

**Crowdsourced Translation as Immaterial Labour: Emerging Communities of Practice  
(CoP) in the TED Translation Project**

**Boya Li**

Thesis submitted to the University of Ottawa  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
doctoral degree in Translation Studies

School of Translation and Interpretation  
Faculty of Arts  
University of Ottawa

© Boya Li, Ottawa, Canada, 2025

## Table of contents

<b>List of figures</b> .....	v
<b>List of tables</b> .....	vi
<b>Abstract</b> .....	vii
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	x
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Chapter 1: Research context, literature review and research questions</b> .....	3
1.1 Research context: An overview of the TED Translation Project.....	3
1.2 The changing landscape of Translation Studies in the digital age.....	12
1.2.1 <i>Conceptual and terminological nuances and inconsistencies around digitally mediated translation practices</i> .....	14
1.2.2 <i>Crowdsourcing: Extraction of the Economic Value of User-created Content?</i> .....	17
1.3 Conversations and debates on the impact of the participatory culture on translation.....	29
1.4 Research on translators and their communities in the participatory culture.....	28
1.5 Literature that applies CoP (Communities of Practice) to Translation Studies .....	39
1.6 Existing research on the TED Translation Project.....	47
1.7 Gaps in existing literature.....	55
1.8 Research questions.....	57
<b>Chapter 2: Theoretical framework and methodology</b> .....	59
Introduction: Relevance of a sociological approach to the case study on TED.....	61
2.1 A practice-based approach to studying translation agents .....	62
2.2 Community of practice (CoP) theory.....	64
2.3 Immaterial labour in the age of digital capitalism.....	74
2.4 Methodology.....	88
2.4.1 <i>Introduction</i> .....	88
2.4.2 <i>A netnographic approach to TED Translators as a case study</i> .....	91
2.4.3 <i>Dataset</i> .....	99
2.4.3.1 <i>Identifying and locating research fieldsites</i> .....	99
2.4.3.2 <i>Fieldnotes</i> .....	104
2.4.3.3 <i>Sampling</i> .....	106
2.4.3.4 <i>Ethical considerations in the collection of data</i> .....	108
2.4.3.5 <i>Coding and analysis of data</i> .....	111
2.4.3.6 <i>Limitations of Dataset and Methodology</i> .....	113
Conclusion.....	120
<b>Chapter 3: Theorization of TED Translator groups as CoPs facilitated by a network platform</b> .....	122
Introduction.....	122

3.1 Research fieldsite—a digitally mediated platform sustaining the translator network.....	123
3.2 Who the TED Translators are: What was learnt about the interview participants.....	129
3.2.1 <i>Why are the participants translating for TED?</i> .....	141
3.2.2 <i>Translation as Lived Experience of Learning</i> .....	142
3.3 Translators’ engagement with technologies on the TED translation platform.....	142
3.3.1 <i>Integration of digital tools in TED Translator’s collaboration</i> .....	158
3.4 TED Translators as emerging CoPs.....	172
3.4.1 <i>Mutual engagement</i> .....	172
3.4.2 <i>Joint Enterprise</i> .....	183
3.4.3 <i>Shared repertoire</i> .....	194
3.4.3.1 <i>Translation guideline and glossary repertoire</i> .....	196
3.4.4 <i>A crowd or a community of practice?</i> .....	205
Conclusion.....	207
<b>Chapter 4: Immaterial labour behind emerging CoPs of TED Translators</b> .....	210
Introduction.....	210
4.1 Immaterial labour in TED Translators’ work.....	214
4.1.1 <i>Translation as active consumption of educational materials</i> .....	214
4.1.2 <i>Translation as a means to Increase One’s Visibility</i> .....	217
4.1.3 <i>Translation as a Way to Provide Social Benefit</i> .....	223
4.2 Identity negotiation and immaterial labour in CoPs.....	225
4.2.1 <i>Learning, regime of competence and immaterial labour in CoPs</i> .....	229
4.2.1.1 <i>Comparison of Learning Structures in TED with Self-solicited Translator Initiatives</i> .....	235
4.2.2 <i>Three Modes of Identification in CoP</i> .....	238
4.2.2.1 <i>Engagement</i> .....	239
4.2.2.2 <i>Imagination</i> .....	240
4.2.2.3 <i>Alignment</i> .....	247
4.2.3 <i>Conclusion</i> .....	251
4.3 Immaterial labour, the platform economy and TED Translation Project.....	261
4.4 The Translators’ Reaction to the Extractive Activities of the Online Subtitling Platform TED.....	264
4.4.1 <i>Lack of negotiability: one example of how TED Translators’ community-building processes can be influenced by the external actor</i>	
<i>TED</i> .....	266
4.4.2 <i>TED Translators’ reactions to the external constraints</i> .....	268
4.5 Dysfunctional CoPs? Challenges for Translator CoPs engaging in Immaterial Labour.....	271
Conclusion.....	275
<b>Chapter 5: Conclusion</b> .....	278
Introduction.....	228
5.1 Findings.....	280
5.2 Originality of the current study.....	286
5.2.1 <i>Theoretical and social implications for Translation Studies and beyond</i> .....	286

5.3 Limitations and future research.....	291
<b>Works cited</b> .....	197
<b>Appendices</b> .....	312
Appendix 1: Certificate of Ethics Approval.....	312
Appendix 2: Sample Translator Application Page on TED.com.....	313
Appendix 3: TED Translation Interface on Amara.org.....	315
Appendix 4: TED Translation Interface on Captionhub .....	316
Appendix 5: Collaborative file shared in the French TED Facebook Group for summer translation challenges.....	317
Appendix 6: Collaborative file shared in the French Facebook Group for the coordination of thematic translation activities for September 2020.....	318
Appendix 7: Participants' Rating of the Two Translation Platforms.....	319
Appendix 8: Corpus on how to translate Disclaimers compiled by French-language Reviewers and LC/LS.....	320
Appendix 9: Corpus for reference on how to translate high-frequency words in TED Talks created by a French LC/LS.....	320
Appendix 10: Recruitment Script for the Survey and Interview.....	321
Appendix 11: Consent Form.....	322
Appendix 12: Interview Guide.....	323
Appendix 13: Implied Consent for Online Survey.....	325
Appendix 14: Survey Questions.....	327
Appendix 15: Final List of Codes Built in Nvivo for Interview Data Analysis.....	329
Appendix 16: Original text for the interview excerpts which have been cited.....	330

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Homepage of the TED Translators Facebook Group.....	96
Figure 2: Homepage of TED.com.....	111
Figure 3: Resource Page for TED Translators.....	112
Figure 4: Homepage for meeting TED Translators.....	116
Figure 5: An example of TED Translator profile.....	117
Figure 6: Education Backgrounds of Participants.....	119
Figure 7: Participants' Level of Education.....	119
Figure 8: Gender of Participants.....	121
Figure 9: Age of Participants.....	121
Figure 10: Length of Time Participants Have Spent Translating for TED.....	122
Figure 11: Number of Talks that Participants Have Translated.....	122
Figure 12: Subjects of the TED Talks Participants Have Translated.....	123
Figure 13: Translation Experience of Participants outside TED.....	123
Figure 14: Outline of the TED Translation Project Workflow on Amara (pre-2021) .....	148
Figure 15: Outline of the TED Translation Project Workflow on Captionhub (post-2021) .....	148
Figure 16: Homepage for TED Translator OTPedia (Wiki portal) .....	154
Figure 17: An example of TED Translator Posting in the Facebook group to speed up reviewing process.....	169
Figure 18: Excel Form Created by French TED Translators to Organize collaborative Translation of Thematic TED Talks.....	170
Figure 19: Excerpts from a Glossary Created by a French TED Translator as a Translation Guide (See Appendix for the Complete Document) .....	171
Figure 20: Welcome page of TED Translator Wiki in French with Translation.....	200
Figure 21: Welcome Page of TED Translator Wiki in Simplified Chinese with Translation....	201
Figure 22: Crowdsourced Glossary for Translating the Disclaimer of TED Talks.....	201
Figure 23: Crowdsourced Glossary for Translating recurrent words and terms in TED Talks...	202

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Online interactions in the TED Translator Facebook Group between December 2020 and December 2021.....	150
Table 2: Online interactions in the Facebook Group for French TED Translators between January 2020 and July 2024.....	152

## RÉSUMÉ

Depuis l'avènement des technologies du Web 2.0 et du Web 3.0, l'identité du consommateur de produits culturels et celle du producteur de produits culturels se fusionnent. L'externalisation ouverte des services de traduction, le processus par lequel les personnes participent à la traduction partiellement rémunérée ou non rémunérée à la demande de tiers comme des organismes ou des sociétés, est une excellente illustration. Cette thèse conceptualise la traduction en externalisation ouverte en tant que travail immatériel, un concept importé de la pensée autonomiste. Plus précisément, elle se penche sur le Projet de traduction TED, un projet d'externalisation ouverte, à travers le prisme de la théorie de communauté de pratique (CdeP). En s'inspirant de la netnographie, cette recherche recourt à une approche multiméthode en combinant la participation observante et l'analyse du contenu afin d'étudier les archives numériques, et en utilisant l'entretien afin d'étudier les perspectives des traducteurs TED en matière de pratique de traduction.

Après une analyse approfondie des données recueillies des archives numériques et des entretiens individuels, cette recherche a révélé que l'implication des Traducteurs TED dans le travail immatériel offre l'occasion aux traducteurs de tirer des enseignements de la pratique. Le projet de traduction TED s'appuie principalement sur un cadre d'apprentissage social fondé sur l'interaction entre les traducteurs et leur auto-organisation. Alors que les traducteurs TED s'impliquent dans la pratique de traduction, ils présentent certaines caractéristiques d'une communauté de pratique en matière d'engagement mutuel, d'entreprise jointe, et de répertoire partagé. Alors qu'ils montrent un potentiel pour la formation de communautés de pratique, leur pratique s'appuyant sur le travail immatériel donne lieu à une subjectivité fondée sur la

cocréation. Cependant, ce potentiel est aussi fortement freiné par les directives de TED encadrant les activités des traducteurs.

Les résultats de cette recherche pourraient faire avancer notre connaissance théorique en matière de développement des pratiques de traduction à l'ère numérique, en combinant deux approches théoriques distinctes couramment utilisées pour étudier la production culturelle. De plus, les données recueillies mettent en évidence la nécessité d'explorer davantage des relations entre les acteurs individuels et les acteurs corporatifs facilitant et façonnant les pratiques de traduction en environnement numérique.

### **ABSTRACT**

Since the advent of Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 technologies, the identity of the consumer of cultural products and that of the producer of cultural products have begun to merge. One good example is crowdsourced translation, the process whereby people participate in partially remunerated or non-remunerated translation elicited by third parties such as organizations and corporations. This thesis conceptualizes crowdsourced translation as immaterial labour, a concept borrowed from the Autonomist school of thought. More specifically, it studies the TED Translation Project, a crowdsourcing initiative, through the lens of the Communities of Practice (CoP) Theory. Inspired by netnography, this research adopts a multimethod design: it combines participatory observation and content analysis to analyze the digital archives and uses interviews to study TED Translators' perspectives in respect to translation practice.

Having analyzed the data collected from digital archives and one-on-one interviews, this research found that the TED Translators' involvement in immaterial labour creates an opportunity for them to learn from practice. The TED Translation Project is essentially facilitated

by a social learning structure which needs the translators to interact with each other and self-organize. As TED Translators engage in the translation practice, they demonstrate certain features of a community of practice under the dimensions ‘mutual engagement’, ‘joint enterprise’ and ‘shared repertoire’. Their practice based on immaterial labour creates a form of co-creative subjectivity for them as they show potential for forming CoPs, but this potential is also largely restrained by what TED imposes on their activities.

These findings could contribute to our theoretical understanding of evolving translation practices in the digital age by bringing together two different frameworks widely applied to the study of cultural production. They also show the importance of further examining the relations between individual and corporate actors facilitating and shaping digitally mediated translation practices.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Looking back when I am near the end of my PhD journey, I am much indebted to my family, mentors, friends etc. for their invaluable support during this journey.

First and foremost, I could not be more grateful to my parents who offered me everything they could from beginning to end to help me complete my studies. Despite the physical distance between me and them, I have always felt loved, happy and home thanks to their support. Thus, I would like to dedicate my thesis to them.

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Professor Luise Von Flotow, who has acted not only as my supervisor but also as my mentor and friend since I started my master's degree at the University of Ottawa, and through the tough times of the COVID-19 pandemic. I have always been impressed by her knowledge and passion, and it has been a great pleasure to work with her during my PhD career.

I would like to thank my thesis committee members, Professors Luis Pérez-González, Marc Charron, Ryan Fraser, and Elizabeth Marshman, for taking the time to read my thesis and for providing invaluable feedback. I would also like to thank Professor Kyle Conway, who was on my research proposal committee, for his helpful feedback on my research proposal.

Moreover, I would like to thank the TED Talk Translators who participated in my research and shared with me their insights and experience of the TED Translation Project. It is their kindness and openness that make the completion of this research project possible.

Last but not least, I am grateful for the support and companionship of my dear friends and colleagues during my PhD career, including but not limited to: Alexandra Yazeva, Argelia Peña Aguilar, Ruoqi Fu, Ting Liu, Ecem Yucel, and Xuan Zhao. Their presence has made my PhD journey less bumpy and more enjoyable. I wish them the best in their future endeavors.

## **Introduction**

This thesis was born out of my interest in ‘voluntary’ forms of translation where people engage in translation practices to pursue their passion or agenda. To position myself in this field of study, I originally come from a field which is not Translation Studies, and thus I am particularly interested in how translators who gain their skills and experience outside formal learning institutions engage in the practice of translation. Moreover, my experience of working for the Government of Canada as a translator intern also showed me the importance of situated learning and horizontal networks in institutional and corporate settings for translators to become better at their work. I chose TED Talk Translators as the subject of my research because TED seems to have developed a global network that expands across borders and attracts a large, culturally diverse group of people to translate voluntarily for them. TED seems to have become a successful model of intercultural communication, and I am interested in why it is able to attract such a large number of volunteers to continuously translate its content. More specifically, I studied two different language groups among the TED Translators, those translating into Simplified Chinese and those translating into International French, as communities of practice that may form on the translation platform supplied by TED.

My thesis consists of five chapters. In the first chapter, I introduce my research context, existing literature in Translation Studies on my subject matter and my research questions. The second chapter presents my theoretical framework where I attempt to combine two different theoretical tools, Autonomism and the Communities of Practice Theory, and my methodology, which is comprised of netnographic approaches to collect descriptive, qualitative data on the online activities of TED Talk Translators. Chapter Three presents my research findings and theorizes the two TED Talk translator communities as communities of practice based on the data

collected. Chapter Four brings in the concept of immaterial labour from Autonomist Marxism and, with the support of examples from data collected on TED Talk Translators, demonstrate in what ways the CoP Theory and the theorization of crowdsourced translation as immaterial labour can become 'allies'. Finally, in Chapter Five I go back to my research questions and provide answers while summarizing my main research findings. Then, I explain the new insights that my research contributes to Translation Studies, the limitations of my research, and possible directions for others in Translation Studies to conduct future research on the TED Translation project and other crowdsourced translation initiatives.

# Chapter 1: Research Context, Literature Review and Research Questions

## *1.1 Research Context: An Overview of TED Translation Project*

“Ideas worth spreading”. This motto used to appear every time one visits the official website of TED Talks, an American media organization that produces audiovisual content for knowledge dissemination and makes this available online for free viewing and use. Currently, the motto has been modified to “Ideas change everything” in the newest version of the TED website. Both slogans seem to try to sell the idea that on the platform called “TED”, one can access important thoughts and ideas that will have a considerable impact on the self and the world.

The big ideas that TED promotes are in English, and certain work is needed to ensure that this knowledge reaches people with different national, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. While technologies have made it easy to distribute written and audiovisual materials digitally, human labour is still needed to make those materials understandable and accessible to people from different parts of the world. Thus, several questions come to mind: how do ideas spread in our current world increasingly connected by technologies yet divided by different language borders? Whose help is behind the circulation of “ideas worth spreading” or the big ideas that “change everything”, and why do they find such ideas worth spreading, or to put it in another way: why are they invested in the spread of these ideas?

TED is an acronym for “Technology, Entertainment, Design”. Started as a conference where “Technology, entertainment and design converge” in 1984 (TED n.d.), TED Talks can be seen as an example of ‘edutainment’, or the combination of entertainment and information to make the learning experience more enjoyable, by engaging the audience with the wit, charm and intelligence of expert speakers that TED collaborates with. It also shows how technology and mass communication converge to shape the way information is produced, translated,

disseminated and consumed in the age of new media. After its initial events in the 1980s and 1990s, TED was acquired by Sapling Foundation owned by media entrepreneur Chris Anderson in 2001, and TED has thus launched itself as a nonprofit initiative that organizes conferences featured by “the inspired format, the breadth of content, the commitment to seek out the most interesting people on earth and let them communicate their passion” (TED n.d.). In 2019, to make it easier for donors to connect their donations to TED Conferences, TED moved TED Conferences from Sapling Foundation to TED Foundation also created by Chris Anderson, which is aligned with the brand name (TED n.d.). Between 2001 and 2006, TED was working on extending its influence beyond the city of Monterey where the TED conferences were held by adding a sister conference called TED Global held across the world, granting the best TED speakers with TED Prize, and releasing selected TED Talks online for free viewing. The strategy of using internet as the podcast outlet soon turned out to be successful—when TED Talks were first released online in 2006, they reached millions of views within three months, and the website TED.com was relaunched in 2007 to release TED Talks to a global audience (TED n.d.). As a non-profit organization, TED makes money through “conference attendance fees, sponsorships, foundation support, licensing fees and book sales”, which is spent on the making and editing of videos, the organization of conferences, and sister programs like TED Fellows and TEDx (TED n.d.). As its popularity grows, TED keeps adding to its original initiative, like the TEDx program that allows for locally and independently organized TED conferences, and TED-Ed that creates short animated videos for teachers and educators. As of today, TED has produced and published online more than 3400 talks and animated short video clips in English, some of which have more than one million views. The videos TED produces cover a wide array of topics that are deemed “ideas worth spreading”, which feature an invited guest speaker who could be

scientist, philosopher, businessperson, artist, or religious leader to present in an off-line conference event. Speakers give “short, powerful talks” that last between 12 and 18 minutes on topics that range from “science to business to global issues” (TED n.d.), as well as health, art, history, and other types of general knowledge. Unlike academic conferences or symposia in the traditional sense, TED Talks are addressed to both the expert audience (i.e., people who are experts or professionals in the topics presented and who attend the off-line conference) and the lay audience (i.e., non-expert people who have free access to the videos online and who can comment on or share the videos on various social media platforms). In such a way, TED creates an opportunity for celebrities, scientists, experts, activists and others to communicate knowledge and information to lay people through a condensed presentation. Unlike academic proceedings that are often dense and rigorous, it is common for TED Talk speakers to employ a variety of emotional and narrative devices in their talks so that the audience empathizes with them. As a self-proclaimed non-profit organization, TED frames its mission as seeking to inspire conversation and change attitudes through the spread of innovative ideas. More recently, TED not only produces and distributes media content but also seems interested in building a network of ‘global leaders’ as they launched the TED Fellow Program in 2008. In this way, access to the TED community appears as a great opportunity not only to increase one’s visibility as a TED speaker but one’s social capital. According to TED, those who join the fellowship program become part of the TED community and thus can connect with “global leaders who become business partners, collaborators, funders and mentors”, and the program’s support allows the fellows to receive “millions of dollars of funding”, win prizes and grants and be seen and published widely (TED Fellow Program, n. d.). Thus, apart from knowledge popularization and distribution, TED is also devoted to building a network around the organization of TED

conferences that promises participants various useful resources for achieving their own professional goals.

As TED launches various new programs and additions to its original initiative, there have been criticisms of TED for failing to live up to their mission as they gradually lose their innovative power. Critiques of TED argue that instead of producing talks that are truly innovative and cutting-edge, TED has moved on to a model of selecting speakers based on their fame and appeal to the audience and marketing them as stars. Moreover, TED now gives priority to “tricksy emotional and narrative devices” while downplaying rigor despite its self-proclaimed devotion to knowledge (Salmon, 2012). While the TED mission emphasizes the importance of intellectual exchange and nuance, all TED Talks are actually produced under the strict control of TED curators. More specifically, speakers are carefully selected based on their appeal to the audience, and the talks are strategically crafted, practiced, filmed and edited for online viewing in such a way that academic rigor gives way to narrative and performative tactics (Heller, 2012). Consequently, TED has been criticized for placing a greater emphasis on entertainment rather than education and according to one commentator, TED packages the speakers as ‘stars’ despite their lack of intellectual rigor (Salmon, 2012). Moreover, as a non-profit organization, TED still gets criticism of corporatism because of how the ideas presented in TED Talks are branded with Silicon Valley elitism and recycled to the audience again and again (Jurgenson, 2012). In some people’s opinion, TED has thus become a place where “ideas, regardless of their quality, go to seek celebrity, to live in the form of videos, tweets and [...] e-books” (Jurgenson, 2012). As TED “fuse[s] sales-pitch slickness with evangelical intensity”, the organization “necessarily leaves out other groups and other ways of knowing ideas”, which goes

against the “TED epistemology” premised on sharing ideas to inspire and change the world (Jurgenson, 2012).

Therefore, it appears that as an outlet for science/knowledge popularization, TED deploys certain tactics to enhance its popularity and influence at a time when media platforms and sources of information are multiplying; it governs how the talks are produced, filmed and edited so that they meet the same set of standards, and loads the talks with narrative devices to attract people’s attention. These could be seen as effective strategies to help ideas gain visibility in a world where people tend to be overloaded with information. For instance, it has been said that the TED style of condensing information and using life narratives to capture the attention of a wide audience creates an opportunity for activists to quickly increase their visibility and communicate their ideas to the global audience by creating empathy, thus reaching their goal of making a difference in the world (e.g. Martínez García, 2018). Nonetheless, from a more critical perspective, the greater emphasis on performative, emotional and rhetorical devices over intellectual rigor could cause TED to fail in delivering the innovative and cutting-edge ideas that it promises.

Despite such criticisms, TED has still become one of the most influential media outlets in the digital age. Each TED Talk video has hundreds of thousands to millions of views, and TED seems to have successfully combined entertainment with education and stands out among a wide array of internet-based media. More importantly, TED is devoted to building a large, global viewership by making the TED Talks accessible in as many languages other than English as possible.

When it comes to the distribution of TED Talks to a global audience, the keywords seem to be speed and cost. For the TED Talks to reach a broader audience in as little time as possible and

at no additional cost to the organization, the TED Open Translation Project (previously called the TED Open Translation Project) opts for crowdsourcing by having TED Talks translated by volunteers. The TED Talks translator community consists of more than 36,000 volunteers from various language communities who subtitle talks that are predominantly filmed in English into 117 languages, creating a total of more than 167 000 translations as of June 2020 (TED n. d. b). Given the large number of viewings that TED Talks get online, volunteer translators play an indispensable role in the circulation of ‘great ideas’ from TED Talks speakers to non-English-speaking viewers. The volunteer translators come from diverse cultural backgrounds and are scattered around the globe, but the development of new information technologies and infrastructure allows them to work on the same project using an online interface.

The TED translator community has been growing at a fairly fast rate through its relatively simple, straightforward recruitment process. Any interested person can apply to join TED as a volunteer translator. While volunteers are expected to be fluent in both target and source languages, they are not required to have credentials or past experience with translation. Additionally, monolingual volunteers are welcome to contribute by transcribing TEDx Talks (talks presented at independent events authorized by TED), though this work can also be performed by bilingual or multilingual volunteers. At the time of application, volunteers are asked to explain why they are interested in volunteering, recount their past experiences with source and target languages, and explain how they came to know TED. Since 2020, at the time of applying applicants are also required to watch a short video on how to subtitle and answer a short quiz based on the content of the video. When TED was on the Amara platform, TED responded to volunteer applications within days and once their applications were accepted, volunteers could either transcribe or translate talks using the online subtitling interface *Amara* that TED partners

with. The *Amara* editor is an open-source tool for video subtitling. It was launched by a non-profit organization that claims to “foster a media ecosystem that enables everyone to benefit from online video content” by offering a free subtitle tool for the public (Amara, n.d.). Amara displays all the available tasks that can be taken up by TED volunteers, which include translation, review of translation and approval of reviewed translation. However, the last two tasks are reserved for people who are both volunteer translator and reviewer or language coordinator. Only one person can work on a translation task into a certain language at a time, and as a result, volunteers have to wait for translation tasks to become available before they can contribute to the TED Translation Project community. In 2021, TED transitioned to a different subtitling platform, *Captionhub*. While retaining most of the functionalities of the subtitling platform, TED also made certain important revisions to the translation workflow on the platform, which will be covered in detail in Chapter Three.

Before the migration of subtitling platforms, the workflow of the TED Translation Project was presented as “transcription, translation, review and approval” (TED n. d. c.), divided among volunteers with different responsibilities. Once online, all TED Talks either have an official transcript to begin with or are transcribed from audio by volunteers fluent in the language in which the talk is given. Volunteer translators produce translations of the TED Talk with the source-language transcript available. While TED translators have a source language transcript to work with and do not subtitle directly from audio, they are still expected to pay attention to such issues as subtitle compression, line breaking, reading speed, etc. (TED Translator Wiki n. d.).

Translating for TED is collaborative work, since more than two people are needed to finish one translation (TED n. d.). Translations go through a peer review process before being made accessible to the public. After each translation is completed, it is reviewed by more experienced

volunteer translators of the relevant language combinations, and then approved by language coordinators, who are “skilled, experienced translators who help develop their language communities” (TED n. d.). Language coordinators not only play a gate-keeping role in maintaining translation quality, but also help produce language style guides, act as mentors for translators, advise on platform improvement and support collaboration within the translator community. TED seems to highly value peer support and feedback during the translation process. When each new translator joins TED, they are given information about how to connect with the translator community of their languages, i.e., via discussion groups on social media platforms like Facebook. While Amara has limited social networking features such as messaging, discussion groups on other digital platforms offer alternative ways for translators to connect with other translators, reviewers and language coordinators.

TED has specific requirements for subtitles in terms of style, tone, register etc. More specifically, TED favors colloquial, modern, and universally understood language (TED n. d.). Since TED relies on a large group of volunteers to translate TED Talks into various languages, maintaining quality and style consistency in translation is particularly challenging. Although TED Translators are not given formal training in translation or subtitling, TED offers them a number of guidelines and resources on subtitling for quality control purposes. Some of these guidelines are provided on the TED website, and others seem to be crowdsourced by members of the TED translator community, on Wikipedia pages for example. Thus, the collaborative nature of the TED Translation Project is not only about the translation process itself, but also about the production of translation guidelines and resources.

