

**TRANSLATION OF RESEARCH ARTICLES: A HUNGARIAN CASE
STUDY IN THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**TUDOMÁNYOS CIKKEK FORDÍTÁSA: ESETTANULMÁNY
EGY MAGYAR EGYETEM BÖLCSESZET- ÉS
TÁRSADALOMTUDOMÁNYI KARÁRÓL**

ROBIN LEE NAGANO¹ – HEIDRUN TÓTH-LOESTI²

Abstract: In this questionnaire study, researchers in the humanities and social sciences were asked about how they approached the writing of an article on one aspect of their research and then the translation of the article into English for a journal's special issue. In particular, we attempt to identify the role that proofreaders and translators play in producing the pre-submission manuscript. Approximately the same number of respondents translated their articles themselves as had the manuscript translated, and it was important to them that translators were familiar with academic writing; relatively few had their manuscripts proofread before submission. More involvement of literacy brokers may be helpful in publishing, especially in a second language.

Keywords: *English for research publication purposes, translation, academic texts, language broker*

Absztrakt: Ebben a kérdőíves vizsgálatban a bölcsészet- és társadalomtudományok kutatóit arról kérdeztük, hogy miként közelítették meg a kutatásuk egy aspektusáról szóló cikk megírását, majd a cikk angolra fordítását egy folyóirat különszámához. Különösen azt próbáljuk feltárni, hogy a lektorok és a fordítók milyen szerepet játszanak a benyújtás előtti kézirat elkészítésében. Körülbelül ugyanannyi válaszadó fordította le saját maga a cikkét, mint ahányan lefordították, és fontos volt számukra, hogy a fordítók jártasak legyenek a tudományos cikkírásban; viszonylag kevesen lektoráltatták kéziratukat a benyújtás előtt. A lektorok és fordítók nagyobb mértékű bevonása hasznos lehet a publikálásban, különösen idegen nyelven.

Kulcsszavak: *tudományos publikálás, szakfordítás, tudományos cikkírás*

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- ¹ ROBIN LEE NAGANO
mesteroktató
BTK Modern Filológiai Intézet, Alkalmazott Nyelvészeti és Fordítástudományi Tanszék
Miskolci Egyetem
robin.nagano@uni-miskolc.hu
- ² DR. HEIDRUN TÓTH-LOESTI
óraadó oktató
BTK Modern Filológiai Intézet, Német Nyelvészeti és Irodalomtudományi Tanszék
Miskolci Egyetem
heidiloesti@msn.com

1. Introduction

Within the larger area of language for academic purposes, two topic areas that have gained increasing attention in recent years are writing (English) for research publishing purposes and the situation of multilingual scholars – those who do research and publish their findings in more than one language. As we all know, English has a special role in global academic publication, and many countries and institutions are encouraging their researchers to publish in English to reach an international audience and raise the profile of the institution on an international level. Drawing on research in both areas, one focus of language researchers has been on non-native speakers of English who are publishing their research – or attempting to – in English.

Kachru's categorization of World Englishes into inner circle, outer circle, and expanding circle (Kachru 1985) is a concept that describes proficiency in English that categorizes English speakers (and the English they speak) based on their country of origin. The inner circle consists of native speakers of English in a country where English is the primary language, the outer circle is made up of English speakers in former colonies and/or countries where English is an official language but other languages are commonly spoken, and the expanding circle is, basically, every other case. Kachru's model has been criticized and expanded upon, but still serves as a useful approach to considering different contexts, and how they affect scholars publishing in English. Canagarajah (1996) pointed out, for instance, that not just language proficiency and language use in the environment matter; these three categories can also describe circumstances that researchers are placed in that go beyond language proficiency: factors such as access to resources, from academic books to photocopiers and paper – and these days, access to the internet and online databases. Scholars in the expanding circle may face difficulties that inner-circle members can hardly imagine. If we combine these two perspectives, then scholars in the inner circle are native English speakers studying and working in English-speaking countries such as the US or UK, with full access to well-stocked libraries, full-text databases, and often research funds. While access to resources has certainly improved, Hungary clearly is a member of the expanding circle. Structural and financial restrictions exist, English is not widely used on a daily basis, and language issues play a role for most Hungarian scholars planning to publish their research in English.

