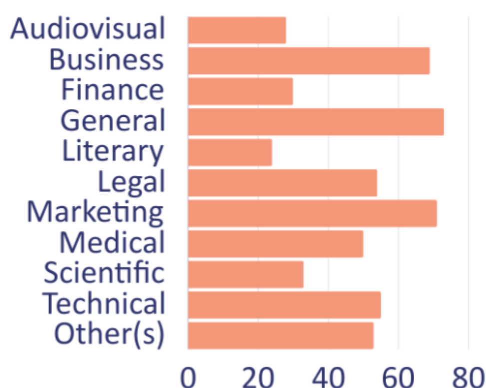
66.7% (n=114) of respondents work full-time as a translator.



MEMBERSHIPS

80.7% (n=138) of respondents are a member of at least one professional translator association.





TOP SPECIALISATIONS

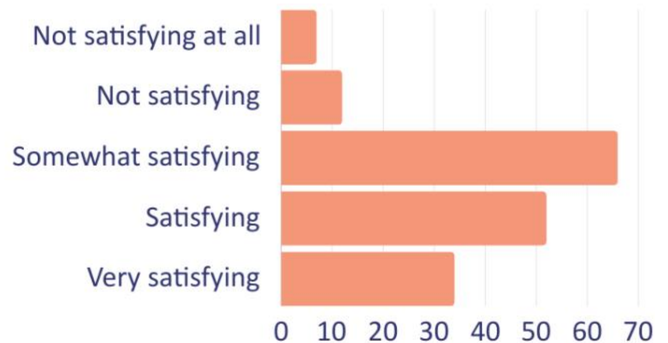
In addition to general translations, the top three specialisations are Marketing (41.5%, n=71), Business (40.4%, n=69), and Technical (32.2%, n=55).

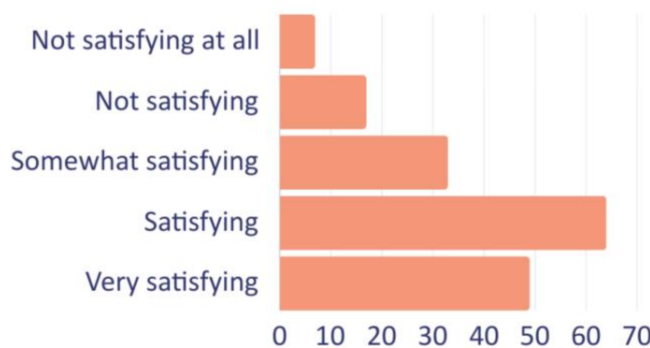
Key findings

The following illustrations depict some of the initial findings that were drawn from the data, covering themes relating to: experiences as a translator, professional conduct, and skillset.

FIRST EXPERIENCES AS A TRANSLATOR

Half of the respondents (50.3%, n=86) found their first experiences as a translator as either satisfying or very satisfying, with only 4.1% (n=7) finding no satisfaction at all.





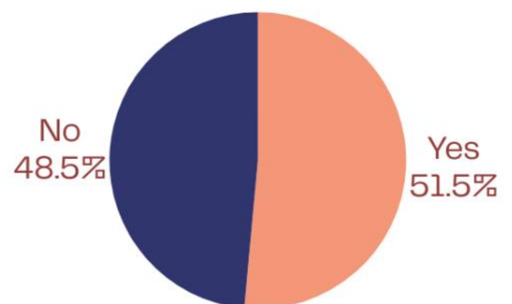
CURRENT EXPERIENCES AS A TRANSLATOR

Respondents generally appear to be more satisfied with their experiences as a translator now than when they first started out, with 66.4% (n=113) finding their current experiences as either satisfying or very satisfying.

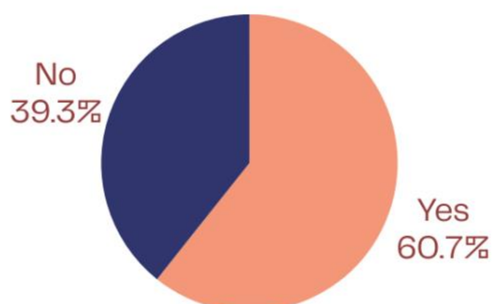
CONSIDERED LEAVING THE PROFESSION?