TED translators and transcribers are not paid for the work they do. However, TED implements a system of crediting translators and rewarding them with non-monetary merits. All

translators and reviewers are credited in the TED Talk that they subtitle, their names appearing at the beginning of the video. Each volunteer translator can set up his/her personal page on the TED website, which tells people who the translators are, the languages that they speak, and the translations that they have completed. TED also maintains a translator blog where selected volunteers are interviewed individually to share how they have come to be part of TED Project, what they have gained/learnt from translating TED Talks, and why they think their work is important etc. These resources seem to serve publicity purposes for the TED Translation Project and as incentives for people to join by making the TED translators visible and framing their work in affinity with the TED mission to foster change by spreading ideas. Through a discourse analysis of 11 translator interviews published on the TED Blog between 2009 and 2011, Maeve Olohan (2014) found that ‘altruism’ seems to be an important incentive in these narratives about why people volunteer to translate for TED. While Olohan’s study uses only a small sample for analysis, her work shows how the TED Translation Project differs from our traditional understanding of how translation works based on the commercial model. Unlike the vast majority of paid translators who often ‘translate for survival’, TED translators are incentivized to translate for a different set of possible reasons, such as contributing to the “TED mission” of disseminating innovative ideas that foster change. TED Translation Project is a project where consumers of media content can participate in both production and distribution. By translating, they are said to “enable the inspiring ideas [in TED Talks] to crisscross languages and borders” (TED n. d.). TED Translation Project features a peer-to-peer network, in which self-selected individuals with more translation experience act as mentors, advisers and coordinators for the newbies. All of this shows how online, collaborative translation has evolved in the age of participatory media.

## *1.2 The Changing Landscape of Translation Studies in the Digital Age*

As a form of transcultural communication, translation is affected by changes in cultural production and consumption under digitalization. According to Henry Jenkins (2006a), given the affordances of communication technology and increased global connectivity, media have morphed and converged. As digital screens infiltrate our lives, entertainment now occurs across a wide array of platforms and involves multiple human and technological agents at a globally connected level, with highly increased interactivity. People not only migrate across online applications and platforms for entertainment, but also participate in the co-creation of media content by commenting on and referencing these platforms on social media like Twitter and Facebook (Jenkins, 2006b). The viewers of media content have thus become empowered consumers who engage in its production and distribution (Bold, 2011). Moreover, communication has become more audiovisual and multimodal than ever. As technologies blur the boundary between producers and consumers of audiovisual products, the landscape and practices of audiovisual translation are being shaped by the development of participatory cultures. The affordances of media technology have allowed those who used to be considered consumers of translation to create, mediate and redistribute translated materials (Díaz Cintas & Sánchez, 2006). Thus, it is important for Translation Studies to explore the new translation practices emerging in the digital age, which cannot be explained by the patronage model.

In two papers published in 2011 and 2016, Karen Littau explores the impact of translation medium on what translation practices have been like throughout history and argues that Translation Studies should pay more attention to the relation between media forms and translation. Currently, the ubiquitous presence of digital technologies and media outlets in our

daily life has led to a surge in research on media and translation, including the study of audiovisual translation, translation in film adaptation, translation in global news broadcasting, translation and communication technologies, etc. (Littau, 2011, p. 261). However, much more work still needs to be done on the relations between media convergence and translation studies. Media studies hardly pay attention to linguistic issues (Orrego-Carmona, 2018), and only recently have translation studies started to address fansubbing and non-professional translation within the wider context of media convergence and participatory culture (Pérez-González, 2012). Under the existing linguistic and cultural paradigms, Translation Studies consider interlingual and intercultural translation as “translation proper” (Littau, 2011, p. 277). This has given too much priority to language rather than the medium of language dissemination, thus downplaying the role that media, instruments and technologies play in shaping human communication (Littau, 2016). In the advent of the digital, our world is being constantly reconfigured by the affordances of global interconnectivity. Therefore, translation studies must delve further into the question of medium and technology in order to better position itself within a networked, technologized society.

“The easy availability of technology, the seduction of multimodal productions and the affordances of [audiovisual translation]” (Díaz Cintas & Massidda, 2019, p. 255) have caused an explosion of media products on omnipresent Internet platforms. Thus, to better understand the relation between media forms, technologies and translation, it would be useful to closely examine non-professional translation in online environments. Although non-professional and volunteer translators have played important roles in facilitating various cultural, intellectual and economic exchanges throughout history, the professionalization of translation and interpreting in recent years has led to a naïve division between professional and non-professional

translators/interpreters, the latter often seen as a threat to market structures of the translation industry and professional translators' livelihood (Pérez-González & Susam-Seraeva, 2012, p.151). As a result, non-professional and volunteer translation does not always sit well in translation studies and needs further delimitation (McDonough Dolmaya, 2020). Nonetheless, the participatory culture that permeates the “post-industrial, informational society” in the age of Web 2.0 and 3.0 acts as a catalyst for the proliferation of translation practices by ordinary people outside professional contexts, and non-professional translators can no longer be considered as “a cheaper alternative to their professional counterparts” by Translation Studies (Pérez-González & Susam-Seraeva, 2012, p. 152). The scope of literature on non-professional translation in the digital age has widened considerably to include various kinds of informal translation in digital environments.

### *1.2.1 Conceptual and terminological nuances and inconsistencies around digitally mediated translation practices*

In regard to the wider TED phenomena, namely the wide range of translation practices mediated by digital technologies, I have noticed a wide range of terms used, each pointing to a slightly nuanced concept. A few examples are user-generated translation (O'Hagan, 2009), open translation (Hyde, 2011), volunteer translation (Olohan, 2014; Pym, 2011), community translation (Kelly et al., 2011), crowdsourced translation (McDonough Dolmaya, 2012), massively open translation (O'Hagan, 2016), online collaborative translation (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017), online social translation (McDonough Dolmaya & Sánchez Ramos, 2019) etc., and there seem to be both conceptual and practical overlaps among these terms. Sometimes conflated and used interchangeably, the aforementioned terms highlight certain intrinsic features of such

practices: blurred boundaries between producers and consumers of translation (Cronin, 2010), the reliance on networked and digitally-mediated working environments, social aggregations formed during the process, etc. This might explain why Ray and Kelly (2011) propose the umbrella term CT3 to designate crowdsourced translation (or translation crowdsourcing), collaborative translation and community translation, which are used interchangeably in this context (Ray and Kelly, 2011 cited in Dwyer 2017).

Some of the recent literature addressing the fuzziness of terminology that designates digitally mediated translation attempts to delineate a hierarchy of concepts. For instance, Zwischenberger and Cukur (2024) propose online collaborative translation as an overarching term for various translation practices that occur on the web where a group of people contribute to the translation of a text with the help of interactive technologies. Translation phenomena such as crowdsourced translation are subsumed under this category. However, not all scholars on digitally mediated translation adopt this approach when it comes to terminology. For example, in the work of McDonough Dolmaya (2012) and Jiménez-Crespo (2017), online collaborative translation refers specifically to non-solicited forms of translation where the translation is not initiated by a third party, and crowdsourcing refers to solicited translation where an initiating party outsources a translation and solicits a multitude of people for their linguistic expertise.

Crowdsourcing and online collaborative translation both seem to be suitable candidates for meta concepts that encompass a variety of practices. This is determined based on their longer history of usage and the wider range of practices that have been subsumed under them in the literature (e.g. see Desjardins, 2017). While newer terms have been proposed and used in more recent literature on digitally mediated translation, they all seem to have flaws. For example, volunteer translation (Pym, 2011) and non-professional translation (Pérez-González & Susam-

Seraeva, 2012) have been proposed to address the fact that web 2.0 has opened the door to amateur participation in translation. However, professional translators can also participate in the voluntary creation of translated content online. Other terms proposed as a meta-concept for digitally mediated translation emphasize the social connections facilitated by technologies that underlie such practices. Examples include online social translation (McDonough Dolmaya & Sánchez, 2019) and social media-driven translation (Hebenstreit, 2019). However, Zwischenberger (2023) criticizes the use of such terms as they conflate social ‘connectedness’ with digital ‘connectivity’. More specifically, the uncritical use of ‘social’ to designate online translation practices hides the fact that human connectedness on the web may be exploited by corporations to develop profitable algorithms and network analysis (Van Dijck, 2013 in Zwischenberger, 2023). Thus, the terminological choice should carefully consider the socio-economic implications of translation practices in digitally mediated environments.

The terminological fuzziness, if not controversy, around digitally mediated translation, is an interesting topic in itself. It reflects the fluidity of online translation practices that cannot be easily subsumed under one generalized category, just like other practices on web 2.0 and beyond. Furthermore, the terminological nuances such as those that designate solicited and non-solicited translation demonstrate the co-existence of vertical and horizontal structures on the web, which ties into questions about control and power, such as who actually owns the content collaboratively produced online and/or manages the co-creative activities.

Although scholars such as Zwischenberger and Cukur (2023) have argued for the use of online collaborative translation as the meta-concept for different translation practices online, it should be noted that in previous literature, online collaborative translation is more frequently associated with the self-solicited, self-managed forms of translation such as fan translation. Thus,

terminology-wise, it may not be the most suitable term for use in the context of this study where translation is not solicited and controlled by the translators themselves. Since crowdsourcing is a term that has been applied to a wider range of phenomena beyond translation, mostly in digitally mediated environments, this dissertation subsumes the voluntary translation practices in TED under crowdsourcing. The solicited nature of crowdsourcing in TED is not only reflected in the terminology but also in various aspects of the translation, such as how translation is organized in TED. In the context of this study, crowdsourcing is thus not to be conflated with, but may be associated with, the concept of online collaborative translation. The following section offers an overview of crowdsourcing as a working concept.

### *1.2.2 Crowdsourcing: Extraction of the Economic Value of User-created Content?*

Crowdsourcing is a mass phenomenon brought about by affordances of networking and digital tools that goes beyond translation: it involves the exploitation of “collective intelligence” in Pierre Levy’s (1997) terms by certain groups to achieve their own business or organization goals, such as to “improve public participation in governance, design products, and solve problems” (Brabham, 2013, p. xv). It needs voluntary participation and is thought to bring certain mutual benefits to its participants in non-monetary form (Estellés-Arolas & González-Ladrón-de-Guevara, 2012). The term crowdsourcing is generally thought to come from Jeff Howe and refers to the outsourcing of various tasks by groups and corporations to ‘amateurs’, ‘hobbyists’, ‘part-timers’ and ‘enthusiasts’ as facilitated by the networked environment of Web 2.0 (Howe, 2006, 2008). Anyone who is connected to the web is in the pool of potential cheap labour that Howe (2006) calls ‘the crowds’ and can donate their abilities and competences to a call or initiative, working along with professionals in domains that include photography,

computer programming, graphic design, journalism, and other creative or scientific disciplines. Howe (*ibid*) argues that technological advances have made once specialized tools such as digital cameras and graphic design software readily available to non-professionals, allowing them to develop skills and interests by exploring and testing those tools in their spare time. Moreover, not only do amateurs attempt to develop their skills to the same level as those of their professional counterparts, but they also leverage the Internet to share their interests and pursuits with potentially millions of other web users connected to the same community of interest or practice (Dombek, 2014, p. 14). Nowadays, the crowdsourcing model is adopted in translation, subtitling and localisation in both commercial and non-profit contexts. For-profit companies like Facebook and Twitter turn to their pool of users and leverage their linguistic competencies for localization of the company's own services. For example, the Facebook crowdsourcing initiative relies on a large community of user-translators to make Facebook accessible in non-English languages (Dombek, 2014; O'Hagan, 2017).

The seemingly extractivist nature of crowdsourcing has attracted the attention of academic researchers in Translation Studies. Examples include Piróth and Baker (2019) and Zwischenberger (2022), which will be discussed in more detail in Section 1.3. Moreover, different labels have been used in academic research to describe how user-created content in the wider crowdsourcing phenomenon can be extracted by corporate actors in the digital economy. These terms are mostly associated with the work of Autonomist Marxism and include “immaterial labour, affective labour, free labour, and precarious labour” (Banks & Deuze, 2009, p. 424). While these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, they tend to emphasize different aspects of the same phenomenon. For example, the use of the term ‘affective labour’ by Autonomists is criticized by Gill and Patt (2008) for overemphasizing the affective dimensions of

creative labour, which impedes rather than facilitate the understanding of the phenomenon (p. 15). Thus, in this study, I intend to conceptualize TED Translators' crowdsourcing activities as immaterial labour, the Autonomist term that originally comes from the work of sociologist such as Mauro Lazzarato (1996). Immaterial labour designates the process whereby post-informational capitalism extract economic value from people's creative, precarious labour as our lives are increasingly being dominated by technologies. However, Autonomist sociologists such as Lazzarato (1996), Hardt and Negri (2000; 2004), and Dyer-Witford and De Peuter (2009) also argue that immaterial labour opens up opportunities for a form of spontaneous communism/revolt against capitalism. More specifically, they see immaterial labour as creating "emergent subjectivities, the possibilities of resistance, the features of subjectivity that exceed capitalism control and regulation" (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 19). A more thorough discussion of the Autonomist concept of immaterial labour will be given in Chapter Two of this thesis. However, I would like to emphasize here that the term immaterial labour is adopted for my thesis because it helps tackle the tensions inherent in crowdsourcing between different types of actors involve due to its organizational structure, which will be discussed in the next section.

### ***1.2.3 Different Organizational Structures of Digitally Mediated Translation Initiatives***

Unlike self-solicited translation practices where the translators initiate the translation and decide on what to translate, translation crowdsourcing is solicited by a third party with translation needs for its own content, and translators thus have less control over what to translate. The initiating party oversees the translation process and decides on the availability and selection of source material. As a result, crowdsourced translation is often seen as a top-down approach where translation is requested by the owner of source content to be completed by a group of

volunteers, which makes it essentially different from ‘bottom-up’ types of translation like fansubbing initiated by self-organized groups of people working collaboratively in digital environments, which is often referred to in the literature as online collaborative translation (e.g. Jiménez-Crespo, 2017; McDonough Dolmaya, 2019; O’Hagan, 2009). The results of crowdsourcing may be compiled unselectively into the final product or selected based on merit (Vukovic & Bartolini, 2010). The Facebook initiative, for example, has a voting system in place where the users vote for the best translation of different parts of a string that will be compiled into the final product. Crowdsourcing initiatives can also be collaborative, in the sense that the translation work is divided among contributors and will later be compiled into the final product. The second model often involves self-surveillance on translation quality. For example, the unvetted translations need to go through various stages of feedback and revision by the translators themselves, which is a salient feature of self-solicited translation initiatives such as fan translation (e.g. see Yu 2019). The TED Translation Project seems to adopt a collaborative model that requires translators to take on different roles in the workflow.

Apart from the organizational structure, literature on translation on the web also notes that different of translation practices rely on different technological solutions. Being more technologically literate, fansubbers opt for open-source freeware as subtitling tools and are more autonomous and competent at the technical level (Jiménez-Crespo, 2019). Contributors in crowdsourced screen translation initiatives, however, enjoy less autonomy at both the organizational level and the technical level since the workflow is closely managed by the organization or team that requests the creation of subtitles (Díaz Cintas, 2015; Díaz Cintas & Massidda, 2019; Jiménez-Crespo, 2019).

Díaz Cintas (2015) has commented specifically on the technologies used in crowdsourced audiovisual translation (also called ‘crowdsuitling’ in his terms) More specifically, crowdsuitling or crowdsourced suitling refers to the creation of “collaborative, nonprofit subtitles powered by specific organizations or teams of volunteers” that relies on cloud-based platforms determined by the initiating party (Díaz Cintas, 2015, p. 637). Unlike fansubbers who work with suitling tools that need to be downloaded and installed on a PC, crowdsuitling allows contributors located physically apart to create, save and share subtitles using cloud-based platforms. Such platforms are often built specifically for the purpose of the initiative and feature a streamlined, user-friendly production process. As a result, crowdsuitlers enjoy less autonomy at the technical level compared to fansubbers and are more focused on the linguistic transfer (Díaz Cintas & Massidda, 2019). The adoption of cloud-based platforms where suitlers work collaboratively across different geographical locations is now also seen in industrial suitling, since it helps cut down the cost and time by streamlining the workflow and makes it easier for clients to oversee the production and delivery of subtitles (Díaz Cintas, 2015, p. 637-638). This shows how crowdsourced, digitally mediated translation and technology co-evolve, with impacts extending to practices within the translation industry.

O’Hagan (2016) has called for more attention to the relationship between technologies and non-professional translation in online environments, which can contribute useful insights to both the translation profession and the wider society. More importantly, O’Hagan notes a connection between the technical code embedded in translation environments and translators’ autonomy, pointing to the socio-political aspect of translation technologies. Similarly, Pérez-González (2014, 2017) looks at the relationship between human translation agents in non-professional suitling initiatives and the technological infrastructure of their suitling platforms. Addressing

the sociopolitical aspects of non-professional audiovisual translation, he argues that constraints on the contributors' creativity and autonomy derived from the organizational structure of the initiative can be reinforced by constraints that exist in the digitally-mediated translation environment. For example, the digital subtitling tool *Amara.org* allows the initiating party to control the availability of source material and restrains the social interaction between contributors, thus having a "homogenizing impact" on the contributors' translation practices (Pérez-González, 2017, p. 20). Pérez-González argues that this leads to the reproduction of institutional power relations seen in industrial screen translation in highly structured non-professional, non-profit subtitling collectivities, even though it has been argued that participatory media can help challenge such power relations (Pérez-González, 2014, p. 69). This shows the importance of the technological aspect of participatory translation as affecting and intertwined with the human or social aspect. The role of the subtitling platform and its technological features should thus play a more important role in the theorization and conceptualization of online participatory translation practices.

Despite the importance of standardizing terminology in research on online translation practices by choosing a higher-level concept, it should also be noted that online translation practices, like other forms of fluid practices online, cannot in certain cases be easily subsumed under clearly delineated categories. Research on the various forms of non-professional translation shows that boundaries cannot be easily drawn between crowdsourcing and other terms that describe voluntary translation in digital environments like online collaborative translation and user-generated translation. With the advent of digitalization and the omnipresence of technology, practices of crowdsourcing have become increasingly complex. Translation can be performed by amateurs or professionals, free of charge or remunerated in small amounts, and

initiated by those who create the translation or by source content owners (McDonough Dolmaya, 2019). For example, scholars disagree on whether or not Wikipedia should be called a crowdsourcing initiative (e.g. see Dombek, 2014; Howe, 2008; Jiménez-Crespo, 2017), since the same online community (Wikipedia users) both initiates the call for translation and creates the translation content. Moreover, the top-down/bottom-up dichotomy in defining crowdsourcing does not always apply to its practices in reality: even though the translation request may be solicited by a third-party content owner, participants still need to respond to the call voluntarily, as in the example of the TED Translation Project (Yu, 2020). As a result, despite certain claims that crowdsourcing should be differentiated from related terminology like online collaborative translation (e.g. Jiménez-Crespo, 2017), any distinction would be artificial without taking a close look at the features of a particular translation initiative.

#### ***4.2 Conversations and debates on the impact of participation culture on translation***

There have emerged considerable conversations and debates around what the new prevalent phenomenon of crowdsourced/online collaborative translation causes for translation as a profession and its position within the wider society. Bank and Deuze (2006) caution against what they see as polarized debates in current scholarship on digitally mediated translation in non-professional contexts between “development theories” and “dependency theories” (p. 422)

At one end of the debate is the urge to take a critical stance on how corporations and firms exploits the language expertise of internet users and extract surplus economic value from them, with a focus on ethical questions with new forms of labour relations in neoliberal, informational capitalism. Apart from the use of crowdsourcing by for-profit businesses like Facebook and Amazon, practices of translation crowdsourcing in charity, non-profit or humanitarian assistance

contexts are also subject to such criticism. For example, a comparative study by Piróth and Baker (2019) examines translation crowdsourcing in humanitarian assistance and raises critical issues around the ethics of unpaid, voluntary translation in the sense that surplus value may be extracted from such free labour by the translation platform. Looking at two volunteer/crowdsourced translation initiatives in humanitarian assistance and international development contexts, the authors make a distinction between horizontal/grassroots initiatives based on a peer-helper system and vertical/top-down crowdsourcing initiatives where a corporate approach to translation is adopted. More specifically, the authors compared the organizational structure of Translators without Borders and Solidarités International, two organizations that solicit volunteer or crowdsourced translation to support humanitarian or international development NGOs. While Solidarités International adopts an internship system based on peer support to help integrate novice translators under training in the labour market, Translator without Borders takes a corporate approach to translation crowdsourcing and implements a top-down organizational structure in the sense that a paid management board solicits unpaid volunteer translation services from participants not necessarily without professional credentials. Moreover, Translator without Borders profits from the accumulation of translation assets contributed by volunteers on their platform and requires participating NGOs to pay an annual subscription fee to the platform while not paying the translators, despite adopting a discourse of charity in its mission statement. While Translator without Borders emphasizes the volume of texts translated by volunteers, Solidarités International emphasizes collaboration, networking and personal development of translators that contribute to its crowdsourcing/volunteer translation initiative. As a result, the authors argue that a series of critical questions need to be asked about the actual practices in translation crowdsourcing initiatives to determine whether their practices feed into the platform economy at

the cost of deprofessionalizing translation itself, such as who benefits eventually benefits from unpaid translation? What is the impact on public perception of translators and the organizational structure of such initiatives? In conclusion, the focus of volunteer-based translation initiatives should move from the accumulation and exploitation of translation assets to fostering community-driven collaboration between translators. Piróth and Baker's study stresses the necessity to keep in mind the larger socio-economic structure that underpins crowdsourcing, even in seemingly charitable initiatives.

Zwischenberger (2022) argues that ethical problems with partially paid or unpaid contribution to for-profit crowdsourcing initiatives lie in the consequences of such actions instead of the causes or motivations for people to participate in such initiatives. There may be mutual benefits for both the participants in crowdsourcing initiatives and the for-profit organizations that initiate such translations. Participants in for-profit and non-profit crowdsourcing initiatives alike can be motivated by intrinsic factors, such as the urge to help others, to relate to one's language community, or to acquire and practice a new skill without investing too much time. The gamification of translation in certain crowdsourcing initiatives also helps to keep such intrinsic motivation high by blurring the boundary between work and play. This said, Zwischenberger argues that this mutually beneficial relationship can also be exploitative "if it reveals unfair traits and/or if there is some kind of unconscionability involved" (2021, p. 11). In this case, whether or not unconscionability is involved is determined by the distribution of profit—a crowdsourcing initiative is considered exploitative if the profit generated from voluntary participation is not redistributed to the contributors, even though they are not motivated by financial compensation. Such voluntary contribution that yields huge profit which is not redistributed to the contributors can generate a negative impact on professional

translators, since translation as unpaid labour might lead to demonetization of professional practices. The fragmentation of translation processes in certain crowdsourcing initiatives also calls into question the necessity of university-based translation training (p. 14), thus resulting in deprofessionalization of translation. From such a perspective, the focus is not on how participants in translation crowdsourcing make sense of their work, but how such practices might jeopardize translation as a profession and have a negative impact on labour relations in professional translation practices.

Notwithstanding, an apparent problem with this approach is that it excludes the viewpoint of participants in crowdsourcing when determining the ‘fairness’ of the initiative on the grounds that such evaluation must go beyond the immediate actors involved. While there is no denying that socio-economic factors underpinning crowdsourced translation are important, a simple focus on the distribution of monetary gains and the latent societal impact risks overlooking other dimensions of power relations in hierarchically structured top-down crowdsourcing initiatives. Little has been said on the question of uncovering what grounds such communities are formed and maintained and how they change and shift.

As Bank and Deuze (2009) notes, another set of research findings on digitally mediated translation in non-professional contexts consider user-generated, participatory translation practices as empowering for consumers of media content and mutually beneficial for both media companies and the user-consumers who participate in the co-creation of translation. Comparing top-down and bottom-up approaches to digitally mediated translation, Pérez-González (2013) identifies two kinds of co-creational practices in the participatory age. Drawing on Chouliaraki’s (2010) analysis of the dialectics of technology and democracy, Pérez-González argues that the top-down model of crowdsourced translation shows how the ‘technologization of democracy’

occurs in the digital age. More specifically, translation crowdsourcing initiated by the owner of source content usually takes place in more institutionalized sites like TED Translation Project and the crowdsourcing program of Al Jazeera, in which translator-participants' autonomy is constrained by the initiating party's rules, such as what texts are made available for translation and what digital tools should be used. Self-organized translation in less institutionalized sites, such as fan translation and subtitling, reflects the 'democratization of technology'. This bottom-up, horizontal approach to online translation gives translator more autonomy in terms of what to translate and how translations should be done. For this reason, existing research on this strand of translation tends to focus on its activist dimension and how it thus creates "cultural resistance against global capitalist structures through interventionist forms of subtitling" (Pérez-González, 2012, p. 165). Drawing on a case study on the activist subtitler network *Ansarclub*, Pérez-González further illustrates how politically engaged amateur translators challenge dominant narratives and co-create alternative narratives of reality through participation in the remediation and bricolage of online media content. More specifically, this activist network is based on an online "affinity space" (Pérez-González, 2012, p.169) where politically engaged amateur subtitlers and the viewers of the subtitles interact and exchange posts in a blog. By selecting particular audiovisual content for re-circulation and adopting interventionist translation strategies, the amateur subtitlers deliberately engage an audience who sympathize with the political stance implied in these narratives, thus creating an active political citizenship. However, while both the subtitlers and their viewers subscribe to an alternative, anti-hegemonic narrative about conflicts in the Middle East, they also bring in their individual world views during the exchange, which are motivated by certain aspects of their nuanced, fluid individual identities.

Looking at the potential social impact of these two different practices, Pérez-González argues that due to the various constraints present in relatively institutionalized sites of participatory translation, translator-participants in these initiatives might actually help reproduce the “institutional power relations” that cocreational, participatory translation can potentially disrupt (Pérez-González, 2012, p.171).

The study of translation in the digital age is without doubt a new and vibrant field. Nonetheless, the persistent inconsistency in associated terminology shows that boundaries between different kinds of practices in this field cannot be easily defined. Scholars have attempted to provide various working definitions for digitally mediated translation. Although they all address certain important aspects such as the motivation of contributors, the organizational structure and the digital environment, fuzzy boundaries between different kinds of practices both in literature and real-life scenarios lead to conceptual overlaps between many of these definitions. Therefore, there is a need for a more robust terminology to avoid redundancy and to more closely capture the characteristics of digitally mediated translation in different contexts. Given the irregularity of diverse scholarly discourses in this field, my study will attempt to further delineate the boundaries between these online translation practices by resorting to the term “crowdsourcing”.