At the same time, national and institutional policies designed to encourage or even require publication in a language other than local language – preferably in English, it seems – are increasingly common. In Hungary, these range from institutional publication requirements for a doctoral degree (Nagano–Spiczéné Bukovszki 2017) to national requirements for application for the rank of full professor (administered and assessed on the national level in Hungary) (Sasvári–Ludányi 2021). Systems for quantifying research performance typically give more points to publications in a foreign language and in international journals. Such systems lead to debates about the fair application of systems dependent on journal rankings (impact factor, Scimago rankings, etc.) across all disciplines. Traditions in the social sciences and in the humanities differ from medicine or engineering in

factors such as the number of authors, the use of qualitative studies or the prestige of book chapters (Alpár et al. 2019; Sooryamoorthy 2020; Sasvári–Ludányi 2021).

In addition to research circumstances, the discipline of the researcher also plays a role in the languages used for publishing. Disciplines such as the medical, engineering, and natural sciences – often called the hard sciences – are based on knowledge that is true anywhere in the world, and thus relevant to and applicable by researchers and users across the globe. The situation is not so clear cut in the soft sciences – the humanities and social sciences – which have a much closer relation to culture and where research topics may focus on a phenomenon – be it a poet, a historical episode, a social group, or a language – that is more confined to a particular region or culture. Burgess et al. (2014), in a survey of Spanish scholars in psychology and history, found that their strongest motivation for publishing in Spanish was to share results with the local community; publishing in English was motivated by communicating results to the international community, gaining recognition for research work, and meeting the requirements of professional promotion. According to Kulczycki et al. (2020), the situation remains similar today: scholars in the soft sciences tend to publish in both the local language(s) and in languages for international audiences, mainly English. Their seven-country study of social sciences and humanities researchers in Europe concluded that “multilingual publishing keeps locally relevant research alive with the added potential for creating impact” (Kulczycki et al. 2020: 1373). They found that during a three-year period 58.7% of the 50,000 or so scholars represented in the database study published in English, 65.5% in a local language, and 9.5% in another language.

Flowerdew and Li (2009) found that many established social scientists in Hong Kong preferred to publish their research in Chinese for a variety of reasons, including its relevance to Chinese speakers. Curry and Lillis (2004) found that scholars in fields of psychology in Hungary, Slovakia, and Spain published in a variety of languages: a local or national language so as to contribute to the local/national academic community and English or other languages to reach an international (and often more specialized) audience. Approximately one third of their English-language publications were in national journals.

Researchers may encounter difficulties in expressing themselves in the appropriate fashion – especially novice writers, and especially those writing in a foreign language. In these cases, authors may call on others for assistance in grammar and style as well as academic conventions (Burrough-Boenisch 2003). This can range from tasks from translation to correction/proofreading and may include content-specific feedback; in the later stages, reviewers and editors also play a role in shaping the final form of the work. Academic writing researchers have called this text-shaping support role by various terms; Lillis and Curry (2006) suggest “literacy broker” as a kind of umbrella term, and acknowledge their importance in multilingual publishing: “a key to scholars’ success in publishing is their interactions with literacy brokers — gatekeepers such as journal editors and peer reviewers, and disciplinary and language specialists who may be involved at various points in the trajectory of writing and publishing articles” (Curry–Lillis 2015).

Not surprisingly, the use of literacy brokers is far more common in forming articles intended for submission to international journals than for national journals in English or other foreign languages (Curry – Lillis 2007). This is no doubt related to language use issues, as well as the challenges of claiming a place in a wider research community. In Lillis and Curry (2006), text analysis is used to explore the contributions of brokers, including pre-submission brokers, in shaping arguments and choosing the focus of information, as well as in producing smoother language use in the manuscript to be submitted. In a case study of Romanian researchers publishing in English, Bardi (2015) discusses the valuable role of language brokers, most often proofreaders – especially when they go beyond sentence-level matters and comment on issues such as text coherence and the overall argument structure. In Bardi's study translators are not mentioned and the preferred strategy of published scholars is for authors to write in English rather than translate from another language into English (a strategy that we also support, when it is an option).