Responses were split almost 50/50 when asked if leaving the translation profession was ever considered.

Common reasons for leaving include: declining rates and insufficient earnings, drop in work volume, and instability. Common reasons for staying include: enjoyment, flexibility, and love of translation.



OVERLY COMPETITIVE?



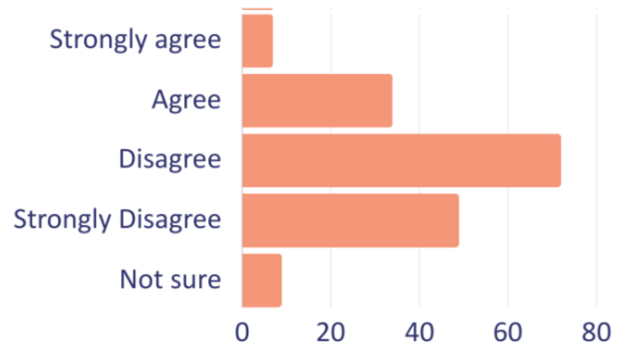
60.7% (n=102) thought that the freelance translation profession is currently oversaturated and overly competitive.

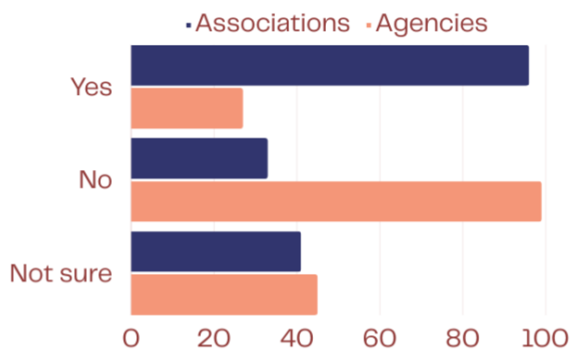
CODES OF CONDUCT

The majority of respondents (84.2%, n=144) do follow a code of conduct. Upon review of the codes that are adhered to, ITI's Code of Professional Conduct was frequently cited.

INFLUENCE OF TECHNOLOGY

42.1% (n=72) disagreed and a further 28.7% (n=49) strongly disagreed with the notion that translation work is becoming standardised and less complicated as a result of technological developments.





MEMBERSHIP & RECRUITMENT CRITERION

56.6% (n=96) believe that translator associations' admission criterion admit qualified and professional members only.

Meanwhile, 57.9% (n=99) believe that translation agencies do not employ qualified professionals only.

CPD

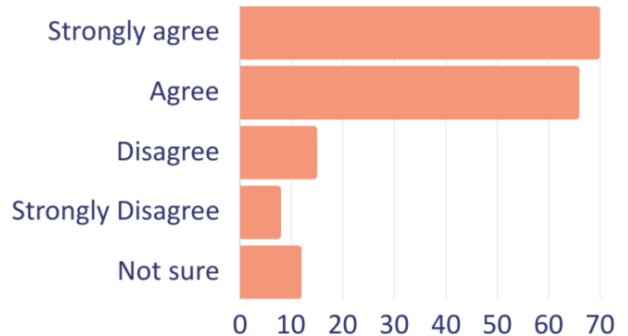
92.2% (n=153) currently partake in or would like to partake in CPD.

TRANSLATION THEORY

70.1% (n=117) believe that teaching translation theory at university is valuable.

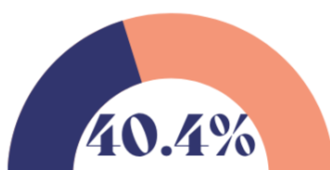
TRANSLATION SKILLS

40.9% (n=70) strongly agreed and a further 38.6% (n=66) agreed with the notion that professional translation skills are just as exclusive and valuable now as they were during pre-machine translation times.



FREELANCE TRANSLATION AS A PROFESSION

40.4% (n=69) think that freelance translation is / will one day be considered as a full-fledged profession.



When asked about what makes freelance translation a profession, the following characteristics were frequently cited:

- Specialised skillset (especially in writing, languages, and domain specific knowledge);
- Training and commitment to lifelong development;
- Professional conduct;
- Responsibility and demand for the service.