#### ***4.2 Research on Translators and Their Communities in Participatory Cultures***

There is a growing interest in the sociological aspect of digital translation, with special attention being paid to social interactions within groups of amateur translators and how they evolve into collectivities that contribute to the flow of information online. While earlier studies try to assess the quality of practices like fansubbing from the perspective of professional

translators, this approach has become problematic as the scope of participatory, digitally mediated translation expands. Fansubbing, for instance, is highly experimental and interventionist, and does not conform to norms in industrial screen translation (Pérez-González, 2013). As a result, conventional measures in professional translation are not applicable to participatory translation practices like fansubbing (O'Hagan, 2012, p. 30). To date, literature on digitally-mediated translation has focused on issues including quality assurance, ethical implications, motivation of contributors, involvement of professionals etc. (O'Hagan, 2009, 2011). A close look at how non-professional translation takes place and who is involved is needed to study these problems and their impacts on the wider society. This section reviews three case studies on crowdsourcing initiatives launched by Wikipedia and Facebook and discusses how they can inform research on TED.

Driven by the growing interest in profiles of contributors in collaborative, non-remunerated translation and how these people are organized, the number of agent-oriented, sociological studies of translation in online environments is on the rise. Studies such as Dombek (2014), O'Hagan (2017) and McDonough Dolmaya (2012) have used sociological methods like survey, interview and virtual ethnography to study crowdsourcing initiatives like Facebook and Wikipedia. The issues examined include the contributors' profiles, their observations of the crowdsourcing initiatives, structure of the workflow, relations between different contributors and how they interact with one another, the role of technology in facilitating the whole process, etc..

McDonough (2012) sent an online survey to Wikipedia translators who were translating into English to find out who they are and why they contribute to Wikipedia's initiative. The findings suggest that there is a low interest from people who have received formal training in translation or who currently work in the translation industry to participate in the Wikipedia initiative. More

than half (68%) of the respondents indicated that they have neither received formal training in translation or worked in the translation industry. Only 15% were working in a field related to translation at the time of the study. McDonough notes that compared to open-source software crowdsourcing initiatives where most contributors have either received training in IT or worked in the IT sector, there is significantly lower participation by professionals in Wikipedia translation crowdsourcing (p.174). This finding is in line with concerns within the translation industry about the ethics of non-professional translation practices—criticism has been made of non-remunerated translation outside the traditional workplace because it shows professional translators as replaceable by untrained practitioners and contributes to a potentially negative public perception of translation as a profession (McDonough Dolmaya, 2011). Professionally trained translators' low interest in participating in crowdsourcing initiatives such as that of Wikipedia points to ethical implications of non-remunerated translation that harvests free labour and potentially lowers professional standards.

McDonough (2012) also looks at the motivations of participants and find that most participants identified intrinsic reasons for their participation, such as making information widely accessible or supporting the organization launching the crowdsourcing initiative. Unsurprisingly, more participants gave intrinsic reasons rather than extrinsic ones for their motivation, be they amateurs or professionals. Of particular interest are participants' social and political motivations tied to the agenda of the organization behind the initiative, i.e., helping the spread of knowledge to certain communities, raising public awareness of certain issues, rectifying unequal access to information across different language communities etc. (McDonough Dolmaya, 2012, p. 184).

In terms of extrinsic motivations, McDonough found that those working as professional translators gave extrinsic reasons like enhancing their reputation as professionals and increasing

their visibility to potential clients via participating in Wikipedia. Having analyzed the motivations of professional translators who contribute to Wikipedia, McDonough suggests that some other crowdsourcing initiatives such as The TED Translation Project might be more attractive to professional translators than that of Wikipedia because of “the greater cultural and symbolic values” that TED possesses (2012, p. 188). Results of the survey suggest that professional translators consider participation in crowdsourcing initiatives as a way to enhance their visibility to a potential pool of clients. However, there is a low participation rate among professional translators in the Wikipedia initiative, and the vast majority of Wikipedian translators taking part in the survey did not put their real names on the Wikipedia website. By contrast, TED translators are much more likely than Wikipedian translators to register with their real names and put photos of themselves on their TED translator profile.

McDonough’s findings comparing the motivations of different groups of Wikipedian translators suggest that although both Wikipedia and the TED Translation Project are considered non-profit, cause-driven crowdsourcing initiatives dedicated to breaking down language barriers and making information more widely accessible, TED seems to be more successful at publicizing its mission to the general public and attracting more interest and attention with its production of audiovisual, multimodal content. TED’s self-branding with “Silicon Valley elitism” (Jurgenson, 2012) and selection of high-profile speakers might explain why professional translators are more likely to consider their contribution to the TED Translation Project as a “high-status professional activity” (McDonough Dolmaya, 2012, p. 188) as opposed to initiatives like Wikipedia. Apart from different ‘marketing’ strategies, other possible reasons for different perceptions of crowdsourcing initiatives among those who are professionally trained as translators lie in the organizational structure, the protocols for selecting contributors, and the organization’s discourse

on translation. For example, TED emphasizes the difficulty of producing high-quality translations that meet the organization's requirements, implements a peer-review system for quality control, and introduces a placement test that new participants must pass before joining. These barriers, together with narratives about the organization's mission as non-profit and cause-driven, seemingly give some translation crowdsourcing initiatives like the TED Translation Project higher status than others (McDonough Dolmaya, 2011). Therefore, the cultural and symbolic values of different crowdsourcing initiatives and their potential impact on how translation is perceived in the society need more attention from researchers.

Sociological research on crowdsourced and online collaborative translation is also informed by in-depth qualitative data collected from interactions with and observations of translator activities in the online space. Recently, a growing number of studies have been using virtual ethnography to examine digitally-mediated translation in non-professional context, such as crowdsourcing and fansubbing (Olohan, 2019, p. 392). Particular to ethnographic studies, participant observation in targeted translation crowdsourcing initiatives allow the researchers to immerse themselves in these online translator communities and more closely examine how the projects are organized, the workflow of translation crowdsourcing initiatives and interactions between contributors and other parties involved in the initiative. For example, Dombek (2014) and O'Hagan (2017) analyzed ethnographic data collected on the crowdsourcing initiative launched by Facebook. Unlike Wikipedia that adopts a cause-driven narrative and a non-profit agenda, the Facebook crowdsourcing initiative is outsourcing-driven in that it is initiated by a for-profit company and calls for participation from a specific community of web users associated with the company (Ray and Kelly, 2011, as cited in McDonough Dolmaya, 2012). Dombek (2014) conducted a case study with both qualitative and quantitative components with Polish

Facebook translators. More specifically, the research used netnography (Kozinets, 2015) to collect qualitative data on Facebook translation crowdsourcing in its specific cultural context, and then used a survey to collect quantitative data on the demographics of translators, their perceptions of the translation process, and their motivations to take part in crowdsourcing. Analysis of the netnographic and survey data led the researcher to conduct an observational study with six translators to find out about the functioning of the Facebook translation application in practice. Later on, O'Hagan (2017) used the netnographic data from Dombek's (2014) study to analyze the emergent relationship between technology and translation crowdsourcing under the framework of Actor-network Theory (ANT) (see Buzelin, 2005; Latour, 2005). Having looked at interactions between different actors involved in the Facebook crowdsourcing initiative, O'Hagan argues that the design of the Facebook subtitling platform leads to poor communication between contributors and the personnel of Facebook—the initiating party. Consequently, the contributors tend to perceive the organizational structure of Facebook crowdsourcing initiative as unresponsive and hierarchical. Thus, weak links between general contributors and the professional team working for the crowdsourcing initiative at the organizational level have caused issues with trust in translation quality and translators' sense of autonomy in the Polish Facebook initiative.

From a sociological perspective, Dombek (2014) and O'Hagan (2017) found that under the top-down structure of corporate-led crowdsourcing initiatives like Facebook, participants are often frustrated at the lack of reciprocity and interaction from the initiating party. Existing literature on participatory culture and online collaborative translation often associates the development of non-professional translation and distribution networks with democratization of information, user empowerment and strengthened links between different parts of the world (e.g.

Orrego-Carmona & Lee, 2017). Case studies looking into collaboration processes in self-organized groups of fansubbers and non-professional translators, in particular, tend to highlight the empowering, transforming and democratizing power of online collaborative translation networks (e.g. Li, 2015, 2019; Yu, 2019). However, studies on the translation process in crowdsourcing initiatives, such as those published by Dombek (2014) and O'Hagan (2016, 2017), run counter to this view. These studies reveal constraints on contributors' autonomy and freedom in digitally mediated environments. More specifically, by comparing translation crowdsourcing in Wikipedia and Facebook, O'Hagan (2016) argues that the democratization effect of collaborative, digitally mediated translation depends on the technical code, which could curtail contributors' autonomy and authority in the translation initiative (p. 943). Thus, while literature on participatory media often suggests that technology has allowed the free flow of information and thus empowered users, technology can well be used for control in hierarchically structured crowdsourcing initiatives where channels of communication between different parties involved may be nonreciprocal. Given the complexity of crowdsourcing where a mix of top-down and bottom-up practices are often seen on the same digital platform, more empirical research needs to be done with crowdsourcing communities to explore their production context and collaboration process to determine the wider social implications of such translation activities.

Studies of amateur and fan translators, for example, have drawn on sociological frameworks to examine the organization of translators in online space. Li (2019) draws on media sociology to investigate EduInfinity, a non-profit fansub group that creates Chinese subtitles for massive open online courses produced in non-Chinese languages and vice versa. In this case study, the researcher tested the social self-organization theory developed by media sociologist

Christian Fuchs (2002) with self-organized amateur translation communities. Methodologically, the study analyzed archival data available online to investigate the group's technological infrastructure and social organization. As a non-profit, cause-driven online fansub group, EduInfinity attracts members who are located in different geographical regions like East Asia, North America and Europe by advertising its mission to break down language barriers in knowledge transmission. Moreover, EduInfinity constructs a shared online social space for translator communication to help boost a sense of collective identity around a technological infrastructure consisting of various instant messaging applications and online platforms. The establishment of such space is accompanied by the implementation of a set of rules that regulate members' communication behaviour that were devised by the members themselves. It is through the rules and rituals regulating members' behaviour, interaction and collaboration that online organisations like EduInfinity become self-organizing-and-reproducing systems in Fuchs' terms that mediate the flows of information in today's globally connected world. In conclusion, Li (2019) argues that technologically-mediated translation in a self-soliciting fansub group can help uncover systematically how our society is being reconfigured by the affordances of networked technologies.

Without doubt, the sociological approach has informed research on fansubbing not only methodologically but also conceptually. Pierre Bourdieu is among the sociological theorists whose work has been applied by researchers on fansubbing. In a recent case study on fansubbing, Lu (2019) conducted netnography with three Chinese fansubbing groups. Conceptually, Lu applies Bourdieu's theory to the study of power dynamics in non-professional subtitling communities. More specifically, Lu argues for a "subtitling field"—a subfield of the field of translation—whose boundary is defined by a kind of symbolic capital specific to the field

which he calls “subtitling capital” and which exists under the influence of the field of power or politics that are external to the disciplines of the field. Lu sees the subtitling field as deriving from a hierarchy where economic capital and cultural capital are opposed in the field of power. From the case study, Lu concludes that power operates within these fansubbing communities in two ways: firstly, through the construction of cultural capital unique to fansubbing groups (such as cultural knowledge built and shared by members of the community which takes time and practice to acquire) and which makes fansubbing an autonomous field with its own structures, hierarchies and ideologies; and secondly, through the influence of the field of economy and the field of power on the internal logic of the fansubbing field, such as fansubbers’ selection of what to translate in accordance with both market demand and government censorship. In particular, Lu argues that the system that credits translators for their work, which exists in a lot of crowdsourcing and online collaborative translation communities, is used to calculate the symbolic capital that translators possess in this particular field (Lu 2019, p. 120). For fansubbers, less credit means less access to both cultural and social capital of the community, thus lower positioning in the fansubbing field. As a result, fansubbers are invested in accumulating cultural capital by improving their mastery of the source language and their computer skills. Therefore, applying a Bourdieusian approach allows the author to reveal how power operates within hierarchical fansubbing communities through the lens of cultural action, something that is not obvious into previous studies on the workflow and structure of non-professional subtitling groups. However, a weakness of this study is that the analysis of capital is limited to the “field of fansubbing” and not situated in the wider social context. A question that could have been asked is whether the levels of social and cultural capital that fansubbers possess in the fansubbing field

can be converted into economic capital, e.g. their reputation and access to resources as professional translators since it is not only non-professionals that are involved in fansubbing.

Furthermore, Wongseree (2020) focuses on self-organized fansub groups in Thailand and explores the usefulness of ANT (Actor-network Theory) as a theoretical and methodological framework for studying participatory, audiovisual translation. In short, ANT conceptualizes societies as self-evolving networks consisting of both human and nonhuman actors. It has been applied to sociological research on translation in traditional workplaces with a focus on translator networks (see Buzelin, 2005, 2007). Curiously, despite the theory's relevance for studying translation practices within the context of global interconnectivity and networked technologies, it has only recently been applied to the study of digitally-mediated translation outside traditional workplaces, such as crowdsourcing (e.g. O'Hagan, 2017). In a case study on Thai fansubbing groups that translate Korean cultural products under the influence of K-pop, Wongseree (2020) conceptualizes the fansub group as an actor-network consisting of both human actors like fans and non-human actors like the digital tools/technological infrastructure, the Korean TV shows that fansubbers translate, and the legal framework that problematizes the dissemination of pirated translations etc. Ethnographic data collected from surveys and interviews with fansubbers help the researcher figure out how such an array of different actors forged relationships among themselves as they enrolled in fansubbing activities. The technological infrastructure has come to play a central role in maintaining the identities and practices within fansub groups as they create alternative ways for distributing K-pop media products without legal authorization. Compared to previous research on amateur translation, the adoption of ANT as a conceptual and methodological framework in this study seems to allow for a more dynamic analysis of the relationship between technology and translation in the digital age.

Findings of the aforementioned studies all point to the need to delve further into social aspects of digitally-mediated, non-remunerated translation. Inspired by recent developments in media studies on the interrelationship between communication technologies and the society, McDonough Dolmaya and del Mar Sánchez Ramos (2019) emphasize the social nature of collaborative, technology-mediated translation and call for more attention to the socialization processes on interactive digital platforms used by translators. The rise of crowdsourced translation in collaborative, technology-mediated environments raises many important questions about the organization of translation, the collaboration between translators, and the functions of digital translation platforms in practice. Given the inadequacy of norms and guidelines developed in the translation industry to evaluate translations produced outside traditional workplaces (Orrego-Carmona, 2019), we need more empirical research on different kinds of non-remunerated translation initiatives in their real-life settings. Sociological research that focuses on the translation agents involved, the organizational structure and wider social implications will contribute valuable insights into the role of translation in the digital age.

In the following section, I will discuss how translation agents and collectivities are examined through the lens of a theoretical framework that originally came from education and has been widely applied in management studies—communities of practice (also known by the acronym CoP). A community of practice is a group of people who share the same interest or goal and, consequently, engage in a set of activities that require social interaction with one another. As opposed to formal learning institutions, in communities of practice people develop their expertise by taking part in the activities of an established collectivity and eventually acquiring new identities specific to the context where their practice takes place (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In CoP theory, learning practices entail a process of meaning negotiation as people make sense of their

activities and give form to their experience, referred to as “a duality of participation and reification” by Wenger (1998, p. 52). Communities of practice are widely observed in professional contexts where the “apprenticeship” model is often applied to the training of new employees—junior employees learn through interactions with their senior counterparts (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Thus, communities of practice facilitate learning and the deepening of knowledge in horizontal structures. In Translation Studies, it was only until recently that Communities of Practice came to the attention of researchers. This said, there has been a surge of interest among researchers on the usefulness of CoP to examine translator networks, translator training, translator identities, evolution of translation practices, knowledge creation and management among translators etc. The following section will explore literature in this field in more depth and explain how it can contribute insights on translator collectivities in the TED Translation Project.

### ***1.5 Literature that applies CoP (Communities of Practice) to Translation Studies***

The CoP theory first emerged from the work of Wenger and Lave (1991), Wenger (1999), Wenger-Trayner (2013), Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) and has since been widely applied in education and management studies. As a forementioned, a CoP consists of people with a shared domain of interest working together to fulfill individual and group objectives. According to Wenger (1999), CoP offers a way to look at how meaning negotiation at the individual level give rise to larger social structures. Although the CoP theory is considered new to Translation Studies (Li, 2015), the existence of communities of practice has been long acknowledged by translation studies scholars, though in other terms such as translation norms, regimes, translator’s habitus, translation as socially situated activities etc. (Flynn, 2010, p.116).

But translation researchers have increasingly engaged with literature on CoP during the last decade. Most of the literature that looks at the intersection of CoP and translation studies came out over the last ten years, including monographs, PhD dissertations, and themed issues on Translation Studies journals. The topics of interest that have been covered in the literature on CoP include translator training, translator identities, translator organization and communications, horizontal networks that facilitate knowledge sharing among translators, potential points of connection between translation and other professional practices etc. (Cadwell et al., 2022; Davier, 2022; Li, 2015; Marco, 2016; Radicioni & Rosendo Ruiz, 2022; Valero-Garcés, 2022; Wermuth et al., 2022; Yu, 2019, 2022).

Among the different kinds of literature that apply CoP to the study of translators, the research that examines how translation agents engage in meaningful interactions in shared spaces online or off-line is of great interest. More specifically, it helps uncover how such interactions facilitate learning, knowledge sharing and identity negotiation for translators. For instance, a special issue that came out in 2022 on the Journal of Specialised Translation Studies focuses on the application of the CoP Theory to the study of translation in various settings (Cadwell et al., 2022). In off-line settings, translation work creates opportunities for the emergence of CoPs that are composed of groups not limited to professionally trained translators, but can include non-typically trained translators who learn by doing and different stakeholders who are implicated in the translation network. In linguistically diverse contexts such as overseas military operations (Ruiz Rosendo, 2022), development work (Nguyen, 2022), social work involving migrants (Radicioni & Rosendo Ruiz, 2022), journalism (Davier, 2022) etc., people from all walks of life may be engaged in the task of cross-cultural and/or interlinguistic communication, which makes translation a key driver for the emergence of communities of practice.

For instance, in an experimental study, Valero-Garcés (2022) applies the framework of CoP and situated learning to correctional services in culturally diverse Spanish prisons. More specifically, this study examines CoPs that are intentionally formed through a training program on translation and interpreting intended for multilingual prisoners. The author first identified an issue with interlinguistic communication in culturally and linguistically diverse Spanish prisons where a considerable number of prisoners hold a foreign passport, which causes communication deficiencies. In order to facilitate communication, education and reintegration of the prisoners, Valero-Garcés introduced a pilot educational program that allows bi/multilingual prisoners to receive training in translation and interpretation and to participate in the design of the program, integrating their personal backgrounds and stories in the learning experience. This initiative engages various stakeholders including prisoners, prison staff, social workers and researchers and teachers of translation and interpretation. Meaningful collaboration and interaction between these parties were found to be key to the overall success of the program, since all parties contributed their perspectives to make the initiative fit into the wider context of the prison. Eventually, the study concludes that participation in this learning initiative not only provided the trainees with skills and knowledge of translation that can help reintegrate them in the labour market, but also engaged them in a reflective process that alerts them to the long-existing communication needs, problems and solutions in the prison as a multicultural space, as well as their existing and newly acquired capacities in interlinguistic communication.

Ruiz Rosendo (2022) examines another group of ad hoc translators in a different context. She looks at civilian interpreters recruited by Spanish troops in Afghanistan who were oblivious to both professional standards and military procedures and as a result, had to develop expertise through the lived experience of working in conflict zones. Applying the concept of legitimate

peripheral participation from Lave and Wenger (1991), the author examines how the old-timers, i.e., the military personnel, and the newcomers, i.e., the civilian interpreters form CoPs where both parties work together to “solve problems, share ideas and increase their knowledge through mutual assistance” in challenging situations of military operations (Ruiz Rosendo, 2022, p. 27). For the established members of the CoPs, i.e., the officers, different competences are needed in different situations which range from daily routine meetings to the more stressful and dangerous field operations. Thus, the interpreters not only have to improve their interpreting skills and military knowledge through their practice, but also need to learn to apply a wider range of problem-solving skills in order to be recognized as competent by the old-timers of the CoP. Moreover, learning through participation in the CoP may entail a (re-)negotiation of wider socio-cultural identities for participants. For example, despite not being previously trained in interpreting, the interpreters recruited in Spain are viewed as more legitimate participants than the locally recruited Afghan interpreters because of their cultural-political affinity with the military officers. Thus, situated learning in real-life settings, rather than teaching and training institutions, may be of a contested nature.

Nguyen’s (2002) work examines the emergence of translation CoPs among different groups of stakeholders in development projects. Again, the key actors in translation CoPs in development work come from all walks of life, including professionally trained translators with experience in development work, development workers who speak more than one language, scholars, donors, consultants, government officials, project field workers, local communities, the media, the public etc. All of these stakeholders may participate in or be affected by the translation process in development directly or indirectly (Nguyen, 2022, p. 127). Although not all of them identify as translators, they need to deal with translation issues in their day-to-day

duties, which creates opportunities for the emergence of CoPs. Using terminological translation problems as an example, the author argues that the diverse actors in development translation CoPs share a common goal of translating fuzzy development terminology from English into the local language and thus act collectively despite their different affiliations. As they leverage the resources at hand to create a shared space and engage more actors for translating terminology, they are not only engaged in translation problem solving but also create a “coherent social identity” among those involved (Nguyen, 2022, p. 131).

While Nguyen’s work shed light on the role of development translation CoPs in cultural mediation, Radicioni and Ruiz Rosendo (2022) further emphasize the role of translators as cultural mediators in humanitarian emergencies and the importance of situated learning to help sustain this role. After interviewing a group of ad hoc translators who are part of an NGO that provides medical services and aid to people in crisis situations, the authors found that none of the interviewees had received training in interpreting before and after they joined the NGO. Learning in practice and knowledge creation/sharing through peers, in this case, are crucial for the medical interpreters to become not only competent interpreters but also cultural mediators. The interpreters thus form CoPs where they create new patterns of work activity centered on interaction, communication, coordination and peer learning in response to the need for them to learn on the job.

In a study on journalists working in the bilingual context of a Canadian newsroom, Davier (2022) investigates the presence of CoP and peer-support networks in mitigation of risks associated with translation in journalism. More specifically, she focuses on the francophone news network where journalists work both with the majority language of English and the minority language of French where there are various risk factors associated with translation in a

newsroom such as tight deadlines, language mistakes and anglicisms (language interference). Taking an ethnographic approach, Davier found that her participants who are translator-journalists working towards a minority language rely largely on help and support within their bilingual communities of practice to mitigate and manage a wide range of translation risks that occur in a stressful, time-pressed work context such as journalism.

Apart from translation in professional contexts, fan and amateur translation has also been the subject of investigation through a CoP-focused lens. Researchers such as Li (2015), Yu (2019) and Xie (2021) apply CoP-informed digital ethnography to the study of different kinds of amateur translator collectivities and uncover how the emergence of translator CoP not only helps members extend their personal networks, gain new social membership and hone their translation skills but also contribute to cross-cultural information flows in a more general, impactful way. The emergence of self-organized, peer-support networks of translation helps amplify connectivity and informatization.

Looking into how social network analysis can contribute to sociological research in translation, McDonough Dolmaya defines a translation network as one where “the actors share a common interest in translation or a translation-related profession” (McDonough Dolmaya, 2007, p. 794). More specifically, the nodes or actors in a translation network are linked by exchange of both material resources like monetary remuneration and immaterial resources like exchange of information, questions and answers, guidance, or career opportunities related to translation. Furthermore, she divides translator networks into four categories: profession-oriented, practice-oriented, education-oriented and research-oriented—translation networks are essentially held together by shared common interests and values. The affordances of technologies have allowed

most virtual practice-oriented translator networks to become international in the sense that they might comprise of actors based in geographically dispersed locations.

Based on analysis of translator's networking and communications in the online translator forum TranslatorCafé, McDonough Dolmaya suggests that the exchange of information and resources through postings in TranslatorCafé shows a practice-based translator network and gives rise to a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Having analyzed the patterns in user behaviour of TranslatorCafé by looking at the forum statistics, the author found that the digitally-mediated online translator forum, a relatively small number of active users were responsible for the majority of online interactions such as postings and discussions in the translator network in TranslatorCafé. However, having compared the number of viewings of the most active postings in the forum, the author argues that translator networks in digitally-mediated spaces not only evolve around active user behaviours such as creating and replying to postings in the discussion forum, but also around viewings of the active postings by an extended translator network that consists of less active members. To further investigate the motivations of the most active users to exchange immaterial resources, the author surveyed registered users who are considered active based on the number of postings that they created in the forum, and found that major incentives include: a) to share experiences; b) to help others; c) to feel like part of a community; d) to increase invisibility to peers; and e) to engage in intellectually enriching discussions. Thus, it seems that the motivating factors for the top posters to remain active in the forum over the course of years are essentially linked to the "desire to form stronger-tie relationships with other members" (McDonough Dolmaya, 2007, p. 807).

McDonough Dolmaya's 2007 study points to the convergence between the idea of community and network in research on online translator collectivities. In particular, her findings

reveal the features of online translator cafés as practice-oriented communities, an idea central to the theory of Community of Practice (CoP). However, the question essential to CoP—how communities are formed through both participation (direct interactions) and reification (creation of both material and immaterial artefacts) in the online translator forum—is left unanswered. Moreover, only statistical analysis of translators’ online interactions were carried out, leaving the qualitative, discursive aspects of translators’ interactions as they form strong or weak ties in the extended virtual network unexplored. Thus, in studies that explore how practice-oriented translator communities emerge in digitally-mediated environments as translators try to create ties with one another to share resources or create a sense of belonging to a community, how the translators negotiate the meanings of their practices and identities and how they make sense of the ‘community-building’ process must be studied using in-depth, qualitative methods.

To sum up, the aforementioned case studies demonstrate the usefulness of CoP for studying translation by both professionals and amateurs in networked, digitally mediated environments. In the previously mentioned studies, translation skills and competences acquired outside of traditional learning institutions play an important role in helping translators in their day-to-day tasks. Equally important is the development of peer learning networks and systems that helps maintain the functioning of such alternative forms of learning. More importantly, such networks of learning and knowledge creation become more important and influential in our age where both communication and work processes are more digitalized than ever. With the interconnectivity afforded by technological developments, translation by amateurs is nowadays a major constituent in the global flows of media products and continues to shape media consumption habits (Orrego-Carmona, 2018). By creating alternative means for diffusing media products, such networks show the potential for reshaping the relationships between consumers, producers and mediators

of media products in our technologized society. Along with other user activities in the online space, non-professional translation may have a profound societal impact that needs to be studied in light of how our world is being transformed by affordances of interconnectivity. The TED Translation Project also relies largely on a volunteer-based peer system as a crowdsourcing project. Thus, many of the insights from the above-mentioned studies on the importance of CoP to translators show that research on TED can benefit from a similar approach. By contrast, existing research on TED does not show an interest in taking an agent-and-process-oriented approach to the study of TED Translation project, as explained in the following section.