Studies tracing the use of language brokers in the publication process are still rather limited, and often focus on trying to determine or categorize the changes recommended by language brokers, as well as to assess them. Case studies are common, and authors are scattered in time, place, circumstances and/or discipline. These in-depth, close studies have much to offer; still, gathering information from one group of scholars that share a context (at least in terms of institutional affiliation and the publication task at hand) provides a chance to get a glimpse of the strategies used and choices made when publishing both in the local language and in English.

The objective of this study is to explore the strategies of humanities and social sciences scholars in the expanding circle – in a Hungarian university – regarding one particular instance of publishing their research in Hungarian and in English. Faculty members were asked about writing two articles – one in Hungarian and its translation in English – and about the role of language brokers in the process.

2. The special issues

One of the journals published by the university press (*Szellem és tudomány/Mind and Science*) produced two special issues to represent research being carried out by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Miskolc. Members of the faculty were strongly encouraged to contribute to both the Hungarian-language and the English-language issue, with the stipulation that the English must be a translation of the Hungarian article, meaning that it should cover exactly the same topic. Authors were requested to submit a 5–7-page summary of a specific academic topic in which they had carried out research and that they felt was of particular importance, with a focus on their results and their work's relevance to the field. The paper was not expected to present new results and was not intended only for the academic community.

Both issues were published in 2020 (link for Hungarian issue: https://matarka.hu/cikk_list.php?fusz=169095; link for English issue: https://matarka.hu/cikk_list.php?fusz=173871). The submission deadline for the Hungarian paper was approximately two months earlier than that for the English paper. The total number

of different authors represented in the issues is 88. Articles were published in both Hungarian and English by 68 authors. A further 20 published in one language only (16 in Hungarian only; 4 in English only, all of whom are native speakers of English).

3. Survey

A link to an online questionnaire (made using Google Forms) was sent in September 2020 to all authors whose articles were published in either of the special issues; the cover letter was written by the researchers and distributed to the authors by an e-mail sent by the editor of the special issues. The questionnaire, written in Hungarian, consisted of four questions on the Hungarian article (on the approach chosen, proofreading, and revision), 17 on the English article (approach, translation, proofreading, and revision) and seven on publishing in additional languages in general (languages, expectations, teaching practices). Valid responses were obtained from 47 authors, a return rate of 53%. Of the respondents, all but three submitted articles in both languages.

4. Results

In this article we focus on questions in relation to the use of language brokers, both for the Hungarian and English articles. Judging from the authors' responses, it was very common for only the authors to deal with their own manuscripts up to the point of submission (after that, naturally other language and content brokers were involved as reviewers and editors). When others were involved, they either gave feedback (for the Hungarian and English manuscripts) or translated the manuscript into English.

We chose not to use terms such as "proofread" or "review" (which at any rate do not have one particular definition, either in English or Hungarian) and instead asked the authors whether they had asked anyone to look over their manuscript and give feedback. For the Hungarian manuscript, eleven authors said they had asked someone to look over both the language and the content, while another three had asked someone to look over the content and another two wanted feedback on the language usage, adding up to 16 respondents, or 34%. They received feedback in the areas of language (11 responses), content (4), structure (2) and citation and referencing (1). When minor modifications were suggested, all but one author said that they had carried out minor modifications based on the feedback. Major changes were recommended in three cases (one each for language use, content, and structure), but just one author ranked their modifications as major (for structure), while the other two reported making only minor changes. Thus, it seems that feedback is generally responded to, but may not be accepted in full. In addition, three authors said that they had made minor modifications in areas where they did not report receiving feedback, which suggests that the act of reading the feedback provided an opportunity to revise other points of their manuscripts.

Of the 47 respondents, three chose not to submit an article in English. They gave a number of reasons for this choice: all three said that they didn't have time to do it themselves, and two also mentioned the expense of paying for translation. One

author commented that they did not know of a translator who could handle specialized texts and received no help with finding one, despite requesting it.