### ***1.6 Existing Research on TED Translation Project***

This section discusses studies that have been done on TED Translation Project and their limitations. Many studies have been done on TED Talks (e.g. Denskus & Esser, 2015; Hasebe, 2015; Liu & Chen, 2019; Ludewig, 2017; Martínez García, 2018; Mattiello, 2017; Scotto di Carlo, 2014a, 2014b; Tsou et al., 2014; Wingrove, 2017; Wu & Qu, 2020). The surge of research tackling different aspects of TED in recent years shows that interest in the TED model of knowledge popularization and its wider social impact is growing quickly in academia as TED continues to gain more and more public influence and visibility. Some of these papers focus on the linguistic features of TED Talks as a new genre for entertainment and science popularisation emerging from new media outlets (Ludewig, 2017; Scotto di Carlo, 2014a, 2014b; Wingrove, 2017), while others try to address the wider social implications of TED Talks (Denskus & Esser, 2015). However, when it comes to the crowdsubtitling model of TED Translation Project or issues in translating TED Talks, the existing literature is much less rich. Translating/subtitling TED Talks thus seems of less scholarly interest than TED Talks themselves.

So far, three papers have focused on TED Translation Project as case studies, two of them examining the motivations of volunteer translators to join TED Translation Project and one looking into translating for TED as a learning experience (Olohan, 2014; Cámara, 2015; Cámara & Comas-Quinn, 2016). As aforementioned, Olohan (2014) produced a discourse analysis of 11 blog entries by selected TED Translators that were written in interview format and published on the TED website from 2009 to 2011. These entries seem to serve publicity purposes for TED Talks and The TED Translation Project, and thus tend to emphasize certain aspects of translator experiences that TED would like to present to people. While the data are likely to be biased due to the strategic selection of narratives that match the TED mission for posting and the limited number of blog posts available for analysis, Olohan argues that the blog post analysis points to the usefulness of qualitative methodology to study the motivations of volunteer translators. Demographic information about the translators is limited in this set of data, but reveals that most of the volunteers that appear in the blog posts are university educated. The results identify several main categories of motivations for TED translators: 1) sharing benefits from TED Talks, often within a certain language community or culture; 2) effecting social change by facilitating spread of knowledge; 3) deriving satisfaction from altruistic acts; 4) participating in communities, groups or movements; 5) learning more from TED Talks by translating them; 6) translating for enjoyment/fun. Thus, it seems that altruism—bringing benefits to others and effecting change—and the sense of satisfaction derived from altruism play a big part. Some people are attracted to TED Translation Project simply for the sake of being part of a community or movement tied to a good cause. Notably, Olohan notes that both factors 5 and 6 point to “a lack of contact with translation as a professional activity” (Olohan, 2014, p. 26). The translators show no professional interest in translation per se, but simply see translation as a means for

acquiring knowledge. They are not motivated to learn more about translation through volunteering, but to learn more from TED Talks and the knowledge or civic value that these talks created.

In a different study, Cámara (2015) used an online survey to collect information on the demographics and motivation factors of TED Talks translators. Cámara divides crowdsourcing projects into three categories: outsourcing-driven, which often applies to projects initiated by for-profit corporations, product-driven, which involves localisation of a specific software or program, and cause-driven, which are often initiated by non-profit organizations. TED Translation Project falls under the third category. She argues that TED Translation Project “removes the linguistic barriers to the spread of knowledge” by having web users around the world subtitle talks transcribed in English, which is the dominant language for publishing scientific talks, into other languages (p. 213). Her study found that a good number of TED Talks translators possess great intercultural skills. About 1/3 of respondents were born in a place culturally and linguistically different from where they currently reside. Nearly half (44.6%) of the respondents speak a language at home that is different from the language of instruction in their schools. Around 40% of respondents with or without previous training in translation are thought to have an intercultural background. The author thus suggests that the TED model of bringing together people from different parts of the world helps users develop intercultural competences as they translate the ideas of people with different languages, nationalities and cultures and interact and collaborate with others in the TED community. However, the reverse is equally likely to be true—people with an intercultural background are more likely to be drawn by the cause of TED Translation Project to facilitate intellectual exchanges across different nations, cultures, religions etc. In terms of TED translators’ motivations, Cámara found that

people volunteer to translate for a wide array of reasons, with the top 5 motivational factors being: 1) members identify with the TED value and philosophy and would like to take part in its expansion; 2) members see translating for TED as a way to contribute to society; 3) members see translation as a way to enjoy free time; 4) volunteer translation helps members gain translation/subtitling experiences and skills; and 5) volunteer translation helps members learn more about TED Talks. Many of the motivation factors match those uncovered by Olohan (2014), i.e., bringing benefits to society, translating for enjoyment, and enhancing learning of the content of TED Talks. However, unlike the Olohan study, Cámara's survey reveals that gaining translation skills/experiences does appear to be a main incentivization factor for TED Talk translators, and volunteer translation can be linked to the volunteers' long-term goals or interests in translation. In a later study, Cámara and Comas-Quinn (2016) further explored the value of learning enhancement through participation in online open communities like TED Translation Project for translator education and concluded that most participants considered participating in TED Translation Project a positive learning experience for subtitling, because of the user-friendliness of the online subtitling platform and the peer review process in place as part of the quality control system. While new participants' lack of control over rules and practices in the TED community might lead to discord on translation between participants and reviewers, the commenting and messaging functions of the subtitling platform make it possible to create dialogues between them and facilitate the exchange of knowledge.

Moreover, Cámara's findings about the intercultural competences and backgrounds of TED Talks translators relate to Anthony Pym's (1998) analysis of translation and interculturality. Pym criticizes the tendency in translation studies to shift from a purely source-oriented approach to a purely target-oriented one, which can be detected in the theoretical work of scholars like

André Lefevere, Gideon Toury and Lawrence Venuti. He suggests that by considering translations as facts of the target culture only, these scholars fail to see translation as something that happens at the intersection of cultures. Pym suggests that translators are always physically associated with a kind of interculturality and translation should thus be considered in relation to cultural intersections as well. In order to more precisely define interculturality, Pym takes the example of cities and suggests that with the rise of the city, interculturality is less associated with borders and territories but with cultural hybridity found in the modern urban space. However, digitalization and the creation of virtual networks that facilitate the exchange of ideas and knowledge across different linguistic, cultural and religious borders would make a stronger example for intercultural space. Or, by participating in the TED Translation Project, the volunteers have the opportunity to enhance their learning from the information available in talks given by people from various linguistic, cultural and religious groups other than their own. Thus, an analysis of the cultural context of production and Interactions between participants In TED Translation Project can potentially uncover the relation between translation and interculturality in a non-professional context, and what role digitalization has played in this process. Unfortunately, existing case studies on TED Translation Project seem to have overlooked this direction of research.

While the aforementioned case studies of TED Translation Project provide useful insights on translation crowdsourcing and intellectual exchanges, particularly the motivation aspect of crowdsourced translation initiatives and the virtual communities of user-generated translation as a space facilitating cultural transactions, they also have limitations. None of the studies mentioned above focus on one or more specific language or culture communit(ies) under TED Translation Project, thus treating all such groups as the same. Taking a wholistic approach to

TED Translation Project, the aforementioned research risks treating all such subgroups of TED translators as homogeneous and setting aside possible nuances in the motivations, working conditions and demographics of volunteers in different language groups. As aforementioned, TED Translation Project has grown into a large network consisting of people from more than one hundred language communities. In terms of the organizational structure of TED Translation Project, TED also seems to divide its volunteer members into different virtual communities based on the languages that they speak. For example, most languages that TED Talks are translated into have their own Facebook groups, which can be closed or public, where volunteers can reach out to their specific language coordinators and to each other, ask questions, seek help, and create/share resources on translation. The aforementioned case studies, however, fail to address the culturally specific production contexts in TED Translation Project.

Moreover, the studies focus mainly on why people translate for TED, while making little effort to collect empirical data on how online collaborative translation takes place in the context of TED Translation Project. In other words, they do not answer the ‘how question’—what translation in TED Translation Project actually looks like. Neither Olohan (2014) nor Cámara (2015) paid sufficient attention to the translation and collaboration process from the perspective of participants. Cámara and Comas-Quinn (2016) have done work on the participants’ experience with TED Translation Project and concluded that overall, TED Translation Project offers a positive learning experience for the participants. However, they recruited participants who were not part of the TED Translation Project before the start of their study. As a result, data collected on these participants did not tell us much about what the actual collaboration process is like in TED Translation Project, and the relations and interactions between different parties involved.

TED Translation Project is also of interest to researchers working on the role of technology in online collaborative translation. In his summative article on technology and non-professional translation in the Routledge Handbook of Translation and Technology, Jiménez-Crespo (2019) comments on how the advent of cloud-based subtitling platforms has affected the area of multimedia translation by “acting as a breeding ground for activist and ‘crowd subtitling’ ”, using TED Translation Project as an example (p. 245). He argues that the cloud-based solutions to subtitling not only give the parties initiating crowdsourcing projects more control over source materials, workflow, and the composition of volunteer groups for crowdsubtitling, but also allow them to manage collaboration among members and expand the pool of volunteers. Jiménez-Crespo notes that TED Translation Project customized the cloud-based subtitling platform Amara for the purpose of its initiative, so that it retains more control over the subtitling process. The TED-customized version of Amara imposes a hierarchy on the translator community and divides participants into translators, revisers and language coordinators, based on their level of participation, their experience and their abilities. Participants of higher status have more power in the workflow, such as freezing a translation in process to prevent further changes from being made. Jiménez-Crespo further argues that the case of TED Translation Project and its customization of Amara.org shows the symbiotic and dynamic relationship developed between technology and non-professional translation practices in recent years. However, it seems that the role played by technology is still largely underexplored in the aforementioned three studies of TED Translation Project, with the exception of Cámara and Comas-Quinn’s (2016) comment on how the social networking feature of Amara.org, which has been criticized for constraining “the socialization of amateur[-

subtitlers]” (Pérez-González, 2017, p. 20), helps facilitate reciprocity between the translators and reviewers.

Another theme that has not been explored by existing research on TED Translation Project has to do with language politics in translation traffic. Lawrence Venuti (1995/2018) has criticized the unidirectionality of translation flows in cultural production from West to the Rest, thus emphasizing questions about language diversity and linguistic justice. The advent of digital interconnectivity has provided new opportunities for resisting such trends in the flows of cultural products, such as through self-organized translation and diffusion networks in online environments, but more critical examination is needed to assess the results. As aforementioned, TED is dedicated to making the vast number of TED Talks originally produced in English accessible in as many foreign languages as possible. While collaborative screen translation platforms like Viki Global TV are said to reroute traffic in screen translation against the ‘West to Rest’ flows, thus encouraging language diversity in screen media and multi-directional global connectivity (Dwyer, 2017, p. 179), TED Translation Project seems to be based on a model of expansion from its headquarters in North America. Although TED claims to break down language barriers in global knowledge distribution, it places a great emphasis on making its content originally produced in the English language accessible in non-English languages, thus making the flows of screen media translation unidirectional rather than multidirectional. On a side note, the franchising of the TED conference from its place of origin to various regions overseas also means that talks are being produced in local languages other than English. As a result, while TED Translation Project primarily serves the purpose of making TED Talks available in a wide array of non-English languages, the reverse translation traffic—translation of talks originally produced in non-English languages at local conferences—can also be facilitated

by TED Translation Project. The directionality of translation traffic in TED Translation Project between English and non-English languages thus should be further investigated.

Finally, as TED Translation Project has recently migrated from Amara.org to Captionhub, it would be equally interesting to uncover how translators are affected by the transition. Thus, literature on TED Translators' engagement needs to stay up to date by investigating changes in the translators' technological work environments and their possible impacts.

### ***1.7 Gaps in Existing Work***

The above sections show where we are in research on digitally mediated translation, with a focus on translation agents involved, the collaboration between human translators and technologies, the dynamics within online translation collectivities. Despite negative reactions from within the translation profession towards the involvement of untrained practitioners in various crowdsourcing projects, the proliferation of diverse translation practices outside traditional workplaces calls for more empirical research to understand their nature. While studies on non-remunerated translation in the digital age have shown that such work could affect how translation is organized and evaluated in the industrial context, there is also a growing research interest on their wider implications for society. With the affordances of technology and interconnectivity, the digital has become a cultural phenomenon that affects all aspects of our lives, and the digital turn is said to be happening in many disciplines that range from media studies to communication studies, sociology, psychology, political studies etc. (Vitali-Rosati, 2020). As one of the many aspects of the society affected by digitalization, translation is now undergoing various transformations. Research on translation in the digital turn can thus

contribute to the wider scholarly conversations on how our world is being affected and transformed by omnipresent technologies and increased interconnectivity.

Existing literature on networked amateur translation identifies certain themes that need to be further explored by researchers. With regards to contributors' motivations to take part in non-professional translation initiatives, McDonough Dolmaya (2019) notes that due to the limited scope of data collected from case studies of specific non-professional translation initiatives using different research methods, it is difficult to compare and generalize the findings of these studies. Thus, McDonough Dolmaya suggests that more comparative studies are needed to investigate the motivations of translators across different platforms and/or whether translators translating from and into different languages have different motivations (p. 126). The limited scope and representativeness of research on non-professional, digitally-mediated translation is a problem present not only in this specific area of research but also generally in translation studies, given the predominant use of case studies as research methodology (Orrego-Carmona, 2018, p. 337). While the scope of research is often limited by factors such as time and resources that each researcher has, taking a comparative approach could be a way to expand the scope of study and address the issue of generalizability as much as possible in smaller studies that try to generate in-depth analyzes of individual cases. In large, transnational crowdsourcing initiatives such as TED Translation Project with numerous translator communities working from and into different languages, comparing two or more language groups might help expand the scope of study, while the project still stays relatively manageable.

Knowledge dissemination and production in crowdsourced and online collaborative translation have attracted the attention of more and more researchers. The relationship between translation, technologies and the diffusion of knowledge and information in the digital age has

been explored in studies on non-profit, cause-driven crowdsourcing initiatives. The Wikipedia translation initiative, for example, has been the object of study for researchers to investigate the relationship between knowledge production/dissemination and language policies in crowdsourcing initiatives (McDonough Dolmaya, 2017), translation flows and the visibility of different points of view in knowledge production (Shuttleworth, 2018), and how both collaboration and hampering can and do occur during knowledge production/dissemination on collaborative translation platforms (Jones, 2019). Research on non-solicited online collaborative translation and fansub groups also looks at the role of contributors and their self-organized diffusion networks in facilitating knowledge diffusion. Examples include how contributors' educational backgrounds and identity roles within the translation collectivity affect meaning negotiation during the translation of scientific texts (Yu, 2019), and how networked fansubbing contributes to both dis-embedding and re-embedding of communication processes during the global circulation of knowledge (Li, 2019). In particular, McDonough Dolmaya (2019) suggests that much more work needs to be done on the relationship between knowledge dissemination in crowdsourced/collaborative translation and the fair distribution of knowledge, while taking into account factors such as the translation platform and translator profiles and motivations (p.128). The role of TED Translation Project in facilitating (or hampering) knowledge accessibility as a cause-driven crowdsourcing initiative thus needs to be investigated.

If we are going to view crowdsourcing translators (e.g. translators from the wider TED phenomenon) as knowledge communities that engage in co-creative labour and contribute to the flows of information, the Communities of Practice (CoP) discussed earlier can help contribute valuable insights into the learning, identity negotiation and community-building processes within these communities. Moreover, the discussion of the controversy around the extractivist nature of

post-informational capitalism in Sections 1.2 and 1.3 needs to be accounted for in a study focusing on the potential translator CoPs in translation crowdsourcing. While immaterial labour as a ‘cluster concept’ has been discussed by media studies, sociological and philosophical scholars for over a decade, this current study sets out to further explore the implications of immaterial labour creating ‘emergent subjectivities’ and mediating the relations between individuals and corporate actors in the proliferating forms of “creative labour, network labour, cognitive labour, affective labour and immaterial labour” (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 2). An exploration of immaterial labour being relevant for my study in addition to the use of the CoP Theory ensures that the role of the corporation initiating the crowdsourcing project will be further explored.

The spread of audiovisual, multimodal content afforded by the omnipresence of networked platforms has created great demands for audiovisual translation and localization services (Díaz Cintas & Massidda, 2019). Audiovisual translation is not only a vibrant field of translation studies powered by new developments in digitalization, but it can also learn from neighboring areas in media and communication studies. Scholars have repeatedly argued for translation studies to develop ties with relevant areas in media and communication studies to more fully understand the dynamics of intercultural communication (Littau, 2011; McDonough Dolmaya & Sánchez Ramos, 2019; Orrego-Carmona, 2018). In such a way, we can provide answers to the questions that Littau (2011; 2016) has asked about the interrelationship between media technology and translation, and thus expanding current conceptualizations of translation in the discipline. Given TED Translation Project’s dedication to making general forms of knowledge more widely accessible through the organization of crowdsourced screen translation, it makes a great case study for addressing the gaps that previous work has left out.

Existing studies on TED Translation Project has applied discourse analysis and quantitative surveys to look into the backgrounds and motivations of TED Talk translators to find out about why they participate in TED Translation Project. Olohan (2014) analyzed blog entries in the TED Translator Blog where TED published interviews with select translators about why they joined as volunteers. However, the researcher notes that the blog posts may not be representative because they are meant to promote TED Talks. Thus, more descriptive, sociological research on TED Translators is needed.

It has been said that community features like collective identity do not necessarily apply to translation crowdsourcing, as opposed to self-solicited, self-managed translation initiatives, since crowdsourcing typically involves an unspecified multitude of people who do not own the translated content (Zwischenberger, 2022). For example, does participation in TED Translation Project help construct emergent identities and subjectivities?

### ***1.8 Research Questions***

In view of the foregoing discussions, I propose the following research questions for my study:

1. Given the examples of existing studies using the CoP Theory to uncover the significance of digitally mediated translation practice for translator's learning and identity etc., in what ways can the CoP Theory and its concept of socially situated learning be used to understand TED Translators' translation practice?
2. Why is the concept of immaterial labour relevant for studies of crowdsourced translation like the TED phenomenon? Looking at crowdsourced translation from a practice-centered perspective, how can immaterial labour as a working concept contribute to the theoretical understanding of translation, with a focus on the translators' lived practices, e.g. by mobilizing the CoP theory?
- 3.

Does TED act as an external force that produces constraints on TED Translators' activities, and how? Based on the answer to this question, what insights can we gain into the relation between Crowdsourced translators in the TED ecosystem and TED, the one that solicits translation?

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided my research context, explaining what TED Translation Project is and why a study of crowdsubtitling in TED Translation Project will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in translation studies. Then, I reviewed prior work that has been done on non-remunerated translation outside traditional workplaces, including attempts to conceptualize different non-professional translation phenomena and individual case studies that looked at the translation agents and the organizational structure of different crowdsourcing/fansubbing initiatives as well as their potential impacts on reconfiguring the world we live in with the development of the global web. The next section provides an overview of emerging academic discourse on informal translation in online environments. In the following chapter, I will lay out my theoretical framework and methodology for a case study on crowdsubtitling in TED Translation Project.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

### *Introduction: Relevance of a sociological approach to the case study on TED*

With the development of polysystem theory and Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) since the mid-1980s, Translation Studies has shifted ground from source-oriented to target-oriented and more importantly, it has come to recognize that translation is always embedded in the politics of the larger target system (Snell-Hornby, 2006). This systemic approach to translation moves beyond the text itself, and makes it possible for researchers to analyze translation in relation to the social context in which it is produced and the role that it plays in systems of literature. DTS's interest in norms, values and ideology of the receptor society can be seen as the starting point for sociological approaches to Translation Studies (Snell-Hornby, 2006, p. 49) Since the 1990s, the sociology of translation has become an major field of study. Largely inspired by the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, this approach differs from interpretative and economic analyses of translation in that it takes into account the social conditions of translation, the power struggles between agents involved, and cultural hierarchies in international exchanges (Heilbron & Sapiro, 2007; Sapiro, 2014). Since the 'sociological turn', Translation Studies has absorbed various theories and research methods developed in social sciences such as sociology and anthropology, which allow it to tackle the weaknesses of DTS and polysystem theory by taking into account the agents involved in translation and the social conditions under which the translation process takes place.

Translation is embedded in a wide range of social processes because no sharing or exchange between social actors and agencies would be possible without translation (Tyulenev & Luo, Forthcoming). Sociological research on translation explores the key role of translation in connecting the atoms that form the social structure, and thus focuses on the actions and activities

accomplished by individuals involved in translation production. Thus, my study aims to adopt a theoretical framework that examines the activities accomplished by translators in their specific spatial and temporal settings. This calls for the incorporation of the theoretical school that investigates translation through the lens of practice. Thus, the next section sets out to further explain what a practice-based approach can bring to my current study and the wider phenomenon of voluntary translation practices.

### ***2.1 A practice-based approach to studying translation agents***

The sociological turn in Translation Studies is accompanied by a growing interest in the translators and what they do. Moving beyond the systemic approaches to studying the societal impact of translation to translators' practices opens up an opportunity for Translation Studies researchers to find a middle path between systemic/structuralist approaches and the individualist approaches in their choice of methodology. More specifically, the practice research strand has roots in the structuration theory developed by Anthony Giddens (1986). Giddens' structuration theory examines how individual actions and agency tie into the reproduction and continuity of social systems and structures as individual agents engaged in situated, knowledgeable activities. The individual actors engage in activities which are time and space bound; such activities reproduce organized social practices and relations between different actors and collectivities. Thus, the knowledge that self-reflexive individual actors possess about their situated activities is integral to the reproduction of social life. Giddens argues that such a sociological framework can avoid the pitfalls of functionalism and phenomenology which take a reductionist approach to the relation between social structures and individual actors (Giddens, 1986, p.26). Thus,

structuration theory can help avoid a partial account of the social life that ignores either the impact of individual purposes/agency or the systemic constraints.

After Giddens, sociological theorists such as Theodore Schatzki (1996; 2002) and Andreas Reckwitz (2002) have further developed the field of practice theory by digging into the roles played by human agents and material entities in embodying organized practices. Referencing their work, Maeve Olohan (2021) elaborates a practice-oriented framework for Translation Studies researchers. With reference to the practice theory research work built on Schatzki, Olohan presents the practice of translation as comprising three elements: materials, competence and meanings. Firstly, she proposes that researchers adopting a practice theory lens on translation should consider the material entities involved in translation, including both tools and equipment used for translation and the translator's body; then, researchers should consider the various forms of competence, understandings and know-hows that govern the translation practice in the field; the last thing to consider is how translation is shaped by the various symbolic meanings that translators give to it and translators' ideas, aspirations and motivations (Olohan, 2021, p. 26). She goes further to argue that these intertwined elements configure the practice of translation and shape one another in the meantime. Thus, for the author, the practice theory lens investigates the social world focusing on how people's understandings and know-hows are embedded in recursive activities, which forms the basis for the reproduction of social order (Olohan, 2021, p.32). This has significant implications for the study of translation which is an example of 'integrative' (Schatzi 1996 in Olohan, 2021, p. 31) or professionally codified/regulated practices that often involve multiple interconnected agents and/or entities that routinely cross into each other for translations to be accomplished. Also, by engaging the

practice theory strand of research, Olohan pinpoints the important role played by material entities in translation practice, which is largely overlooked by Giddens' original structuration theory.

Olohan (2021) draws a sound blueprint for the future research in Translation Studies to mobilize 'practice' as a conceptual apparatus giving a wholistic account of social life. However, her analysis of translation as a practice covers a wide array of translation phenomena and focuses on conceptual development for Translation Studies to further integrate the generic concept of practice. In my study, I intend to integrate a theoretical apparatus that focuses more specifically on the relation among translation agents who are self-selected to do crowdsourcing and their relation with the corporate actors soliciting crowdsourcing. Although a practice-based approach is relevant for my study, I aim to adopt a theoretical framework that better explains the process whereby people (are) voluntarily engage(d) in translation practice without getting paid. Thus, with the relevance of the research strand on practice theory in mind, I will focus on a related theory that can help explain how translation as a skilled practice allows for self-selected communities to form. The next section sets out to introduce the Community of Practice (CoP) Theory.

## ***2.2 Communities of Practice (CoP) Theory***

Like other frameworks under the practice theory umbrella, the Communities of Practice (CoP) Theory connects the activities of individual agents with the emergence of larger social structures. Both structuration theory and practice theory have emphasized the importance of examining activities that are time and space bound to observe how they become organized practices and structures that go beyond the temporal and spatial limits. The CoP Theory further explores the social interactions and relations among the agents involved in situated, practice-

based learning processes. It does so by examining how group organization and governance is connected to individual practices and learning (Wenger, 2010). The CoP Theory arose from the constructivist tradition and phenomenology (Wenger, 1998, p.281). It focuses on human interactions and meaning mediation in the study of emergent social structures. Originated primarily from the work of Wenger and Lave (1991) and Wenger (1998, 2010), CoP not only explores the advantages of approaching learning as a socially situated process over learning as based in institutions, but also sees situated learning as an integral aspect of social experience and identity. More specifically, Wenger (1998) argues that learning through practice is not mere action but can change how we perceive ourselves as we gain new competences, negotiate meanings and define ourselves as parts of groups of practice (p.226). This section offers more detailed information on the main components of CoP Theory.

There is an integral social aspect to learning, and learning practices thus allow people to produce and mediate meanings, which is “our ability to experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful” (Wenger, 1998, p. 4). Learning thus affects our ability to mediate and engage with the world we live in, and in such a way social structures arise from individual practices. In order to present how exactly CoPs lead to emergent social structures, Wenger names three dimensions of CoP that underly meaning negotiation among the members: mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. Essentially, meaning negotiation refers to the process of reaching an agreement in a group of people which is not static but needs maintenance and constantly undergoes re-alignment (Wenger, 1998, p. 53). The three key dimensions of CoP have particular implications for the study of communities of translators, as explained below.

To start with, mutual engagement refers to the fact that members of a CoP engage in certain practices and mediate the meanings of those practices as they interact with one another; because of mutual engagement, a CoP is not merely a network, team or group of people who are physically close to or talk with each other daily. For example, a group of reporters working for the same company and attending the same editorial meetings each day may be considered as demonstrating mutual engagement, while they do not meet the criterion of mutual engagement with reporters working for a different company with whom they share the same work space, because of the absence of negotiation among them (Davier, 2022). Thus, mutual engagement helps to define who is seen as a member of the CoP and who is not, and thus constitutes the work to maintain a community (Wenger, 1998, p. 74). It also creates tight and complex relationships among people within a CoP. While the modifier ‘mutual’ entails a sense of harmony and homogeneity, Wenger also emphasizes that mutual engagement is a matter of both homogeneity and diversity. Diversity arises of the diverse backgrounds of people coming together to form the CoP, the various personal reasons or incentives they may have, and the diverse competencies they possess. While Wenger referred to people who had been hired and were working as claim processors as the example in his case study, this characteristic applies well to crowdsourcing—people respond to an ad or an open call for help to contribute their intellectual competencies, both with a common cause such as feeling resonated with the agenda of the initiative as well as various personal incentives, such as learning, sharing, helping etc. Moreover, mutual engagement needs to be sustained through efforts to create opportunities for interactions among members in person or virtually. In a professional setting, going to work and meeting in the same space everyday and/or engaging in the same set of activities enabled by communication technologies become efforts to sustain mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). However, this may become

tricky in a context where all communication and coordination depend on voluntary work. More information on what kinds of practices take place (or do not take place) in the crowdsourcing initiative of TED to help sustain interactions among TED Translators will be given in Chapter Three.

Joint enterprise is the second key characteristic of CoPs. In short, it is defined by Wenger as a communal practice, a goal or an understanding shared by the group, which is the result of and reflect the complexity of meaning negotiation in mutual engagement. Most importantly, it is not static but the result of negotiation by the participants in response to their specific situation as they pursue their collective objective (Wenger, 1998, p. 77). For example, a group of fans who form a fan translation community may come together with diverse aspirations and goals, like making new connections, learning new skills, finding amusement or pleasure in the communal activity etc., and it is through the joint negotiation of these diverse incentives by group members that a joint enterprise is sustained (Xie, 2021, p. 41). Wenger emphasizes that, while the joint enterprise can be under the influence of various external, contextual and institutional conditions, members of a CoP may mediate imperatives imposed from outside and above, creating space for themselves that is free of external control. Thus, the joint enterprise has an indigenous component and the CoP's response to imperatives imposed from the outside is always communally negotiated (Wenger 1998, p. 79). Any response to such imperatives, including submission, should be analyzed as "a local collective creation of the community" through its interpretation of the imperatives (Wenger, 1998, p.79). Therefore, in crowdsourcing initiatives it would be interesting to examine to what extent participants negotiate and/or try to escape the technological and organizational constraints imposed by the initiating party through an indigenous enterprise; the existence of an indigenous enterprise can also be used to determine

whether the participants in the crowdsourcing initiative should be viewed as CoPs or simply crowds.

Not only does joint enterprise entail an indigenous response to external control, but it also helps create a mutual sense of accountability among the CoP members, which forms the basis of the community's instability. More specifically, negotiating a joint enterprise involves determining what is important and what is not, what can be taken for granted and what needs to be justified, what constitutes good practice and what needs improvements etc. to the members. Participation thus not only means taking part in communal activities but also entail "being personable, treating information and resources as something to be shared, and being responsible to others", as well as knowing when to try or try not to seek new meanings of events (Wenger, 1998, p. 80). While certain parts of such a regime of accountability may become reified as rules or standards, it is not always possible to fully articulate all aspects of accountability, and the reified and unreified rules are always negotiated by members in practice. For example, in the TED Translation Project, the common goal or accountability towards knowledge sharing by making TED Talks accessible in a variety of languages is reified on the TED Website as a general mission statement for all its translators through the following statement: "TED Translators are a global community of volunteers who subtitle TED Talks, and enable the inspiring ideas in them to crisscross languages and borders" (TED, "Translate"). This statement determines why it is important to participate in communal activities (i.e., translating TED Talks)—translation in this case is a way to share mutual accountability towards producing and sharing resources for the general public. The idea is echoed by TED Translators with whom I have spoken during my research and also helps create a general sense of accountability among them in terms of sharing information/resources and maintaining interpersonal relations with

other TED translators. However, these translators also provide individual interpretation of such a statement in ways that reflect their own negotiation of being accountable to their own community as well as the general public that consumes TED Talks in practice. More information on this will be given in Chapter Three.

Shared repertoire is the final dimension of CoP named by Wenger. In short, shared repertoire refers to the resources produced through practice that helps the negotiation of meanings. It includes “routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, gestures, symbols, genres, or actions” that members of a CoP produce as they pursue the joint enterprise and reflects the history of their mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998, p. 82). In both professional and non-professional contexts, translators may collectively compile resources, tools and routines to help each other out, such as shared software and language tools (Davies, 2022, p. 38), technological platforms for social networking and cloud storage and even a particular kind of vocabulary or discourse that they use in their daily interactions with other members (Xie, 2021, pp. 43–44). In TED Translation Project, the initiatives either by TED or self-organized by TED Translators to create textual resources and/or work routines also help to show why TED Translators can be theorized as CoPs.

Apart from the three dimensions of CoPs, another main argument in the CoP Theory is that membership in a CoP is based on recognition of competence, and thus is the result of situated learning and reflects the negotiated aspects of the community. Wenger suggests that belonging to a CoP differs from being part of communities, social networks, groups and categories in the general sense because it entails membership based on a regime of competence (Wenger, 1998, p. 135). More specifically, the competence needs to be acquired through participation in communal activities and may not be recognized as a competence or an expertise outside the CoP. What

constitutes a competent member is thus communally negotiated and the experience is thus neither purely individual or collective. More specifically, new members may bring their individual experiences, expertise and competences to a CoP, yet they need to engage in collective activities through peripheral participation and learn what is important to the collective in the process to be recognized as a competent member (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Wenger provides a more specific definition of the regime of competence as consisting of three dimensions in relation to the above three dimensions of CoP:

- 1) Mutuality of engagement: the ability to engage with other members and respond in kind to their actions, and thus the ability to establish relationships in which this mutuality is the basis for an identity of participation;
- 2) accountability to the enterprise – the ability to understand the enterprise of a community of practice deeply enough to take some responsibility for it and contribute to its pursuit and to its on going negotiation by the community;
- 3) negotiability of the repertoire – the ability to make use of the repertoire of the practice to engage in it. This requires enough participation (personal or vicarious) in the history of a practice to recognize it in the elements of its repertoire. Then it requires the ability – both the capability and the legitimacy – to make this history newly meaningful. (Wenger, 1998, p. 136)

Put differently, competence entails understanding what is important to the immediate CoP, being able to engage with others in the CoP, and using the resources in shared repertoire that the CoP has produced through its past learning activities (Wenger, 2010, p. 180). This shows how competent membership reflects a process of negotiation mediation, and engagement based on interactions and communal activities, and is not something static or taken for granted. In TED Translation Project, to become a translator, one is required to fill out an application form online, providing a short account of one's linguistic competence, an explanation of how one has learnt about the TED Program and why one wishes to contribute. Translators also need to take a short quiz which tests their knowledge of basics of how to navigate the translation platform and rules for subtitling; the answers can be easily found through browsing videos and guidelines that TED has published online to educate its translators. After that, the TED Team will review the application, approve it, and assign the translator to the appropriate language team(s). The

applicant will then have the title of TED Translator, gain access to TED's subtitling platform and participate in the communal activity of translation. However, as other research on digitally mediated, online collaborative translation shows, being accepted as a member of a translator group does not entail being recognized as a competent member (e.g. see Li, 2015; Xie, 2021; Yu, 2020). More specifically, being assigned the title of translator or member in such groups does not equal being recognized as a competent member; rather, one needs to take part in the practices of the group, in mutual engagement with other members, the negotiation of the joint enterprise and production of the joint repertoire to be granted full membership. Thus, I will later explain to what extent TED Translators need to undergo this additional process of membership recognition on top of being accepted through the 'official' TED Team, whose prerequisites are not necessarily recognized by the translator community since there is a lack of verification of applicants' translation and language skills. In short, the formation of competent membership through a progressive process of social interactions and meaning negotiation shows that learning in this context "is not just a matter of competence, but a matter of experience of meaning as well." (Wenger, 1998, p.137)

Going back to my earlier argument that the CoP Theory helps connect the micro with the macro in social analysis, an explanation of the various dimensions of CoP shows that individual experiences and learning can become a source of collective history of learning and membership/identity. Through the production of a collective learning history and a regime of competence, learning as defined by the CoP Theory creates boundaries such as who belongs and who does not, who is seen as competent and who is not etc., "giv[ing] rise to a multiplicity of interrelated practices [and] shap[ing] the human world as a complex landscape of practices" (Wenger, 2010, p. 183). The CoP theory thus takes a social systems approach to learning and

demonstrate how learning is capable of producing social structures (Wenger, 2010). For Wenger, social experience is essentially composed of participation and reification, as shown in how the reificative and participative aspects are intertwined in the three dimensions of the CoP. These two intertwined aspects co-create a collective memory of learning for the CoP, which is how individual and collective aspects are combined in lived social experience (Wenger, 2010, p. 180). Therefore, the CoP theory offers an alternative way to potentially theorize how people are organized in crowdsourcing, i.e., as CoPs rather than crowds. Looking for emergent CoPs in translation crowdsourcing initiatives allows researchers in TS to discover new ways that people may benefit from their participation in crowdsourcing, i.e., by developing a membership for learning communities that creates resources for them to make sense of their situation, activities, and life. Chapter Three will present a more detailed explanation of how TED Translator communities demonstrate the features of CoP by comparing them against the three above criteria. Because of the focus on naturally complex processes of engagement, practices and meaning negotiation that exist in actions, without concrete examples, any detailed explanation of the CoP theory appears to be rather abstract. Thus, I intend to only give a general introduction of CoP in the current section without going into too much detail.

While the CoP theory seems for relevant for my study of the TED Translation Project than practice theory because of its focus on community-building activities and socially situated learning processes, one weakness of CoP is that it does not dedicate as much attention as practice theory does to the material aspect of practice. The CoP theory does not talk much about how material objects help shape practices other than that the possible material productions through which practices become reified for the communities of practice. More specifically, these are the marks that “human activities produce in the physical world” and may include monuments,

documents and objects (Wenger, 1997, p. 60). However, its focus is still largely on meanings or abstract concepts produced through learning processes that help with the negotiation of identity for those who engage in learning practices. However, as the literature review on existing research on digitally mediated shows, the material and/or technological aspect of such practices are not to be ignored. Thus, in my theorization of TED Translators, I will refer to the component of practice theory that emphasizes the importance of materials to the shaping of translation practices. With reference to the current technomediascapes where translators work, Olohan (2021) emphasizes the importance of (Internet) infrastructure, devices and the material configurations of translation database as elements that participate in translation practice. Thus, the digital tools that TED Translators work with also play an important role in shaping their translation practice. Since the research was carried out virtually, I will not comment on the physical devices that TED Translators work on since I do not have access to the process whereby they use them. Instead, I will find out what digital tools facilitate their translation and how they work with them. This include the cloud-based subtitling platform where they translate and their translation dataset is stored, social media platforms where they communicate outside of the subtitling platform, and the Internet outlets such as TED.com where they may consume general information about the TED and the TED Translation Project.

Moreover, although this overview reveals the usefulness of the CoP Theory for the study of translation crowdsourcing, the CoP framework lacks some potential to situate my study of TED Translation Project in its broader socio-economic context. Going back to my research questions, although they focus on the immediate experience of TED Translators within their collectivities, they also try to find out what initiatives like TED uncover about the broader societal impact of the shifting digital 73resumpti, calling for a critical analytical lens. The CoP Theory has been

subject to criticism for not giving enough attention to issues around power in the social structure (Wenger, 2010). Wenger responds to such criticism by rightfully pointing out that the concepts associated with CoP such as community, practice and negotiation do not necessarily entail harmony and homogeneity. On the contrary, CoP provides a useful framework for analysis of power-related issues inside learning communities through its analysis of regimes of accountability and competence that determine who qualifies as a competent member/as part of the community and how the criteria change through a process of mutual negotiation of meanings (2010, 188-189). However, he also recognizes that the CoP Theory focuses on learning itself and not the social, economic and/or political context in which learning takes place (p. 188). Given the important role of crowdsourcing in the current economy and its implications for changing modes of labour and mobilizing the labour force as reviewed in the previous chapter, I will introduce a framework that better explains the potential socio-economic impacts of CoPs on changing labour relations in the digital age, beyond the immediate learning community. The following section explains how CoP could be juxtaposed with another theoretical framework to better explore the material (and immaterial) aspects of translation in the participatory culture such as the TED Translation Project.

### ***2.3 Immaterial labour in the Age of Digital Capitalism***

CoP is relevant for studying emerging participatory communities on networked platform in the digital culture because of its focus on how collectivities are built of peer support, cooperation and collaboration, which also characterize the social dimension of Internet. CoPs as collectivities of knowledge and practice can help explain the formation of knowledge networks that are facilitated and proliferate through networking and communication technologies. However, it is

also necessary to bring in a critical perspective on the emerging socio-technological landscape that forms the basis of the participatory culture. As previously mentioned, co-creative and ‘prosumptive’ activities such as online collaborative translation and crowdsourcing also bring in new challenges in that people’s desire for co-creation may be leveraged without their knowledge. Thus, I will first go back to the concept of participatory culture in explaining how CoP could benefit from juxtaposition with a critical theoretical framework on peer-supported networks of knowledge and learning. As previously mentioned, the work by Henry Jenkins (2006a, 2006b, 2014) maps out how audience engagement and user-generated content can give rise to a participatory culture that arguably creates democratic potentials by allowing audiences of digital media to freely participate in cultural production. However, his work on participatory culture has been criticized for taking a culturalist stance on online media and the digital space in general. Christian Fuchs (2014, 2015), for example, criticizes Jenkin along with other scholars of the Internet and society for holding what he calls idealistic views of the networked society. Fuchs considers Jenkin’s notion of participatory culture as political reductionism for ignoring questions around the material base of digital culture, the political economy and the capitalist exploitation of labour in the digital age.

More specifically, Fuchs (2014) argues that Jenkins’ conception of participation is limited to people meeting and congregating online and sharing/co-creating media content, but it fails to address more critical issues in the politics of digitalization. More specifically, Fuchs suggests that the scholarship on digital media and media culture, including that of Jenkins, shows a reductionist reading of the online ecosystem for failing to address “questions about the ownership of platforms/companies, collective decision-making, profit, class and the distribution of material benefits” (Fuchs, 2014, p. 54). Current literature on participatory culture addresses

either the cultural or the political level of media convergence. Although this work addresses issues such as online co-creation, communities and collaboration that lie at the core of participatory culture, it leaves out the important question about ownership of the infrastructure that sustains all forms of online activities, and it is the online platforms owned by media companies that “strongly mediate the expressions of Internet users” (Fuchs, 2014, p.54). Any discussion of mediation, co-creation and (re-)production of online content by netizens that does not consider the question of ownership is thus flawed in developing a political analysis of the democratic potentials of Web 2.0. To this end, Fuchs advocates for a Marxist approach at the theoretical level to studying digital media and their online platforms that focuses on the “political economy” of digital culture (Fuchs, 2014, p.55). The democratic potentials of participatory culture may be undermined by “how capitalist interests dominate and shape the Internet” (Fuchs, 2012, p. 215) and thus, in Fuchs’ view, have less to do with individual expression and engagement as Jenkins argues than with corporate interest in the accumulation of capital from digital platforms. To this end, Fuchs proposes a different reading of the term participation that draws on participatory democracy theory. In Fuchs’ term, the definition of participatory democracy goes beyond political participation to include aspects such as “the economy, culture, and the household, and the questioning of the compatibility of participatory democracy and capitalism” (Fuchs, 2012, p. 212).

From such a perspective, Fuchs argues that “playbour is an actual control strategy of humans that aims at enhancing productivity and capital accumulation” and that it tries to create an illusion of democratization at the ideological level which hides the sustained practices of exploitation in digital capitalism (2014, p. 116). More specifically, playbour refers to the conflation of play and labour in the participatory culture, and the subject of the labour is referred

to as “produser” by authors such as Fuchs. In this sense, prosumer or produser labour is the result of exploitation and capital accumulation. As previously mentioned in the literature review, critical researchers on translation crowdsourcing (Piróth & Baker, 2020; Zwischenberger, 2023, 2024) have argued for the need to further explore the exploitative aspects of crowdsourcing especially in regard to its reliance on unpaid or low paid labour for for-profit activities. In initiatives such as the TED Translation Project, the unpaid labour of translator-participants, apart from contributing to the social good, can also help bring profits to the initiator of translation, either by increasing their visibility or by producing translations which can be seen as immaterial, cultural goods for consumption. Self-organized learning-from-practice networks and communities thus participate in this new form of economic logics where activities aiming to promote co-learning and sense of belonging may be exploited by corporates. Thus, both the co-creative and exploitative dimensions of concepts such as playbour and use-generated content should be accounted for.

This said, it is more productive and intellectually stimulating to advocate for a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of the term participatory rather than to bash it as Utopian. Notably, Jenkins has tried to respond to such criticism of his theorization of participatory culture. In an article responding to criticism of his work on participatory culture, Jenkins (2014) argues that it is a misunderstanding of his work to reduce his conception of ‘participation’ to ‘interactivity’ and thus ignore its political potentials for collective action and activism. While Fuchs criticizes him for being vague about the role played by the corporate world in the politics of digital media and the concentration of resources in the hands of a few large media companies without taking an actual critical stance on digital capitalism (Fuchs, 2014, p. 55), Jenkins suggests that his work on participatory culture does not leave out the role of corporates, brands and more importantly, neoliberal capitalism. Rather, he sees opportunities in addressing the

contradictions associated with the term participation and “[creating] a more productive dialogue between those [who focus on] identifying the potentials of a more participatory culture and those [who are sceptical towards] how those same mechanisms may insure corporate and government control.” (Jenkins, 2014, p. 273) It is for this reason that this dissertation tries to enrich its theoretical framework by going beyond the constructivist theory of CoP and look for inspirations in the Marxist tradition that focuses on relations of labour and reproduction.

However, a Marxist approach to studying the current digital economy is not without flaws and also needs adaptation. Fuchs rightfully (2014, 2015) acknowledges the importance of situating new forms of cultural/creative/knowledge/communication work in more general scholarly conversations on changing relations of economic production so that the cultural, the economic and the political become connected. However, he tries to engage substantially with orthodox Marxism in seeking a solution to the problems that he identified with the contemporary informational economy without acknowledging changes in the organization of labour under informationalization that fall beyond the explanatory capacity of orthodox Marxism. While Fuchs criticizes the ‘culturalist’ reading of media convergence in the work of people such as Henry Jenkins, applying Marxist economic theory to the study of digital culture also risks falling in the trap of economic reductionism as many critiques of Marxism in social sciences have pointed out. Moreover, with the modes of production changing as new technologies emerge, especially in the communication field, orthodox Marxism may no longer be relevant to cultural industries in current technomediascapes with the re-organization of labour and production relations in place (Banks & Deuze, 2009; Pérez-González, 2012). Thus, I suggest that the autonomist theory may be a better theoretical framework of political economy to designate digital capitalism, in particular the implications of individual autonomy, creation and expression

in post-Fordism where capital's control of life has become dispersed throughout society. More specifically, my research draws on the notion of immaterial labour developed by a group of neo-Marxist theorists from the Italian Autonomist School (e.g. Virno 1999, 2004; Lazzarato, 1999; Hardt and Negri 1994, 2000, 2004; De Peuter and Dyer-Witheford, 2009). Although the Autonomist school seems to have less influence in the Anglo-American context compared to the Italian Marxist Gramsci's work on hegemony, it has led to a substantial body of literature that critiques transformations taking place at the economic and political level in informational, post-Fordist capitalism (Bowring, 2004).

The Autonomist tradition explores the social, economic and cultural transformations brought about by capitalism's turn from the Fordist system of mass production to the post-Fordist system where cooperative networks, digital labour and the production/consumption of 'immaterial goods', such as knowledge, media and cultural contents, become dominant. As a result of this transition, the modern worker is required to engage in labour that "produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity" (Lazzarato, 1996, p.134). In other words, there is an increasing demand for the worker to master computational and communication skills that are essential to the networked, informatized, cooperative modern workplace, and a wide range of activities that involve cultural, aesthetic and intellectual work that are not traditionally viewed as waged work become essential to the marketplace. Such transitions in labour and production processes have considerable impacts at the cultural, societal and political level. More specifically, autonomism sees the neoliberalist, postmodern, globalized world as an enormous factory without wall where capitalist control is decentered and dispersed because of the ubiquitous presence of commodification and digitalization. Most notably, Hardt and Negri (2001) argues that as a result of such changes, we are faced with a comprehensive system

composed of nation-states, large multinational corporations and international organizations, in which immaterial labour plays a highly strategic role due to its central position in sustaining information and communication networks.

The Autonomist school of thought can make a fruitful contribution to the study of translation crowdsourcing because of how it is adapted to re-organization of labour in the age dominated by communication technologies and cooperative networks. Although Fuchs has drawn on key concepts from autonomism in addressing the re-organization of work and labour as cultural, creative and intellectual work becomes important to contemporary capitalism (2014, p. 116), he does not further engage with the theoretical work that grounds the autonomist notion of the social factory which focuses on the implications of individual creativity and expression (central to Jenkins' analysis) for digital capitalism. While inspired by the writings of Karl Marx, the autonomist tradition differs from orthodox Marxism in substantial ways. It rejects the linear progression of history through a sequence of stages eventually leading up to the inevitable end of capitalism (Gill & Pratt, 2008), and thus proposes a post-modern reading of capitalism undergoing transformations under the influence of technologization and globalization. Importantly, the autonomist tradition does not rule out possibilities for escape from the global capitalist control whereas Fuchs (2014, 2015) seems to see labour in digital economies as entirely subsumed under globalized capitalism. More specifically, the immaterial, digital, communicative and affective labour which is dispersed throughout postmodern societies constitutes "a productive force within and against" the global capitalist command (Bourassa & Slater, 2022, p. 965). Autonomism does not deny the subjectivity and autonomy of workers in the contemporary society where capitalist influence is dispersed, which is thus called the 'factory without wall' by autonomists. They acknowledge potentials for change and possibilities for

alternative social organization beyond capitalism in the new forms of subjectivity that workers gain from creative and knowledge work in the ‘social factory’ of post-Fordist capitalist economies. This idea comes from a Foucauldian conception of power relations in post-modern capitalist societies according to Hardt and Negri—while capitalist command of the human body is dispersed throughout the networked, technologized, informational society, resistance to the capitalist command has become possible not only in industrial manufacturing sites, but in every realm of society. Although this optimistic position is later curtailed by recent developments in global politics that shift away from the neoliberal model of globalization (Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2009), the autonomist perspective on the relation between labour and subjectivity in a culture of co-creation still makes it a valuable contribution to the study of translation crowdsourcing.

The concept of immaterial labour has been coined in the work by Lazzarato (1999), Terranova (2000, 2004), Hardt and Negri (2001) and De Peuter and Dyer-Witheford (2009). It has been applied to the study of labour (re-)organization in digitally mediated work environments in research on media convergence, especially its material and economic aspects (e.g. Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2009; Terranova, 2000). In short, the term designates the idea of unpaid, informal labour being extracted by capitalist economies as modes of production shift from Fordist mass manufacturing of consumer goods through lines of assembly to computerized, digitized, globalized networks of production found today in both industrial and cultural production. Immaterial labour is tied to the autonomist idea of ‘social factory’ (Tronti, 1962) which is no longer tangible as in the Fordist age of mass production but become dispersed throughout the society due to the proliferation of informationalized and computerized work (Terranova, 2000, p. 33). Consequently, there emerges the ‘social worker’ who is embedded in

networks of cooperation and communication (Hardt & Negri, 1994). With the restructuring of the dominant labour process from mass production to the post-Fordist model where the production sphere becomes decentralized and informationalized, work becomes more flexible, requires good communication and cooperation skills, and has a considerable intellectual component (Hardt & Negri, 1994, 2001). Such skills and abilities are often not the result of formal training but “a self-required prerequisite for informal participation in the world of everyday life” (Bowring, 2004, p. 112). The ability to carry out communication and symbolic tasks and maintain cooperative networks is now required of modern workers due to the proliferation of computerized networks in production (Hardt and Negri, 2001). The products of immaterial labour include “knowledge, information, communication, a readership or an emotional response”, i.e., the “symbolic and social dimensions of commodities” (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 108). Hardt and Negri (2001) further suggests that there are three types of immaterial labour: the informatized labour that occurs as a result of technologization of production processes; the intellectual labour that tackles analytical and symbolic work; and the affective labour that builds and maintains social relations and networks (p. 293). Thus, immaterial labour is the result of multiple social, economic and technological developments with major technological, symbolic and social components. Both the products that such labour produce and the process of labour itself have cooperative, communicative, informational and affective dimensions. According to theorists such as Hardt and Negri (2001, 2004), the result of such developments is that on the one hand, the capitalist command of the worker’s body and mind has become dispersed throughout society as labour becomes abstract and immaterial. On the other hand, the communicative, cooperative, intellectual and creative forms of labour required in post-Fordist, informational economies help create new forms of subjectivity for the social worker that will undermine capitalism from

within. Due to its power to shape subjectivity through its symbolic, social and affective dimensions, immaterial labour continues to occupy an important position in the global capitalist system, which leverages not only workers but consumers and learners as subjects of labour (De Peuter and Dyer-Witheford, 2009, p.248).

Building her work around the theories developed by Autonomists, Terranova (2000, 2004) addresses the re-organization of labour processes in the cyber space. Her work shows the theoretical overlaps between Autonomist conception of the (re-)organization of labour in post-Fordism and the work of cultural studies theorists such as Jenkins' analysis of how the rise of new media has changed production relations in cultural industries. According to Terranova, cultural consumption converging with production has caused a surge of free labour in post-Fordist economies. More specifically, she takes the Internet and the online media industry as an example of 'social factory' in Autonomist terms (Terranova, 2000. P.34). The development of digital technologies and the thriving cultural industry as supported by the digital platforms give rise to a digital economy composed of "a public element" and "a market-driven element" and "a gift economy element" (Barbrook in Terranova, 2000, p. 35) where governmental/institutional influence/control, corporate pursuit of profits and individual desire for creation and sharing collide in the technomediascape. However, Terranova believes that the gift economy element, which is equivalent to the digital culture of participation, sharing and exchanges is still subsumed under the capitalist logics and becomes an important component of the reproduction of labour in digital capitalism. Thus, the 'self-organization' of people, networks and communities highlighted by theorists of digital media culture is considered as a phenomenon of networked immaterial labour and should be contextualized as a part of the historical development of capitalism (Terranova 2000, p.44). For people such as Terranova, the concept of immaterial labour should

be used as an operational tool to expand the understanding of labour from that of waged labour to a wider range of unpaid and/or poorly paid activities that proliferate in but are not limited to the digital, media and cultural industries (Terrenova, 2000, p. 46; also see Kücklich, n.d.).