Half of the authors reported that they translated the article into English themselves. When we asked what proportion of this group's works were published in a language other than Hungarian, responses varied between 5% and 100%, averaging at around 43%. In this group, six authors had their manuscripts checked after translation.

The other half had their manuscript translated, most often the entire article, but in four cases just some parts. In this group, publication in a language other than Hungarian fell in the same range (5%–100%) but the average was much lower at under 16%. The respondents who had their articles translated ($n = 22$) were asked who did the translating. Their answers fall into two main groups: either a translator or a colleague, someone working in the same institution. Of the seven authors who used someone they identified as a professional translator, one turned to a translation agency and the others hired freelance translators. Four of them entrusted the work to translators they had worked with before, while the other two worked with the translator for the first time. The main means of finding a professional translator appears to be previous experience or through the recommendation of colleagues. None of the seven reported using an Internet search to find a translator.

Over twice as many of the authors asked colleagues (i.e., not full-time professional translators) to translate their articles, mainly also members of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (which includes an institute of modern languages), and in three cases a colleague in the same department or institute. One author gave the task to a student, and two entrusted it to a friend or relative who knows English well. In this article we will call this group “informal translators”.

We asked what factors were taken into account when choosing someone (professional or informal translator) to do the task of translating. *Table 1* shows the most frequently chosen options (multiple choices could be selected). One person named an additional factor, “the professional competence of the colleague recommending the translator”.

Table 1. Factors considered when choosing a translator ($n = 26$)

Factor	Number of responses	Percentage of respondents
ability to meet the deadline	14	54%
previous experience with the translator	11	42%
the translator's familiarity with academic writing	10	38%
the translation fee	7	27%
the translator's familiarity with the topic	6	23%

We enquired about what reference materials – if any – were provided to translators. Eight of the 22 respondents who used translators (36%) provided materials: earlier publications of the author in Hungarian (6 respondents), in both languages (2), and in English (1); English-language publications on the same topic by different authors (1), and a list of terminology in Hungarian and English (2). We were also curious about whether there was any interaction between translator and author during the

translation process. Seven of the 22 authors (32%) responded that the translator had questions (4 cases with informal translators, 3 with professionals). Questions were placed about definitions of terms, clarification of minor unclear points, and (most frequently) selection of appropriate terminology.

Full-time translators usually quoted prices based on the number of characters, while there was more variety among the informal translators: character count, page count and time spent were all reported as the basis for calculating fees. The authors considered the fees to be reasonable (except for the two cases where no fee was charged). The respondents rarely reported concrete fees, though several of them indicated that they were charged fees below market rate.

5. Discussion

Publishing academic work in English can be a rather daunting challenge for those in a non-English environment. In this case, the special issues offered a publication opportunity in both Hungarian and English, and the leadership strongly encouraged faculty members to contribute to the faculty research profile reflected in the special issue. A somewhat unusual feature here was the requirement that the English article be a translation of the Hungarian version. Most faculty members contributed to both issues (a comparison of the tables of content shows 18 authors who published in just one language, meaning that around 80% published in both). This includes faculty members who have little to no proficiency in English (though they may be users of other second languages).

A relatively small proportion of authors asked others to read over and give feedback on their work. For Hungarian articles (the first language of most authors), this was just around one third of authors. This contrasts with the figure reported in Nagano and Spiczéné Bukovszki (2016), in which nearly 80% of doctoral students surveyed in the soft sciences (humanities and social sciences, economics, law) requested feedback prior to submission, mainly from supervisors but also from colleagues. Of course, a major difference here is the role of the author and the absence of academic supervisors. It may be the case that there is no widespread practice of asking others for feedback on academic manuscripts, perhaps because many researchers pursue their topics independently, and there are few cohesive research groups compared with, for instance, the hard sciences. In the same study, doctoral students in the hard sciences reported getting feedback from multiple people, first and foremost the supervisor, regardless of the language of publication. With the soft science group, requests for feedback in the case of a foreign language publication dropped sharply, presumably due to foreign language proficiency issues, and the use of a feedback provider other than supervisor, colleague or fellow PhD student rose, indicating the use of language brokers such as proofreaders or English teachers. The questionnaire in the current study did not ask about the use of feedback providers (proofreaders) when translators were used, though we suspect the proportion is low.

For the Hungarian manuscripts, at least, it appears that those who asked others for feedback made use of it, as they reported using the feedback to make changes, especially minor modifications. Naturally, the judgment of a suggestion or modification as “major” or “minor” may vary among individuals, and this survey took place several months after the actual writing and translating stage, so memories of it would not have been very fresh. For a more detailed look at feedback on texts and how authors respond to it, text-based case studies and/or in-depth interviews would be useful methods (see Lillis–Curry 2006).

Roughly half of the authors did the translation themselves; it appears that this group is more likely to publish a larger proportion of their research in English or another language than Hungarian compared with the second group of authors, who had the translation done by somebody else. A few researchers said that they lacked the time to carry out the translation, and thus either gave up on submitting the English manuscript or asked someone else to do it. It appears to be more common to approach fellow faculty members than to use professional translators; the emphasis placed on knowledge of academic writing and topic areas when choosing a translator probably explains this. The presumed benefits of working with a qualified translator may be outweighed by the benefits of working with a colleague who is familiar with the terminology and discourse patterns of the field and who knows the academic writing conventions used in the humanities and social sciences. The degree of satisfaction reported by authors working with professional translators and informal translators was basically the same.

It is probably not surprising that there seems to be a connection between averaged higher rates of publishing in foreign languages (mostly English) and those who translated themselves – this will vary not only with an individual’s proficiency in a foreign language and publication goals, but also with research topics: some are more locally focused and it would be quite difficult to make the research context understandable by and relevant to an international audience. If the university or faculty wishes to see larger numbers of publications in international journals and in English among researchers in the humanities and social sciences, then perhaps it should consider a way of connecting authors with proofreaders and translators with the appropriate knowledge and skills or even of funding the proofreading or translation of scholarly works. A survey of Hungarian higher education teachers and researchers under age 45 found that only 8.3% reported that proofreading (language or content were not specified) was provided by the institution; 29.4% said this was not available but would be essential, another 29% said it would mean substantial support, and 21.4% said it would provide some support to them (Alpár et al. 2019). Translation was not among the offerings for support in their study.

One interesting finding was that only roughly a third of the authors working with translators provided them with reference materials – background information on the same or similar topic, in one or both languages. We do not know whether this was at the request of the translator or on the initiative of the authors. Reference texts can have a positive effect on the quality of translations and help the translator identify the style appropriate to the intended audience (Horváth 2022). Assistance with

terminology (either through lists or texts on the topic) can reduce the time needed for searching for the appropriate terms and increase the chances of selecting the best translation of specialized terminology.

6. Conclusions

Based on this admittedly small survey, we have found that language brokers were not often involved prior to submission. In this group of social sciences and humanities researchers, many authors translated their Hungarian-language manuscripts into English themselves, with only some of them requesting proofreading of the translations. The main role of language brokers was as translators, and both professional and informal translators (typically fellow faculty members) were used. It appears that many authors already have established connections with translators, and if not, rely on the recommendation of colleagues to find a translator. Authors seem to be aware that language proficiency alone is not sufficient when selecting a translator, and value the translator's familiarity with academic writing and with the topic. Informal translators are more often chosen than professional translators.

As for practical implications of the study, we suggest that authors who intend to work with translators should consider providing reference materials to the translator to help with terminology and discourse conventions of the field. Likewise, translators should consider asking for reference materials and taking advantage of opportunities to ask questions of authors. From this small sample, it appears that the best way for a translator (professional or informal) to attract business is through networking and satisfied previous clients.

This particular situation – the publication of two special issues of a journal in two languages with duplicate contents to reflect the research profile of the university – is unlikely to occur very often, and thus offered a unique chance to gain an idea of the strategies used by authors. This can serve as a starting point for a more detailed investigation of authors and their strategies for and attitudes towards multilingual publication in more conventional publication forums. Investigating disciplinary differences in the use of language brokers is another avenue for future research.

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