If immaterial labour is to be seen as an umbrella term, the phenomenon of unpaid or partially remunerated translation practice that it designates has been explored in Translation Studies research since such activities of translation and beyond emerge in the age of web 2.0. The review of literature in Chapter One has drawn attention to a rich body of existing work that approaches translation as unpaid, community-building and affective labour, while the authors adopt different terminology. It is thus important to note that immaterial labour is not necessarily a new concept to Translation Studies even though Translation Studies has not really explored Autonomism. However, the rich terminological nuance that exists in discussions to date also indicates that this umbrella phenomenon should not be considered as homogeneous. Existing literature has emphasized different angles to take on this umbrella phenomenon, such as the co-creative, affective or community building aspects. In my view, the most compelling aspect of the term immaterial labour is that while it recognizes capitalist control as pervasive in the post-Fordist economy, it also acknowledges the possibility for the subject of that labour to challenge or undermine such capitalist control. Thus, the aforementioned discussions by scholars who fall under the Autonomist school call specifically for an examination of the relation between different actors involved in the evolution of such practices. Thus, by adopting the label immaterial labour, I hope to compare crowdsourced translation against the Autonomist argument that the subjects of immaterial labour are capable of resisting and undermining the exploitative conditions through which their labour practices are shaped.

Moreover, it is also important to note that conceptualizing crowdsourced, non-remunerated translation as immaterial labour does not deny the ‘material’ component of translation practices. All practices are inevitably comprised of both material and immaterial entities, and there is thus an undeniable material aspect to translation process and product. However, the modifier immaterial in Autonomist theory is tied to a specific historical transition where modes and relations of production changed from Fordism to post-Fordism and is not to be taken literally. On the contrary, as Olohan’s application of practice theory to the study of translation shows, materiality (e.g., the tools and equipments used for translation, the communication infrastructure that sustains digitally mediated translation practices, and translators’ bodies) is an important aspect of all kinds of translation practice. In the CoP theory, although less attention is dedicated to the material aspect of practice than in the practice theory, it is argued that material objects which are part of the real world as opposed to meanings are an important aspect of reification, a key concept to social learning (See Wenger 1997, p.63). Thus, to adopt a practice-oriented lens on translation, especially in the case of digitally mediated translation, my research questions touch upon the (digital) materials and tools that TED Translators leverage and the ownership/control of these tools. This further shows that my theorization of unpaid translation activities as immaterial labour does not negate the materiality of these activities.

The above discussion of theoretical conversations and debates on the impact of immaterial labour shows that the scholarship appears to be divided over what exactly immaterial labour is doing to digital capitalism, i.e., whether it undermines or reinforces/is an integral part of the capitalist logics. Such theoretical debates correspond with the conversations in Translation Studies on whether unpaid translation crowdsourcing is exploitative and undermines the status of the translator or creates more opportunities for forming networks of collective knowledge

exchange, learning and co-creation. Immaterial labour is substantial to economic and cultural transactions as well as the maintenance of the Internet as a medium. However, tensions and contradictions are immanent to immaterial labour as both pleasure and exploitation are present in the labour process (Terranova, 2000). One of the most important claims of Autonomists is that immaterial labour creates new forms of subjectivity that in turn create possibilities to escape external control such as that of digital capitalism, as mentioned before. Thus, one can also say that there are contradictions immanent to immaterial labour as both autonomy/subjectivity and control are immanent. In this regard, the CoP Theory can help to apply a micro-lens on the practice of immaterial labour in a socially and technologically situated context. To examine how crowdsourced translation as immaterial labour can construct new forms of subjectivity through individual desire for co-creation and the extraction of added value on immaterial goods, this study draws on Communities of Practice to examine whether communities of translators arise of the crowdsourcing platform in the TED Translation Project, and the mediating processes involved. While previous studies have shown that one of the top reasons for people to translate for TED is the need to feel part of a community (Cámara, 2015; Olohan, 2014), the notion of community has not been further explored in these studies. By connecting individual learning and identification with the emergence of larger social structures, the CoP theory may help uncover how individual desire for creation is being leveraged by the informational economy, and how the subjects of such labour react to the influence of the platform.

Gill and Pratt (2008) have asked how empirical research on (co-)creative, collective knowledge work can speak back to Autonomist theories about emergent subjectivity and resistance in the social factory. A critical analysis of the online ecosystem needs to trace down what is currently happening on the web at the material and cultural levels, taking a descriptive

rather than prescriptive approach (Terranova, 2000, p. 54). CoP can potentially make a valuable contribution to the study of free or immaterial labour on crowdsourcing platforms by connecting learning processes with the formation of a sense of belonging to a particular online collectivity on networked platforms and thus to constructions of identities. Autonomists argue that the cooperation, communication and technology skills that social workers are required to develop in networked economies become a source of subjectivity. The formation of a new subjectivity through creative work that gains prevalence in networked economies means that social workers do not fully fall under capitalist command. When applied to the study of online communities, CoP helps uncover how new members of a particular online group acquire new skills, knowledge and literacy through interaction with other members. This process often requires prolonged participation in shared group activities that either need or cultivate coordination and communication skills and/or technological literacy. Moreover, existing studies applying CoP to online communities show how the meaning making processes of members interacting with one another create materials that can help construct the members' sense of identity.

Moreover, CoP forms an alliance with the concept of immaterial labour by revealing the complexity of co-creative practices in real life that extend beyond material production—it focuses on the intangible symbolic, social and affective dimensions of activities that sustain information and communication systems. By offering a descriptive approach to the learning process as part of immaterial labour that sustains those systems, CoP can also help avoid taking polarized positions. Wenger suggests that because of the constant meaning negotiation involved in sustaining communities of practice, doing things together is a highly complex phenomenon and the resulting relations cannot be reduced to a single principle such as “power, pleasure, competition, collaboration, desire, economic relations, utilitarian arrangements, or information

processing” (Wenger, 1998, pp. 76–77). Thus, through a CoP perspective, relations among those involved in digitally mediated co-creative activities do not fall on either of the polarities such as autonomy and exploitation, but have both (Wenger, 1998, p. 77). By returning the focus of interest to the agents of translation or the subjects of labour, CoP avoids missing out on how the subjects of such forms of cultural or immaterial labour interpret and define the relations they are embedded in and places a greater emphasis on the meanings that they make of their work, which is essential to studies of co-creative labour and production as Bank and Deuze (2009) have argued.

In summary, this section aimed to provide a rationale for juxtaposing CoP and key concepts from Autonomist Marxism in my analysis of crowdsourced translation in TED. Having presented the main components of each framework, I argue that participation in translation activities in the TED Translation Project should be considered as a type of immaterial labour both because of the immaterial nature of the products (subtitles for online consumption) and the nature of the labour that gives rise to Communities of Practice which require social interaction, identification, communication, collaboration, learning and practice to sustain, all of which fall under characteristics of immaterial work sustaining information and communication networks in Autonomist terms. The following section will present a rationale of my research methodology and how the data was collected for this study.

## ***2.4 Methodology***

### 2.4.1 Introduction

The research questions suggest an approach that is qualitative, descriptive and exploratory for an examination of the dynamics within TED Translator collectivities, the possible emergence of translator communities from participation in translation crowdsourcing and an understanding of what the translators are getting out of it (e.g. acquisition of new skills and formation of new group identity). Moreover, there is also a need to collect first-hand data from TED Translators so that their perspectives are not silenced in the account of the socio-economic aspects of crowdsourcing. To this end, ethnographic methods are ideal in the context of the current study. The application of ethnography to the study of translation and translators is recent yet fruitful. For example, a special issue of *The Translator* edited by Marin-Lacarta and Yu (2023) presented a collection of articles using ethnographic research methods on translation which are carried out either virtually or offline. According to the authors, a series of developments in Translation Studies since the 1970s, including the cultural turn and the sociological turn, have led to a greater engagement by researchers with ethnography as an established framework. Ethnography has several advantages for queries on the production process of translation and the organization of translations, including thick description of interactions among different agents involved in translation, the self-reflexivity of the researcher in terms of their social positioning, and a first-hand account of how translation norms and views shared by translators are negotiated in practice. However, when it comes to investigating online collectivities and practices, traditional ethnography must be adapted in consideration of the lack of in-person interaction and the involvement of communication technologies. Thus, this section explores netnography, a term for virtual ethnography, as a research method and explains how it is tailored to my study of TED translator CoPs.

The concept ‘netnography’ has already been introduced through a few examples of research on digitally mediated translation in Chapter One. More specifically, it refers to ethnography adapted for virtual environments. According to Kozinets (2015), netnography is a qualitative research method developed specifically for the study of social interactions on social media sites, forums and online marketing places that proliferate in the age of Web 2.0. The rise of interactions between people in networked, technology-mediated virtual space challenges the notion of localized field sites in traditional ethnography. Key notions in ethnography and anthropology like community and culture are becoming more fluid in the digital space. With such changes in mind, the digitalization of ethnography seems necessary to harness the impact of this medium of communication on social interaction—how people interact with one another as well as with the technologies. Within the context of translation, netnography has been employed by researchers on both crowdsourcing (e.g. Dombek 2014, O’Hagan 2017) and self-solicited amateur translation in online environments (e.g. Li, 2015; Yu, 2019, 2022). Its relevance for harnessing the meaning making and socialization processes in fluid, unstable online interactions makes it a popular tool among researchers of digital cultures, though its usefulness for studying networked, collaborative translation appears underestimated in the current state of research (Li, 2017).

A few studies previously mentioned in Chapter One focusing on the interaction, networking and collaboration within online translator communities has made use of ethnographic methods. More specifically, Dombek (2014) applied ethnography to the study of crowdsourced translation in Facebook, while Li (2019; 2015), Lu (2019), Yu (2020; 2019) and Wongseree (2020) carried out netnographic research with different fansub communities that translate audiovisual or written materials from English and other languages into Chinese. The purpose was

to find out about the process of online collaborative translation as an active social activity. The absence of a localized field site and face-to-face interaction in online translator communities makes such studies very different from ethnographic work in the traditional sense. For example, researchers must determine what constitutes public information and private information in online space, since it is harder to draw the boundary between the two (see [Huang et al., 2023](#)).

Consequently, online ethnography or netnography can face unique challenges when it comes to protecting the confidentiality and privacy of participants. This said, the development of new communication, messaging and video conferencing tools also create new possibilities for the ethnographic researcher to be innovative in the design and the conduct of research. For example, the archiving functions of the Web allows the researcher to capture various moments in the selection, production and diffusion of translation, and the flexibility of instant messaging allows the researcher to explore alternatives to the traditional face-to-face interviews (Pearce et al., 2014). In light of such challenges, the following section describes how a netnographic study of TED Translator collectivities as a case study. More specifically, I will describe my dataset and how data was collected in reference to the work by Kozinet (2015) on netnography.

#### **2.4.2 A netnographic approach to TED Translators as a case study**

Although I have previously introduced the current study as a case study on TED Translators, I would like to first and foremost elaborate a little more on the concept of case study and explain why it applies to my study of TED. According to Gillham (2000), a case study is a qualitative approach that examines human activities as situated in their real-life settings, thus merging the action with its context. A case can be a person, a family, an institution, a community or a profession. (Guillham, 2000, p.1). Given the importance of studying translation agents and

translation production as embedded in their real-life context, I present the current research as a case study of TED Translators. Moreover, Guillemin also suggests that in a case study, the researcher does not start with predetermined theoretical notions and needs to delve into the field data as embedded in its context to understand which theory offers the best explanation (2000, p. 2). This inductive, descriptive approach matches how my research on TED Translators progressed. As previously mentioned in the sections on my theoretical framework, it is what was generated from my field work that led me to the current set of theories applied to my study. More specifically, it was my field observations, my interactions with my informants, and the types of data available to me once I entered the field site that led me through a journey of discovery that made my focus change and shift. Thus, the concept of case study applies well to my methodological framework. Approaching TED Translation Project as a case study, I was able to approach the TED Project, TED Translators and how they carry out their work in real-life settings instead of studying TED translation in an artificial setting (e.g. see Cámara & Comas-Quinn, 2016).

In my case study on TED which focuses on a particular group—communities of TED volunteer translators, my research methodology was largely inspired by netnography. Developed by the marketing and consumer studies scholar Robert Kozinets (2009/2015/2020), netnography is a rigorous term that designates a set of qualitative research methods specific to the study of social media and the cultural experiences that are facilitated by this medium (Kozinets, 2020, p. 7-8, p.13-14). In short, it involves “collecting, participating and interpreting online traces” left by people as they navigate digital communication tools (Kozinets, 2020, p. 16), which may be in textual, graphic or audiovisual form. This makes netnography an excellent method for investigating online sociality. Netnography places an emphasis on the collection and

interpretation of rich qualitative data through participatory-observational encounters, just like in traditional forms of ethnography and anthropology. However, the main difference between netnography and ethnographic research carried out at a physical location is the lack of face-to-face interaction for the former. Netnography leverages the affordances of communication technologies so that the researcher gains access to a wider range of social sphere, such as social media platforms, forums, websites, blogs and microblogs etc (Kozinets, 2015). A related research method is called digital ethnography as developed by Pink et al. (2014). Digital ethnography and netnography shares many similarities such as applying thick description to the analysis of rich qualitative data collected in a field site. In some cases, the two terms are used interchangeably (e.g. see Yu, 2020). This may be due to the variance that exists in ethnographers' interpretation of terms grouped under the umbrella of digital ethnography (Kozinets, 2020, p. 16). However, there are also important differences between the two and they should not be conflated. For example, digital ethnography is seen as an extension of an in-person field site and may complement the collection of ethnographic data such as in-person interviews, focus groups and observations in a variety of online and off-line sites (Pink et al. in Yu, 2019, p. 169). Netnography, on the other hand, refers to the collection of archival, observational and participatory qualitative data in purely virtual sites in order to study digital cultures, and does not need to be completed by research conducted in off-line sites. Therefore, for terminological consistency, netnography will be used to designate my research methodology throughout this dissertation.

Kozinets (2015/2020) describes netnography as a set of related, predetermined methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. He summarized netnographic research as consisting of six main stages: “initiation, investigation, interaction, immersion, integration, and incarnation”

(Kozinets, 2020, p. 25). The initiation stage refers to the planning stage where the researcher reflects on their research interests, research problem, research questions, potential research fieldsites of interest and theoretical frameworks that seem promising in the context of the study. In the current study, Chapter 1 and the first part of Chapter 2 have mapped out my research interests, research problem, and how I came to my current theoretical framework based on investigation into the current literature and initial observation of the phenomenon of interest. Later in the section on methodology, I will explain how I located my research fieldsites and identified my research participants. However, it is worth mentioning here that the results of the planning stage often need to be adjusted and pivoted throughout the course of the study, as new information, data and patterns emerge from the investigation, are interpreted in a hermeneutic cycle and sharpen the researcher's understanding of the theoretical basis (Kozinets, 2020, p. 141).

Following initiation, Kozinets identifies three parallel stages of investigation associated with the actual process of data collection: investigation, interaction and immersion. These three stages correspond with the collection of three types of netnographic data, which will be explained in detail below, and thus can be seen as the general phase of data collection. The integration phase is “an on-going process of decoding, translating, cross-translating and code-switching between parts and wholes, between data fragments and cultural understandings” (Kozinets, 2020, p. 141). As Kozinets notes, it is difficult to draw clear lines among data collection, analysis and interpretation in ethnographic as well as netnographic research (Kozinets, 2020, p. 141) since the investigation carries on in a cyclical pattern where the researcher's understandings of empirical data and existing literature/theories continue to inform each other. Thus, the ensemble of data collection and interpretation should be an ongoing and

cyclical process. Nonetheless, the end results of this process should be able to enrich an existing theoretical framework or formulate a new one with explanatory power in light of the phenomenon being studied. The final phase, incarnation, refers to the communication, presentation and mobilization of the research findings, which should be robust, innovative and useful. In the current dissertation, Chapter Three and Four will include more discussions of the last two phases. The current section will provide more information on phase 2, 3 and 4, beginning with a discussion of the three types of netnographic data.

Kozinets identified three categories of data that are of interest to netnographers: investigative or archival data, elicited or interactive data, and immersive or produced data. Archival/investigative data refer to the data that are not directly generated by the presence of the researcher, but a “wealth of informational traces created in the act of communications between people on social media platforms and saved in archives” (Kozinets, 2020, p. 193). Examples include contents published on websites that are available for viewing by the public, archives of conversations and interactions in online forums etc. Given the considerably large information flow happening over the Internet, the netnographer needs to be strategic and selective when collecting and filtering investigative or archival data under the guidance of the objectives and research questions of the particular case study. Moreover, it is inevitable that the collection of such data is shaped by the researcher’s own interests and perspectives (Kozinets, 2020, p. 193). Thus, the identification of field sites and the decisions on what constitutes relevant data or not need to be explained, justified and kept track of in the context of the study, and the researcher’s own position should also be examined.

The second category of data is called interactive or elicited data. Unlike investigative/archival data whose production is not affected by the presence of the researcher,

interactive/elicited data is the result of direct interference by the researcher. Examples include surveys, interviews, posting public questions and/or comments, reaching out to informants through emails or instant messaging, designing and updating a research webpage etc. (Kozinets, 2020, p.193). While methods are also widely and historically adopted in off-line ethnography, in a virtual context, the collection of Interactive data is shaped by the medium facilitating the networked communication process. For example, interviews need to be done through video conferencing, phone calls or instant messaging. All interrogations are facilitated by digital communication tools such as social media and messaging platforms. Thus, the impact of the medium should also be considered in the analysis and interpretation of data.

The final category is called immersive or produced data. In short, this refers to field notes that are taken by the ethnographer during observation of and participation in the activities of the collectivity or group of interest. It also includes the explanatory and reflective notes taken during the collection of interactive data such as interviews. Due to the potentially large quantity of data that can come together during the stage of observation and note taking, the collection and interpretation of immersive data needs to be strategic and selective. According to Kozinets, this goal can be achieved by keeping records of thick descriptions during the collection of data, or “detailed descriptions and explanations” (Kozinets, 2020, p.193). In the context of this study, what constitutes useful immersive data is determined by the location of relevant field sites, which will be explained later. In other words, the sites where TED Translators aggregate, receive, produce and exchange information are those where the collection of immersive/produced data will be focused on.

Importantly, while all three types are important to generate a wholistic picture of the activity/group/collectivity under investigation, Kozinets (2020) notes that netnographers may

strategically give more weight to one or two categories of data depending on the research design, research questions, researcher's interests and the types of data available.

Going back to my research questions, each different set of research questions require the collection of different kinds of data, or a mixture of them, for answers. In my first set of research questions, the focus is on the backgrounds of TED Translators, their motivations, their experiences with participation in the TED Project, how they work together and how they navigate technologies. While the analysis of archival data and immersive data can answer these questions to some extent, elicited data are required since the questions focus mainly on the individual, first-hand experience of translators and their perspectives. In my research, I used semi-structured interviews to collect elicited data. Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative method that involves a set of pre-determined, open-ended questions to guide the interview, with some degree of flexibility for further development and variation (O'Brien & Saldanha, 2014, p. 310). The interview guide makes sure that interviews with all participants cover the same type of information. However, the participants were also free to further develop on subjects in which they showed stronger interest and the interviewer could also choose to focus more on certain areas of the guide depending on the evolution of the interview.

The second set of research questions apply a comparative lens to the two different TED Translator collectivities, asking what the potential culturally induced nuances and differences between the two groups are and how such nuances may be connected to different trends of cultural exchanges on the larger scale. While this may be complemented by elicited data, answers to this set of questions require a combination of archival and participatory/observational data in order to detect more general trends in how the translators carry out their duties within TED. Archival data include archives of online information created by the translators and the

exchange among translators within their respective group. Archives of activities that have been organized by the translators within the context of TED can also contribute to this inquiry, such as records of the different types of activities organized by French and/or Chinese translators. The collection and analysis of contextual information such as any available information on the consumption of TED Talks or similar media products in French and Chinese can also help answer this set of questions. Immersive or produced data include fieldnotes that are taken during observational-participatory activities and communication with participants to collect elicited data.

The final set of research questions require a combination of elicited, archival and produced data. The questions focus on any potential constraints that exist in the organization of the crowdsourced translation by TED. Without conducting conversations and gaining insights into what potentially constitutes constraints for translators and whether or not they experience any constraints in their experience, it is hard to provide meaningful answers to these questions. However, a part of these questions also goes beyond the individual perception and experience of participants and require generalization and theorization on the part of a critical, reflective researcher. Thus, collection of archival data on the organizational structure of the TED Project and the reflections of the researcher in accordance with the theoretical framework of the research are also indispensable.

Having gone over the three types of data for harnessing and interpreting information by netnographers and how these apply to this particular case study of TED Translators, the next section will move onto identifying and describing the research field sites and filtering what constitutes useful/informative and available data to the researcher in the context of my case study on TED Translators.

### **2.4.3 Dataset**

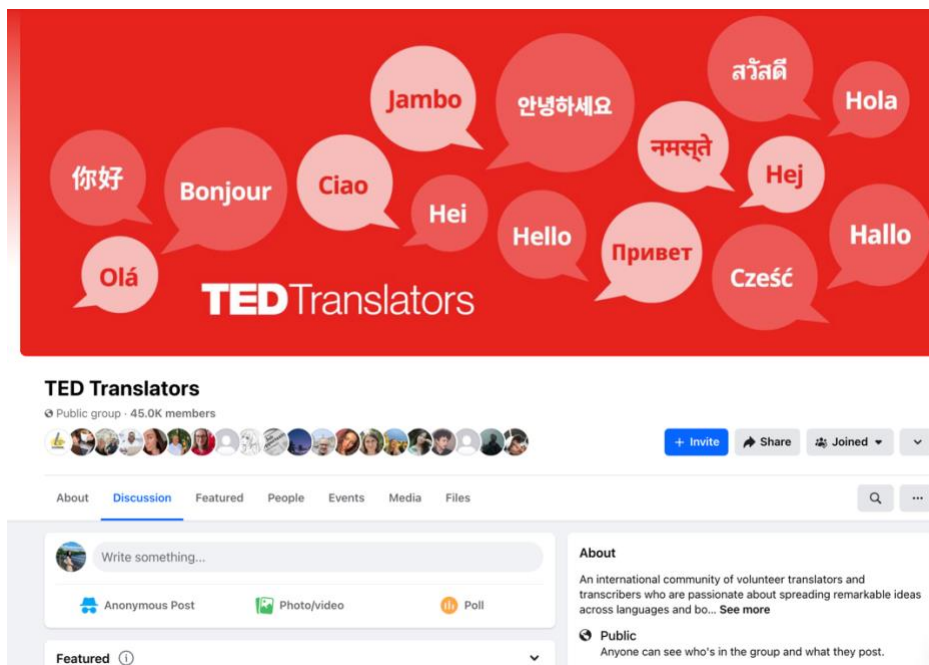
While this study is primarily interested in TED Translators, their motivations to translate for TED, how they work together and their experience with the TED Project, the vast number of people translating for TED in total means that I need to choose a more targeted dataset to reduce the large quantity of data to a more manageable level. My second set of research questions have demonstrated a focus and an interest on TED Translators as different cultural groups and how each group may experience the TED Project differently. Thus, I specifically chose a dataset that potentially allows me to look at two language groups in TED comparatively. TED Translators are grouped by the language(s) they are working into, and each collectivity may be seen as operating independently of each other since each group has its own “management”, or a few selected translators to carry out certain supervision, coordination and engagement activities. Thus, I limit the scope of my research to two groups: TED Translators translating from English into Simplified Chinese and from English into international French. First and foremost, the selection of these two groups is determined by linguistic accessibility. Given the focus of ethnographic research on the collection, thick description and interpretation of rich qualitative data, the two groups’ working languages match those of the researcher’s linguistic proficiency. Secondly, both groups’ working languages are considered as majority languages with large numbers of users. This means a potentially larger data pool.

With the scope of research narrowed down to two language-specific groups, the next step is to locate the fieldsites where collection of data such as observation and communication with informants will take place.

#### **2.4.3.1 Identifying and locating research fieldsites**

The location of research fieldsites falls into the phase of research preparation as identified by Kozinets (2015/2020). Given the abundance of information available on the Internet, it is important to identify research fieldsites that are relevant to the current study. For example, a quick Google search for TED and/or TED Translation project may generate a long list of results, yet not all of them constitute meaningful fieldsites for the current study. These may range from the official media outlets TED.com where the history and trajectory of the TED Project and TED Talk videos with subtitles are made available to third-party websites that contain information about TED. Since the focus of research is on TED Translators, I limit my choice of fieldsites to those where TED Translators can potentially receive useful information, use the sites for communication and to diffuse their translations. Because of the affordances of networked communication tools, they can collaborate on the same project from different physical locations dispersed around the globe while being connected to the Internet. They rely on certain virtual space to receive information and communicate and collaborate with their fellow translators. To facilitate the diffusion of the media content that they produce and to increase their visibility as an organization, TED maintains its official website TED.com where an abundance of information, including information about the translation project, can be found. Apart from TED.com, TED Translators also use social media forums such as Facebook Groups for communication and information sharing. There exists one overarching Facebook group for all TED Translators (see figure 1 below) as well as Facebook groups for specific language teams. TED Translators may use such group for a wide array of communication and collaboration-related activities, such as posting questions, making translation-related requests, etc. Apart from online forums, instant messaging Apps such as Messenger and Wechat in the case of Chinese translators are also important tools for translators' communication. TED Translators also have their own resource

and information pages set up using open-source websites. Such pages are called TEDOpedia or TED Translators wiki. Moreover, TED's partner platform for subtitling captionhub is also essential for translators' collaborative and cooperative activities. Thus, I identified the aforementioned Apps and web platforms as my research fieldsites where the collection of archival, elicited and produced data takes place. More details on the information collected on these platforms will be given in Chapter Three.



*Figure 1: Homepage of the TED Translators Facebook Group*

Having identified the research fieldsite, the next step is to enter the fieldsite as an ethnographic researcher. As Kozinets (2020, p. 199) argues, it is essential that a nethnographic researcher fully discloses their presence and identity and does not engage in any kind of deception at the beginning of their research that involves any type of human interaction. Joining an online community is the same as joining a physical group and/or culture. The researcher has the responsibility to openly and accurately describe themselves and their research goals, focuses

and interests when interacting and communicating with human participants (Kozinets, 2020, p.201). Since my research is conducted on several different fieldsites and not all of them are interactive, the social media groups that TED Translators use for communication and collaboration seem to be the appropriate sites for me to announce my entry as a netnographic researcher. While a general Facebook Group for all TED Translators exists, because of my research focus on two specific language teams of translators, I decided to introduce myself and my research within those two specific groups instead of in the general group. All TED Translators have their language specific Facebook Group, but the Chinese translators also set up a group on the Chinese instant messaging App Wechat because of the inaccessibility of Facebook in Mainland China, where most of the translators translating into Simplified Chinese are located. A Facebook Group for Simplified Chinese translators also exists, but it shows inactivity and a lack of monitoring. Thus, I did not include it as my primary site of observation. While the general group for all TED Translators is a public group, both the French Facebook Group and the Chinese Wechat Group are enclosed groups that require a self-introduction and an explanation of the purpose of joining before a new user can be added to the group. I joined the Simplified Chinese Group prior to joining the French Translators' group. Thus, I made my entrée as a netnographic researcher in the Chinese group having already joined and in the French Group at the time of sending an application to join the group. I used a standardized text for joining both groups that identified myself as a researcher and explained my research interests, objectives and focus, which can be found in the appendices. The text not only introduced my presence as an observational-participatory researcher but also included a message for recruiting participants for one-on-one interviews. At the time of joining the French group, I briefly identified myself and my purpose in joining the group as a researcher when filling out the application form. Having

joined the group, I made a separate post which is available to all members of the group, and this marked my formal entry into the research fieldsite and openly recruited participants for one-on-one interviews.

The harness and investigation of user-generated data has long attracted the attention of Translation Studies, as explained in Chapter One. Orrego-Carmona (2018), for instance, calls for a greater focus on the consumption of media products subtitled by non-professionals and the general societal impact of these products, and it is through expanding studies from fansubbing to include all types of non-professional audiovisual translation that we can further explore the role of user-consumers and other parties related to the production of media products in participatory cultures. With such developments in mind, subtitlers in TED Translation Project are treated as both consumers and producers of media content, and the interview guide thus includes questions about their experiences as consumers of TED Talks, such as whether or not they watch TED Talks and the topics that they are interested in.

In the collection of elicited data, in-depth interviews with a small group of TED translators were adopted instead of large-scale quantitative surveys because the focus of research is on how TED Translators make sense of their volunteer work. Thus, rich qualitative data are needed to reveal how subjectivities and identities are formed through participatory translation, how connections are formed and strengthened that sustains the growth of the network, and what nonhuman actors are present and affect this process. I have been a registered TED Talk translator and a member of the public Facebook Group for TED translators since 2019. My past experiences and observations of the translation workflow and interactions within the TED Translator community before the migration of the subtitling platform from Amara to CaptionHub

in 2021 allowed for the design of a formal observation grid and interview as well as survey questions for the two specific groups of translators of interest

#### **2.4.3.2 Fieldnotes**

Carrying out ethnography research in a virtual, digitally mediated environment requires adaptations to the traditional ethnographic methods in accordance with features of the particular collectivity under investigation and the associated technologies, platforms. For example, the structure of the translator collectivity under investigation and the dynamics specific to it posed challenges for the researcher in terms of the notion of thick description in ethnography. This is mostly due to a lack of observational data in certain circumstances. As Flynn (2010) suggests, to apply ethnographic methods in the digital age, the researcher may need to focus on giving a thick description of what happens on certain virtual sites in a certain timeframe (p.117). However, in a vertically structured crowdsourced translation initiative such as that of TED, there is a lower level of activeness in the translator communities since the vast majority complete their translations independently, and there lacks a public space for translators to engage in meaningful interactions due to the enclosed work environment, which will be explained in more detail in Chapter Four. Due to the lack of interactivity in the shared virtual space where TED Translators segregate, I found that keeping a researcher's journal throughout the duration of my research was not very productive in terms of exploring how TED Translators make sense of their work, and I decided to shift my focus to the moments when I reached out to my participants when soliciting interactions such as when finding participants for interviews, and to then combine such notes with a description of the archives available on the translators' forums/groups.

As a registered TED Translator, I also participated in the translation practice of TED by translating and submitting TED Talk subtitles. However, my participation in the translation activity did not yield me much useful data for my research, because TED imposes a highly enclosed translation workflow where very few (previously three, and currently two) people are involved in completing a translation task. Moreover, since only one reviewer is now required to vet and publish the subtitles, the experience of translating for TED can vary depending on the specific translator and reviewer involved. For example, my interview participants shared different experience with having their translations reviewed or reviewing others' translations. Some may get more detailed feedback and support so that they feel accompanied in a journey of learning, while others may receive minimum feedback or have their translations changed/edited without consultation or exchange with them. Moreover, there is no universal rule for quality assurance in each language community. For example, one of the French language coordinators/supervisors has shared that different supervisors may have different standards for determining what constitutes a good translation of TED Talk. Moreover, it is not required for the reviewer and the translator to 'agree' on the changes made, and the TED workflow can be linear rather than cyclical depending on who is involved. As a result, participation in the translation may help me discover the work environment of the TED Translator, including what the user interface of the subtitling platform looks like and what features it has, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, but it does not help me understand the meaning-making processes that may be involved in the practice of TED Translators.

Moreover, since the moment I started my observation of TED Translators, not a lot of interactions were happening in the space shared by translators. TED Translators tend to work independently due to the enclosed workflow, and even though the process of review requires the

collaboration between at least two translators, it does not necessarily entail direct interactions among them. When interactions do occur, they are also private to the parties involved. Thus, the social interactions taking place aside from the translation process in TED are largely in limbo to an external researcher. Moreover, exchanges among TED Translators in shared public space occur less frequently and more sporadically since this does not constitute an integral part of the translation workflow, unlike in self-solicited online collaborative translation initiatives where peer discussion and/or voting processes open to the whole translator community are put in place to ensure quality assurance (e.g. see Desjardins, 2017; Yu, 2017). Compared to self-solicited initiatives that value sociality and intellectual exchange, the TED initiative is more result-oriented instead of process-oriented, and the initiating party TED.com does not show much interest in implementing a platform and a workflow that encourage open discussions among translators. With these features in mind, I did not take fieldnotes synchronously but asynchronously. Except when I am soliciting contact and interacting directly with my informants, I examined archives of interactions that took place in my field sites periodically.

#### ***2.4.3.3 Sampling***

As previously mentioned, considerations were given to the size and the number of users of specific TED Translator groups when I made decisions about which groups to include in my research. For reasons of linguistic accessibility, I decided to include primarily groups translating into French and Chinese. This said, two sub-groups exist for the TED Translators translating from English into French and English into Chinese: the group of International French and Canadian French and the group of Simplified Chinese Translators and Traditional Chinese translators. They are different groups operating independently in the sense that they have

separate volunteer-monitors, i.e., linguistic coordinators/supervisors. There are also nuances between them when it comes to stylistic and linguistic rules for translation, which will be discussed later in the Chapter Three. Even though Canadian French exists as a specific language category for TED Talk translation separate from the French group, the number of users registered with this language group is much smaller than that of the French language group and the level of user activity is thus much lower. Thus, I focused on international French only for a potentially larger data pool. Unlike International French and Canadian French, the sizes of the Simplified Chinese and Traditional Chinese Translators are comparable. Simplified Chinese Translators like myself usually come from a background in the Chinese Mainland while Traditional Chinese Translators tend to originate from Taiwan. Thus, these two groups should not be viewed as homogenous. For considerations about the scope of research, I did not include the traditional Chinese Translator Group except for those who are simultaneously members of the Simplified and the Chinese Translator Group. In my initial observation of the TED Translator Groups, the Traditional Chinese groups do not necessarily demonstrate a high level of group activity, especially when compared to the Simplified Chinese Group, and thus its inclusion would not have helped generated more archival data for my study. Thus, I did not choose the online space used by Traditional Chinese French Translators as my fieldsites. However, when recruiting participants for my research, I sent invitations for interview to the language coordinators of the Traditional Chinese Group in an attempt to collect more elicited data and to see if there are possibilities of extending my scope of research to include the Traditional Chinese Group, which is the same as I did for the Group of Canadian French Translators. However, these attempts received no response. Thus, eventually only the Simplified Chinese and the International French Groups were included in my research.

When it comes to the recruitment of interview participants, I used snowball sampling as well as recruiting participants in a public post. More specifically, I asked my interview participants whether they could share my message of invitation with other people they know who translate for TED and who might be interested. This method of recruitment helped me connect with a few more participants but was not particularly successful because it depends largely on the number of active connections that the participants within their translator collectivity have at that particular moment. Given the fluidity and anonymity of participation in crowdsourcing, not all of my participants felt comfortable forwarding my invitation to others.

#### ***2.4.3.4 Ethical considerations in the collection of data***

Ethnographical research conducted in online fieldsites can bring many new ethical challenges to the researcher, most notably because of the blurred boundary between public and private space and information on the Internet today. Moreover, the presence of the researcher is also less visible given the lack of in-person interactions with the informants. As Kozinets notes, by captioning, recording and taking photographs of interactions within an online community, the researcher may be disclosing information that the community members do not wish to make public (2020, p. 163). Moreover, an ethnographic researcher needs to reflect on questions about representation. Questions around representation are no less relevant to ethnography carried out on virtual sites than on physical sites. Examples include on what grounds a researcher may or may not have authority to write about the experiences and perspectives of a group (Stanley & Wise, 1983), and how to better engage the research informants and present their perspectives in the context of the study (Sundar, 2006). If a researcher has been a member of the community under investigation prior to the beginning of research, they need to reflect on the question

whether their research will bring about changes to the situation of the group that they are studying (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Prior to the beginning of my research, I joined TED Translators as a volunteer for translating subtitles. However, given the division of TED Translator group by language pairs and the independent operation of each language collectivity, I did not have the confidence to be a figure in authority to report on behalf of translators from the different groups, and my experience could only speak for myself. Thus, when I joined the French Translators' group specifically for the purpose of conducting the current PhD research, I tried to stay as open-minded as possible to the habits, styles of collaboration and culture of this particular group and not to let my existing experience and knowledge of the interactions within a different language group interfere with my observation.

When it comes to the collection of archival data, the tricky question of what constitutes private and public information came to the fore. Different privacy rules apply to different groups of TED Translators. For example, the generic Facebook group for all TED Translators is visible to any public viewer. Thus, I treat the data available on the generic Facebook group the same as data available on public sites such as the TED Website. In other words, such information can be legally accessed and utilized by researchers without additional measures for obtaining consent (see Kozinets 2015, p.138). However, both the Chinese and French translators have a private group with screening and gatekeeping measures that make the contents on those sites unavailable for public viewing. Thus, archival, immersive and elicited data that were collected on these enclosed sites need ethical considerations and solutions so that the confidentiality of the participants is protected. Disclosure of people's identities may be an unwanted consequence of the research on members of the community under investigation. TED Translators respond to the call for participation from TED to translate the subtitles and do not receive any monetary

rewards for their participation in the TED Project. Thus, their activities do not involve infringement of copyrights and their participation in the crowdsourcing does not cause legal issues. They are not bound by any responsibility established through labour agreements with TED either. Thus, it is unlikely that revealing information about their experiences and participation in crowdsourcing will bear any legal consequences for them. This said, the researcher should take measures to preserve the anonymity of participants and make sure not to publish any information that participants may not want to have published without consent. For example, expressions of emotions or descriptions of relations with other people may be deemed as inappropriate or create social pressure once published or taken out of context. Thus, during the collection of archival and produced data in non-public space such as a Facebook group that is not open to the public, I exclude any personal information such as names, usernames, profile pictures etc to anonymize the source. Moreover, if it is necessary to quote information shared or contents created by people for those sites for the purpose of my research, I paraphrased the information instead of quoting directly.

When collecting interview data, I forwarded a consent form for the participants to read prior to the interview (see appendices). The form explains the purpose of my research and how the data collected from interviews will be used. Having read the consent form, the participants gave their consent either by signing the form or giving their verbal consent at the start of the recorded interviews.

Upon entering the Chinese and the French language groups as a researcher, I made a post introducing myself and explaining the purpose of the research and how data will be collected and used. Also, I invited users of those sites to reach out to me directly should they have any concerns with the utilization of how information captioned on those sites, which may involve

information about them. To date, nobody has contacted me to ask questions or raise their concerns with how information will be collected and used during my observation of the fieldsites. Moreover, I made sure to only collect data which are useful for my investigation of the research topic and exclude any irrelevant information. In order to ensure anonymity, I labeled my participants instead of using their real names in the presentation of my research findings, as will be shown in Chapter Three.

#### ***2.4.3.5 Coding and analysis of data***

TED Translators who agreed to take part in the interview were given the choice to be interviewed in English or their first language. The six French TED Translators were interviewed in French and seven out of eight participants from the Simplified Chinese community were interviewed in Mandarin, except for one participant who chose to be interviewed in English. The interviews were transcribed and coded. Direct quotes of participants have been translated into English should the language of interview be French or Mandarin, and both original texts and translations were sent to participants for validation. The interviews with 14 TED Translators from the French and Simplified Chinese teams generated a total of 239 pages of single-spaced transcripts. Generally, Zoom interviews lasted between 35 and 50 minutes, and instant messaging interviews lasted between 60 and 120 minutes.

Deductive and inductive coding are applied to the analysis of interview and archival data. More specifically, deductive coding means starting with a set of predetermined codes based on existing research or theoretical notions and then assigning the codes to qualitative data. On the contrary, inductive coding is a bottom-up approach that allows codes to emerge only from the information collected from participants or in the field site. According to Guest et al. (2012), the

use of a codebook ensures coherence and consistency among codes in the interpretation of rich, qualitative data. The development of a codebook is a prolonged process during the analysis phase that involves rereading and re-analyzing textual representation of data, and changes may be made to the initial set of codes as the text is segmented and examined for common themes/categories and what relationships exist among them. Thus, the reading of textual data and the development of a codebook should be a cyclical, iterative process. Any new, unexpected themes and categories that emerge during the reading will be used to modify the codebook, and the codes developed should continue to be refined to reduce the messiness of data. Once coding is finished, the results will be compared against key theoretical concepts in the study and the researcher's hypotheses/preliminary arguments. Therefore, it seems that Guest et al.'s (2012) method implies an inductive approach whereby the researcher allows themes and categories to emerge only from the data itself.

As Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest, this emergent coding approach can be combined with the use of predetermined codes based on the research questions, research design and theoretical framework in the development of a qualitative codebook (p. 196). To ensure coherence between my theoretical framework and the analysis of my research findings, instead of building the codebook from nothing but the data itself, I started off with an initial set of codes developed based on key concepts in my theoretical framework. The interview guide was used to develop a set of predetermined codes in accordance with the principles of 'structural coding' (Guest et al., 2012) that forms the basis for the subsequent development of the codebook. Structure coding allows the researcher to give a structure to qualitative data based on the research questions and design, and can be easily implemented based on the interview guide developed for the collection of researcher-elicited data. Thus, two separate sets of initial codes

were developed for the analysis of interview and archival data collected for the netnographic study. Later, the initial codes were adjusted and complemented by emerging contents from the actual data collected. Guest et al. suggest that a codebook should define a code by naming it, outlining its basic and extended definitions. Moreover, they suggest that structural coding is compatible with qualitative data analysis software to streamline and better organize the process of data analysis. Thus, I used the qualitative research software Nvivo to store, organize and categorize my data and to build my codebook. The codes for analyzing archival data were later used for a content analysis whose results will be shown in Tables 1 and 2 in Chapter 3. A final list of codes built in Nvivo for analyzing the interview data can be found in the appendices.

#### ***2.4.3.6 Limitations of Dataset and Methodology***

In the previous sections, I presented the chosen methodology for my research in detail. The goal of this section is to recognize the limitations of my actual dataset, i.e., the information that I was able to collect and compile into my dataset during the study, and the resulting limitations of my research methodology.

My dataset covers the activities of TED Translators largely taking place between 2020 and 2024. This research officially began in late 2020 following the approval of my research proposal; data collection that does not require direct interaction with human participants and making use of public data began while I waited for research the ethics clearance to collect data elicited from human participants. Thus, the dataset reflects the state of the TED Translator Project during this time. It is comprised of 22 screenshots of the TED Website, 735 screenshots of posts (which include threads and replies) made by TED Talk Translators in their general Facebook Group between 2020 and 2021, 242 screenshots posted by French Translators in their French TED

Translator Facebook Group between 2020 and 2024, 7 screenshots of posts made by French Translators in their Facebook Group in 2019 which were included because they represent a period of time in which the French Translators were active in terms of self-organizing, and 194 screenshots of posts by Chinese TED Translators in the WeChat Group they use for communication and interaction. Moreover, the dataset also includes the transcripts of interviews conducted with 14 TED Translators between June 2021 and September 2021. Finally, the dataset consists of three Excel files compiled by the French TED Translators themselves which represents the translation ‘knowledge’ that the French Translators compiled. The French TED Translators who participated in my research were not taking the lead in the development of these files and thus the interview data did not reveal much about the development of these files. However, the 7 screenshots taken of the French Translator Facebook Group present discussion threads that reveal the beginning of these side-projects of French translators and help provide contextual information about why the files were created.

The archival and elicited data collected for my research have been explained above. The dataset also includes produced data, in other words the fieldnotes taken by the researcher during participatory observation. Produced data come from meaningful interactions between the researcher and human subjects in the fieldsite as well as meaningful encounters that provide the researcher enough material to work on. However, there is a lack of such firsthand interactions and encounters in the virtual fieldsites of TED Translators because it appears that most TED Translators do not participate in or initiate interactions in their forums. There are hundreds to thousands of TED Translators in each language-specific online group, yet interactions occur sporadically rather than regularly. Some of the archives of online interactions reveal that TED Translators would be relatively more active in their groups following elicitation, such as a fellow

translator asking a question or TED representatives or LC/LS sharing information about past/upcoming events organized by TED. However, there are no “routinely” online interactions to keep the group socially active on a daily or weekly basis. Moreover, much less information about events or initiatives that may be of interest to TED Translators, such as the organization of TEDx Talks that are relevant for the translators’ region/language, is being shared to the groups since the migration of platforms. These factors seem to contribute to the lack of engagement from TED Translators, and will be discussed in more in detail in Chapter Three where the shifts in dynamics of the TED Translator communities will be tackled. As far as the impact on my methodology goes, TED Translators’ lack of engagement or interest in meaningful exchanges with their peers in the general forums largely limits the amount of data available on their current community dynamics. On the other hand, the archival data available provided a richer set of information on a past moment of TED Translators’ community-building efforts. As a result, the archival and elicited data help uncover a part of history of the TED Translators’ activities and engagement in both translation and community building. Thus, these archives that uncover the past moments where TED Translators engage in community-building practices have largely informed my theorization of TED Translators as CoP.

Encounters and interactions with TED representatives are also missing from my dataset. Despite my efforts to engage TED staff who may have an insider perspective on the Translation Project in my study, I was unsuccessful in obtaining any response or information directly from them. Thus, while TED should be considered an important external factor that affects and/or restrains TED Translators’ activities and practices, what this research was able to find is largely the translators’ reaction to TED’s presence. While TED has published an abundance of information about its translation project and it serves to contextualize my investigation of the

project and the translator communities, this information is inevitably biased because TED may have selectively made certain information available to promote their project. This said, TED's representation of the translation project is nonetheless a discursive framework that affects translators' practices. The extent to which translators accept or reject TED's statement about the objectives and priorities of the translation project forms part of the translators' reaction to TED's presence in their practice, and thus to look into the practice of TED Talk translation, a comparison of how the TED Translation Project is presented by TED and the actual unfolding of the project will help answer the research question on TED Translator's reaction to the possible exploitative activities of corporates that extract translations from free 'labourers'.

I have discussed the limitations brought to the study by the lack of 'ethnographic' encounters between the researcher and research subjects that could naturally occur in the fieldsite, and the possible ways to work around these limitations and find alternative ways to collect and interpret information. However, these limitations still affect the extent to which my research can contribute new insights to my chosen methodological framework. Notably, the lack of produced data brings challenges to my study in terms of my self-positioning as a critical, self-reflexive ethnographer. I signed up for the TED Translation Project as a TED Translator since I became interested in the TED Project for my research to do an initial observation and evaluation of the fieldsite. Thus, I consider myself a novice, peripheral participant in any Translator CoP that potentially exists on the TD platform. According to the CoP theory, participants in the practice that a given CoP engages in move from the margin to the center as they learn to become better at the practice and integrate themselves into the culture of the CoP. It is through constant interactions with other, especially the more experienced members that the new members gain such an experience. However, this process is not transparent in the TED Translation Project since

the standards that TED uses to determine what constitutes competent membership do not appear to match those of the translator CoPs. While the two are not completely detached, the TED standards for a competent TED Translator is rudimentarily and vaguely defined, and the ‘core’ members of the Translator CoPs may develop their own sense of competence for their translation practice since they are the ones who monitor translation quality. The formation of a regime of competence for TED Translator CoPs will be more thoroughly discussed in Chapter Three in regard to theorizing TED Translator groups as CoPs. As far as the research methodology is concerned, my participation in the practice of translation TED Talks helped me become familiar with the translation process and features of the subtitling platform, but it did not really open up many opportunities for me to interact with my reviewers to get a better idea of what translations are considered good for them. It seems that different reviewers have different working styles and some made changes to my translations in regard to the language and/or the format and published them, while others left one or two comments/questions on my translation. Whenever I received some feedback or questions on my translation, I would politely respond, but the interaction would then seem to stop there and not go any further. During the interviews with more seasoned TED Translators, some of whom review translations, they confirmed my initial observation that there is no standard procedure for correcting and/or providing feedback to junior translators. As a result, speaking from my perspective as a researcher, I would argue that even though the TED system is supposedly based on socially situated peer learning, what each participant can take with them out of each social interaction with their peers on this platform can be highly inconsistent. This lack of standardization and consistency can hinder the learning processes that are central to the TED platform and keep participants engaged, but so far there is no initiative from TED to try to address this issue.

Moreover, another interesting observation is that my entry into and thus membership of the TED Translation Project does not necessarily equate with the entry into/membership of translators' space of exchange where meaningful interactions for situated learning are supposed to occur. More specifically, joining the respective translator forums/chat space for specific language pairs is optional for TED Translators. Upon successfully enrolling in the TED Translation Project, TED Translators may receive automated information which directs them to virtual groups for their working language pairs. However, joining and using those groups for translation and communication purposes is not mandatory. Thus, the group activities do not reflect all TED Translator activities. However, since translator activities on the subtitling platforms (e.g. sending messages to other users, working on translations) are not public and visible only to the translators themselves, these activities are not accessible for the researcher.

In the open translator groups, I was able to spot and document certain types of translator activities which will be tackled in more detail in Chapters Three and Four. However, my presence as an ethnographic researcher with an external perspective was generally met with indifference and a lack of engagement/interest from the TED Translators. For instance, when I announced my entry into the fieldsite as a participatory-observatory researcher, explained my research objectives and methods, and invited any translator with questions or concerns to reach out to me, I received minimal reactions from both the Chinese and the French translator groups. In the French Translator group, there were a few thumbs-up reactions to my post and one reply by a participant expressing their interests in participating in my interview. The thumbs up may be interpreted as general interest or positive feelings about my research from the translators giving out such reactions, but they lack verbal signs and cues and thus did not result in more meaningful exchanges. I sent interview invitations to those who reacted to my post, and only one person

accepted, while other initiatives did not go any further. In the Chinese group, there was no functionality on the WeChat platform to like or give a thumbs up to a post/message, so there was no way for me to detect general reactions from the chat group members to my presence as a researcher. One Chinese language coordinator reacted to my entry by some chit chatting about another researcher they know who was also working on a research project on TED Translators. I connected with this language coordinator following this initial interaction and tried to invite them to participate in my interview, but they were not available to participate due to their busy schedule.

The recruitment and engagement of participants in netnographic studies is a common challenge for researchers of online communities, as discussed by researchers like Wallace et al. (2018). In other netnographic studies on online translator communities such as Yu (2020), Xie (2021), the ethnographer's entry into the research field sites naturally created many opportunities for interactions between the researcher and human participants under observation because of the enclosed nature of these translator communities and members' high level of engagement in community building. The fan/self-selected translator communities under investigation in these studies implement their own gatekeeping and screening measures to recruit and screen members and thus, they care about who joins their communities, their objective for joining them and what they can bring to the community. A Translation Studies researcher coming from academia will need to reconcile their identity as a researcher with training in translation coming from the outside with the group identity that these translators construct as they work towards their collective goals. Thus, identity negotiation as part of the social learning process becomes a natural participant elicitation strategy that researchers can make use of. By contrast, in TED Translation Project, there was a general lack of curiosity, engagement or attention from the

translation group members about my presence, my background and what I am bringing to the translation project and/or their community as a fellow translator. This lack of engagement sheds light on issues that are present in the social learning processes for TED Translators that do not exist for self-organized translation initiatives. It also raises questions about the validity of considering TED Translators as communities of practice because there are fewer opportunities for identity negotiation available for TED Translators as a whole group.

Overall, the lack or inaccessibility of certain types of data translates into the lack of generalizability of my research findings that the next two chapters will discuss beyond the research participants directly involved in my study. For the same reason, my participation in the translation and other activities shared by TED Translators do not generate enough encounters in my field sites that could have generated richer produced data. This is a major limitation of my research that needs to be recognized, but the lack of engagement from TED Translators also suggests that TED Translators are not to be seen as a well-established CoP because some of the potential important learning processes are missing. Thus, in Chapter Three and Four, my discussion of TED Translators as possible CoPs will be focused on the activities of not all but those Translators who demonstrate (or once demonstrated) more initiative in their translation, learning and community-building activities. Moreover, the relation between TED Translators and TED as a corporate actor will be an important component of my theorization of whether TED Translators can be seen as CoPs.

### ***Conclusion***

Ethnography is simultaneously a framework, a methodological framework and a product (Marin-Lacarta & Yu, 2023, p. 148). The purpose of this section is to present and explain the

research design and rationale of the current dissertation based on principles of netnography, a research method for carrying out ethnography in virtual, digitally mediated fieldsites. The theoretical framework chosen for this study calls for a method that collects qualitative data on TED Translators' meaning making and negotiation processes as they engage in translation. Thus, netnography has been adopted to provide a descriptive account of how TED Translators carry out and make sense of their 'work' on the TED Platform. However, the availability of data on social interactions among translators and their learning and community-building processes is limited by various factors such as the lack of interest from translators about who comes to join their community, the interruption of translation activities by the change of subtitling platforms and TED's enclosed translation system. These problems are to be considered in discussions of my research findings and their applicability.

While a global picture of the research methodology is covered in this section, the next chapter which focuses on the presentation of research findings will provide complementary information on how data is collected and analyzed under the current methodological framework, including a more detailed presentation of the research fieldsites and the participants, and what kinds of information were collected (or available) to answer research questions.

## **Chapter 3: Theorization of TED Translator Collectivities as CoPs Facilitated by a Networked Platform**

### ***Introduction***

This chapter compares the data collected under each set of research questions with the principles of CoP Theory in order to examine to what extent the two language teams may be considered as CoPs and how the findings can contribute insights into the CoP Theory itself. In particular, this Chapter focuses on the translators, their organization, and how they work together. This chapter seeks to find out whether and how TED Translators maintain coherent practice, which is central to CoPs, in terms of the three key characteristics of practice as defined by Wenger (1998) — mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. Also, I will pay attention to the digital work environment of the translators and the technological tools that they work with, considering them as the material aspects that co-shape the practice. Sections 3.1.1, 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 focus on the presentation of the digital platforms where TED Translators receive information and carry out their work as well as the translators themselves and their motivations to join TED. Section 3.1.4 comparatively analyses the organization of TED Translators in the Chinese and the French collectivities against the principles of CoPs to determine how well they fit into the arguments of the CoP Theory.

In my first set of research questions, I asked about who the TED Translators are, from which background they came, how they work together and with which technologies they work. In the emergence of online collectivities and/or communities, the role of digital platforms and the related communication technologies is essential since all communication and engagement efforts must rely on technologies. Thus, technologies should be given an important role in the three

dimensions of practice defined by Wenger, as highlighted by Fuchs' (2010) analysis of how technological developments enable sociality, as well as Olohan's (2021) conception of translation practice as comprised of materials, meanings and competence. This chapter begins with a detailed description of the research fieldsites, i.e., the digital platforms enabled by communication technologies. This not only presents and analyzes the investigative data collected, but also helps to highlight the role of networking and communication tools and platforms in sustaining emergent online communities and/or CoPs. More specifically, the investigative data collected for the purpose of the current study is analyzed in order to find out to what extent the two TED Translator groups demonstrate the aforementioned three characteristics of practice in Wenger's terms, and thus whether and/or how they can be viewed as CoPs.

### ***3.1 Research fieldsite—a digitally mediated platform sustaining the translator network***

In my following discussion of the research fieldsites, observations were made of websites created and run by TED and web pages co-created by TED Translators themselves. The information harnessed from the TED websites may be biased because TED may selectively make information available to further promote their projects/initiatives, but they, together with information created, compiled and shared by translators themselves, still constitute the technomediascape where TED Translators engage in translation activities. Thus, a breakdown of the TED websites is necessary to demonstrate what kinds of information TED Translators have easy access to that can possibly shape their practice. The reaction of TED Translators to such information coming from the TED platform will also be interesting in terms of how they picture their relation to TED, the translation project initiator. Moreover, the information made available by TED also shows how TED Translators are screened and selected before they join the

translation initiative, and thus reveals what kinds of people will actually get to participate in the practice of TED Talk translation.

The TED platform has several components, which includes the website TED.com where information on TED and its various programs and initiatives is published and the TED videos are stored, its partnered subtitling platform Captionhub.com where the translations of subtitles are produced, and the various social media platforms and/or associated instant messaging applications where interactions and communications among TED Translators mostly occur. The three types of platforms serve different purposes, and their functionalities may overlap to a small extent, but most of the time they operate separately. TED.com does not have many interactive features: this is where information about TED is mostly diffused by the official TED Team (see Figure 2). Here, any Internet users can watch TED Talk videos, learn about the TED organization and find out more about the conferences where TED Talks are being videotaped. They can watch TED Talks by selecting subtitles in different languages, and thus it is where Translations of TED Talks are diffused and consumed. TED.com includes a sub-homepage for the TED Translation Project which also includes resources for TED Translators (Figure 2). It also includes links to TED's official accounts on various social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram. Such websites monitored by the official TED Team are the sources from which translator receive important information about how to become a TED Translator, the structure of the translation program and where they can turn to should they have questions about their roles. Examples include translation rules to follow, how to contact LC/LS etc. as well as step-by-step tutorials on how to apply to be a TED Translator and how to navigate through the subtitling platform. They help establish general perceptions of TED by the public and current/prospective translators, but do not allow input of information by users of the site.

The TED Translation Blog, which is linked on the TED Translator main site, publishes selected information about TED Translators and their perceptions of TED. However, due to the fact that such information and input from translators are pre-screened and selected by TED, it should still be seen as TED’s one-way outlet for information.

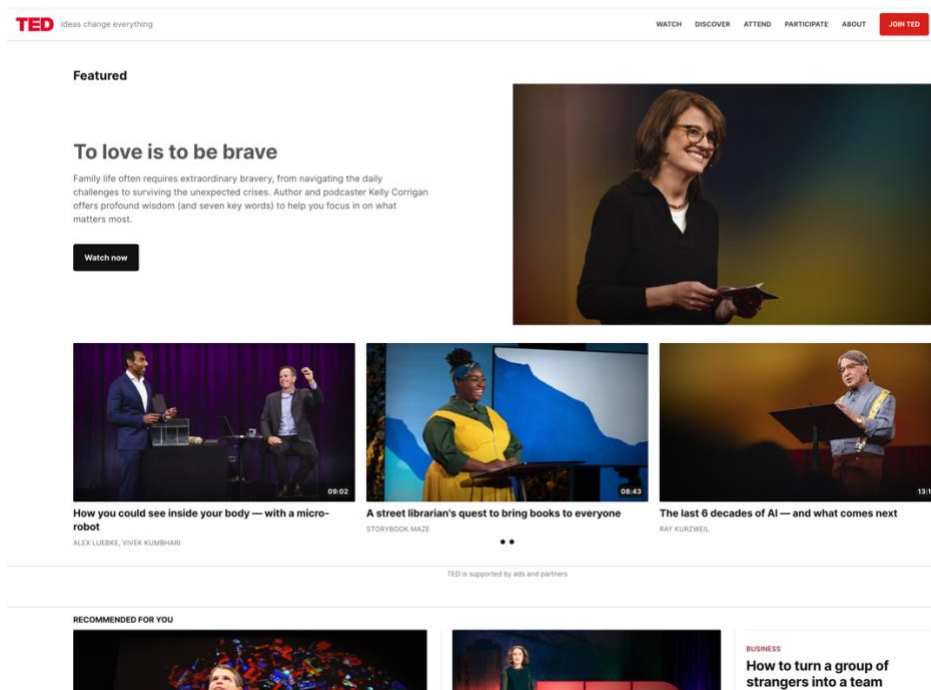


Figure 2: Homepage of TED.com

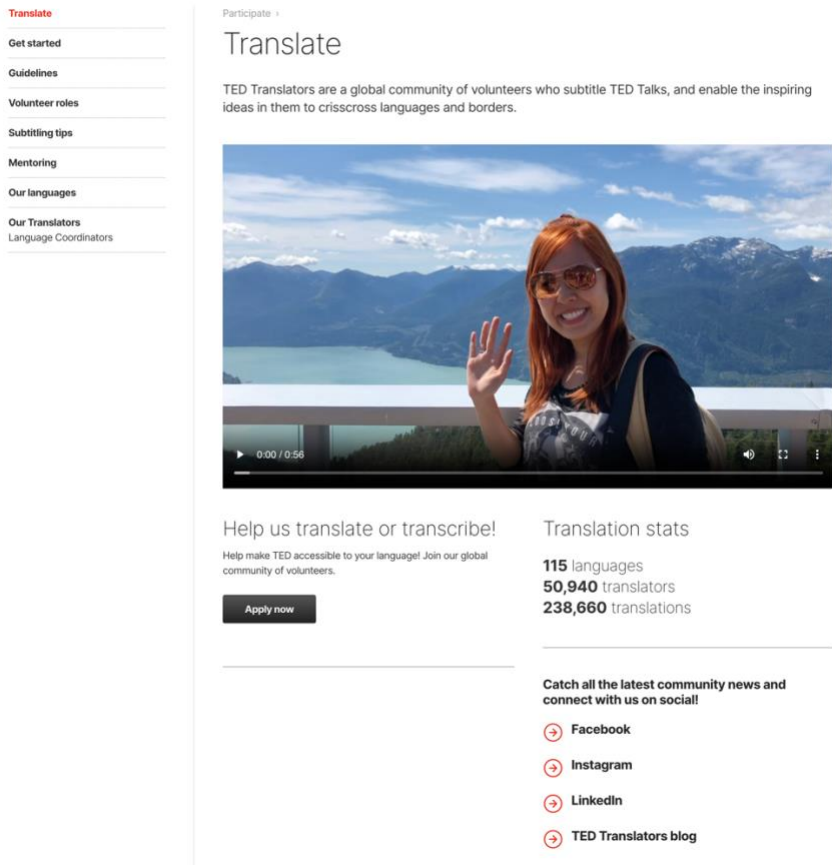


Figure 3: Resource Page for TED Translators

Apart from the official website, TED also introduces a wiki page created by members of the translator teams, called OTPedia. The wiki page includes more detailed information about how to translate or transcribe subtitles, which ranges from the use of punctuation to compressing subtitles to accommodate for reading speed. Although the wiki portals are said to be created and maintained by the translator community, TED limits who can edit the content on their Wiki pages to the LC/LS, and thus the right to edit and make changes to the wiki portals rests with a small number of contributors. It is unclear how the wider translator community may be involved in co-producing the wikis. Moreover, depending on which collectivity owns or manages the wiki portal, the content of the portals may either repeat what appears on TED.com to a large extent or include more content tailored to the needs of specific translator groups.

In the framework of CoP Theory, the aforementioned platforms help shape the participants' cognition of the TED Project and their own collectivity. As the later analysis of interactive data collected from my interview participants shows, the statement about the purpose and mission of TED as described on website is echoed by the informants when explaining their perceptions of and experience with TED. However, what is more important to CoPs is the process of negotiation of such cognition or perceptions through sustained interactions and engagement in collective activities and thus, in practice.

Now, I will compare the information gleaned from publicly accessible digital sites where TED Translators congregate and consume information with the principles of CoP theory. In my methodological section in Chapter Two, I have flagged the problem of TED Translators not demonstrating the same level of engagement and care towards their "community" in comparison to self-solicited translation initiatives. Thus, it seems that some learning and identity negotiation processes are missing in TED Translators' experience because they themselves do not own and control the translation platform, while TED does.

The first dimension of practice in CoP, mutual engagement as defined by Wenger, refers to the fact that members of a CoP need to put effort into sustaining interaction with others and it is through such interactions that practice becomes contextualized and gains a history of meanings. The TED website as well as the OTPedia pages demonstrate the characteristics of Web 1.0 technologies in the sense that they do not enable simultaneous communication and collaboration. Thus, to determine whether and how TED Translator collectivities demonstrate the characteristics of CoPs, it is necessary to demonstrate the dimension of mutual engagement in their actual practice of translation. Both the translation workflow and communications among translators can shed light on the interactive and collaborative dimension of TED Translation

Project. I will begin by explaining the translation workflow based on the investigative and the immersive data collected.

Currently, translation into 115 languages is available for TED Talks. Translation in TED follows a layered system with three kinds of roles for participants—translators, reviewers and language coordinators/supervisors. People willing to contribute to the TED Translation Project take on different roles based on their level of experience within the translation initiative and their willingness to accept extra responsibilities within the group. Generally speaking, TED Translators are also a self-selected group who respond to TED’s call for participation and apply to be a translator on the TED website. At the time of application, potential contributors need to self-report their language competencies and show that they have basic knowledge of the TED translation workflow by answering a short quiz (See appendix for a sample application page). Answers to the quiz are not hard to find provided that applicants consult TED’s tutorial video and information page on the translation system. Those whose applications are approved become translators (also called linguists on the newest translation platform), i.e., the entry-level contributor role in TED. The novices are supposed to work only on producing drafts of subtitles, which undergo a process of peer review and correction before they make their way to the general viewer. What comes next in the ladder is a reviewer, who reviews and revises the translation drafts submitted. A translator must complete a certain number of translations before he/she can be elevated to the reviewer position. Previously, a TED reviewer needed to have five sets of subtitles reviewed and published, while the current threshold is set at 10. The reasons for this change will be explained later in accordance with data collected during interviews with participants about the general changes taking place in TED with regards to the translation project. Finally, at the core of each language group stand the language coordinators or

supervisors. A language coordinator or language supervisor (LC/LS) is a TED Translator who volunteers to take on supervisory and coordinating roles in their respective language teams. Although LC/LS is also a voluntary position like all other roles available for TED Translators, it is not only self-selection that determines who becomes the LC/LS—TED has reached out to at least one LC/LS in my interview to ask whether they can take on that role in the first place. Invested in the growth of their language communities, LC/LS are expected to play an indispensable role in assuring the quality of TED translations, mentoring new translators and coordinating translation activities. TED can also make adjustments to their responsibilities and what they can do in pivoting the translation project. For example, in the past peer-reviewed translations and transcriptions went to them for final approval before publication. However, TED has recently streamlined the review process for subtitles and the final step of approval is no longer needed.

In sum, TED Translators are a heterogeneous group of people who are involved in different ways in different stages of translation production. The next section will go deeper into the backgrounds and relevant experiences of those TED Translators who took part in my interview, exploring what they are bringing to the translation project and how their participation in the project help them negotiate their sense of self.

### **3.2 Who the TED Translators are: What was learnt about the interview participants**

In order to find out whether TED Translators can be theorized as CoPs, first we need to know who they are and why they volunteer to participate in the TED Project. Most importantly, it is interesting to find out how extensive of a role learning plays in continuously keeping people engaged in the TED Translation Project. As previously mentioned, only a small number of TED

Translators actually participated in my study. Thus, it is important to recognize that the data presented here may not fully represent the larger TED Translator group. However, the goal of one-on-one interviews is to explore what kind of opportunities for learning, community building and identity negotiation are made available to TED Translators through the TED project. Given the extremely large number of TED Translators, they may have very different personal backgrounds and bring very different things to the project, which is hard to fully cover as a researcher. However, the data, especially observations of the platform shared by several translators, can still represent what the experience of translating TED Talks is like for the average translator, since the system that they experience is the same.

TED has created a webpage specifically for presenting all its translators to the public, under the title TED Translators. Everyone who wishes to join the TED Translation Project and passes the screening receives a personal profile page where their basic information such as their title or role in TED, the languages they translate from and into and the TED Talks they have subtitled are shown automatically. The translators can also choose to add more information about themselves such as their profile pictures, professions, education, interests, and links to their accounts on external social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook. The TED websites for translators have some basic interactive functionalities such as allowing users to follow the translators and stay tuned to their translation activities, but far less than well-established social networking sites' functionalities for messaging and communication, which explains why TED Translators have alternative Facebook groups in place exclusively for communication purposes. Nonetheless, since TED Translation Project is completely unpaid, the platform for displaying all TED Translators profiles where the titles, translations produced and experience within TED of translators can be found is important for giving the translators credit and a form of recognition to

acknowledge their work and contribution. In the context of this research, the translator profiles also help provide information about the TED Translators such as the number of TED Talks they have subtitled, their past experiences and interests etc.

## TED Translators

TED Translators contribute their time, energy and expertise to help ideas spread more freely. Thanks to them, TED Talks are subtitled in 100+ languages.  
[Find out more about TED Translators](#)

🔍
Language ▾
Country ▾
Role ▾
 Language Coordinator

Sort by: Most subtitles ▾

























 <b>Sebastian Betti</b> Buenos Aires Spanish, English, French 9375 subtitled talks	 <b>Margarida Ferreira</b> Odiseas Portuguese, English, French 6253 subtitled talks	 <b>eric vaultier</b> Paris French, English, Italian 4682 subtitled talks	 <b>Ido Dekkers</b> São Warburg Hebrew, English, Chinese, Yuc 4403 subtitled talks	 <b>Hani Eldalees</b> Doha Arabic, English, Portuguese, Brazilian 3370 subtitled talks	 <b>Elisabeth Buffard</b> Marseille French, English, Spanish 3244 subtitled talks
 <b>Lidia Camara de la Fuente</b> Cologne Spanish, English, Portuguese 3005 subtitled talks	 <b>claire ghysselen</b> French, English, Japanese 2964 subtitled talks	 <b>Daban Q. Jaff</b> Erfurt Kurdish (Central), Northern Kurdish (Kurmanji) 2881 subtitled talks	 <b>Maricene Crus</b> São Paulo Portuguese, Brazilian, English, Italian 2407 subtitled talks	 <b>Sann Tint</b> Yangon Burmese, French, English 2312 subtitled talks	 <b>Jihyeon J. Kim</b> Korean, English 2187 subtitled talks
 <b>Helen Chang</b> Heinchu 蔘竹 Chinese, Traditional, Chinese, Simplified, English 2149 subtitled talks	 <b>Kanhaiya Verma</b> Moscow Burmese, Russian, English 2103 subtitled talks	 <b>Mafalda Ferreira</b> Lisbon Portuguese, English 1842 subtitled talks	 <b>Ariana Bleau Lugo</b> Silver Spring Romanian, English, French 1840 subtitled talks	 <b>Peter Van de Ven</b> Mae Rim English, Dutch 1823 subtitled talks	 <b>Anna Cristiana Minoli</b> Milano Italian, French, English 1743 subtitled talks
 <b>Lilian Chiu</b> Taipei	 <b>Ivana Korom</b> Edmonton	 <b>Michele Gianella</b> Brughiero	 <b>Anwar Dafa-Alla</b> Doha	 <b>Mauricio Kakuel Tanaka</b> São Paulo	 <b>Waiaa Mohammed</b> Cairo

Figure 4: Homepage for meeting TED Translators

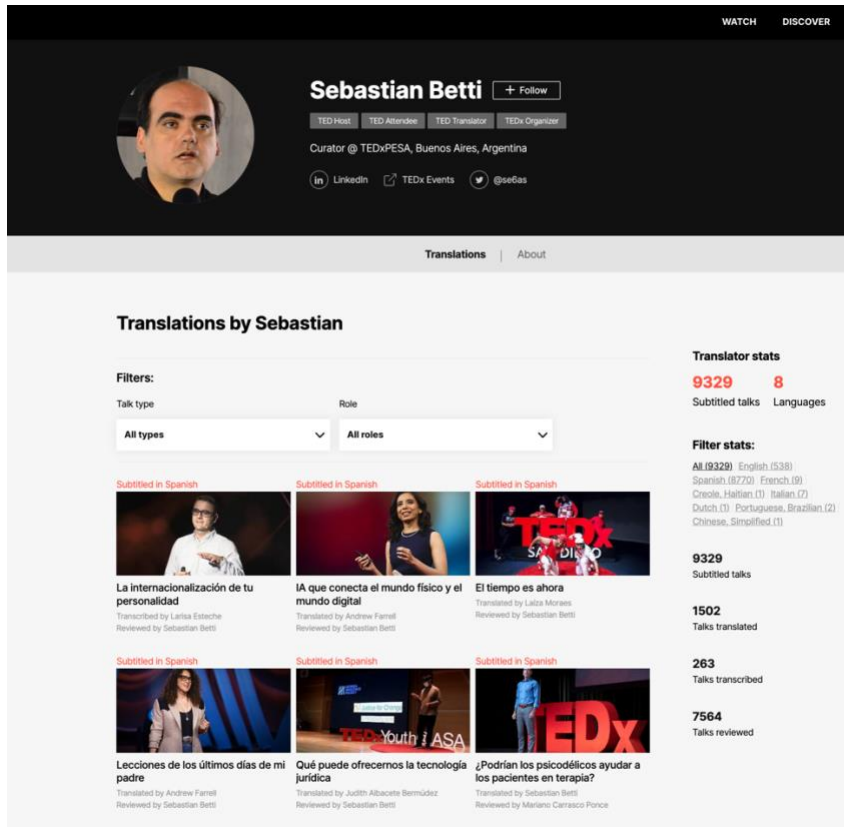


Figure 5: An example of TED Translator profile

Interactive data was collected mostly through one-on-one interviews and subsequent communications with interview participants. Regarding the rationale for recruiting participants, my initial plan was to get representation for all of the three tiers in the translation system for the French and Chinese groups by recruiting an equal number of participants in the three different roles from both groups. However, later I found that the French LC/LS seemed more accessible than the Chinese LC/LS when I reached out to them for my study. As a result, while I collected personalized information from two French LC/LS through surveys and interviews, I had to rely on information that has already been made available about the Chinese LC/LS, such as their self-statements which appear on the TED website. While such information can inform me of their backgrounds and their perspectives on how things are being run in the TED Translation Project, they may be biased since the information is published by TED to strategically promote its mission.

For confidentiality, my research participants are assigned numbers based on their language groups and their role in the TED system when they are mentioned in this thesis. For example, the language coordinators/supervisors from the French team are referred to as LC/LS<sub>FR</sub> 1 and LC/LS<sub>FR</sub> 2. The French-speaking reviewers will be referred to as reviewer<sub>FR</sub> 1, reviewer<sub>FR</sub> 2, and the Chinese-speaking ones will be referred to as reviewer<sub>CN</sub> 1, reviewer<sub>CN</sub> 2 etc. In the following section, I will present a breakdown of demographic information of my interview participants.

TED Talk translators who participated in my interviews come from all walks of life, yet they all tend to be highly educated. Surveys sent to the translators for demographic data show that the lowest level of education completed or in progress for the participants is Baccalaureate, and 3 of the 14 participants have either completed or were in the process of completing a PhD. Their education and professional backgrounds are diverse, with slightly more people trained in humanities, arts or social sciences than sciences or engineering. Figure 3 shows the number of people who are trained in sciences and technologies, humanities and social sciences, and commerce/finances. Three people selected “Others” in their response and added education, diplomacy and industrial engineering as their education backgrounds.

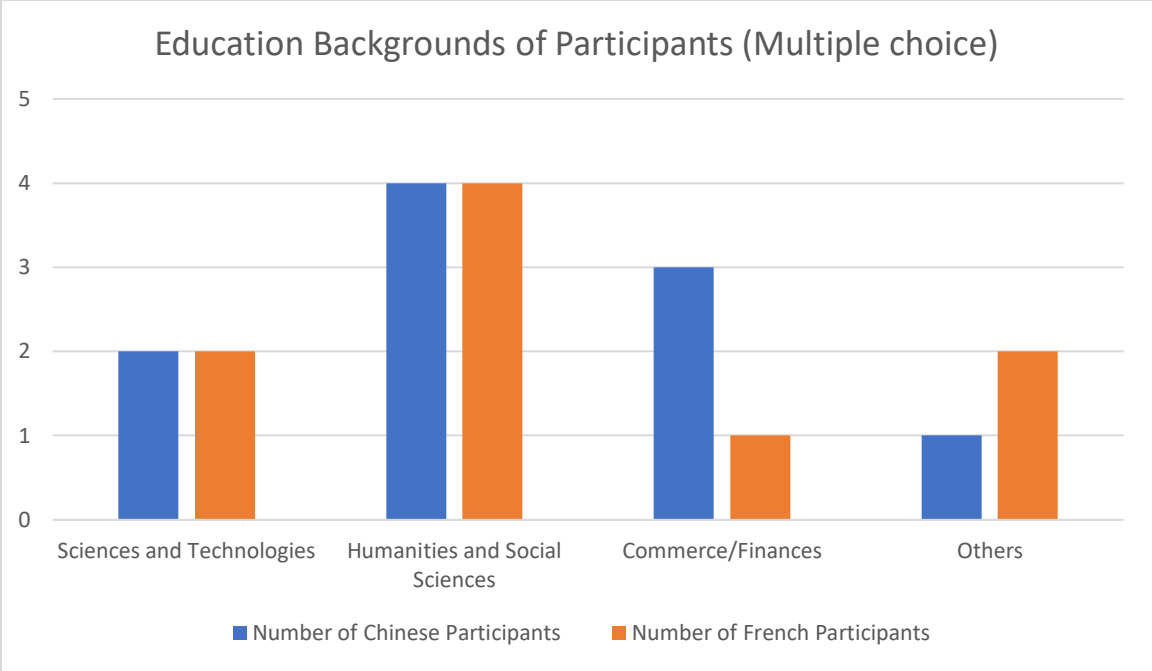


Figure 6

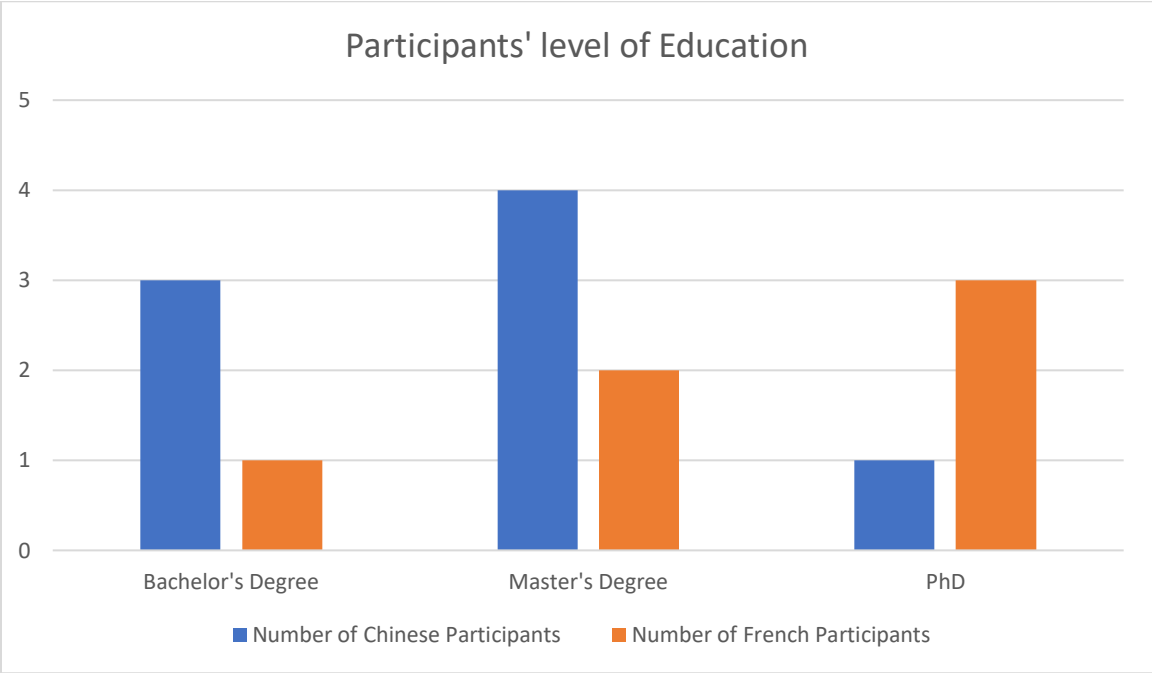
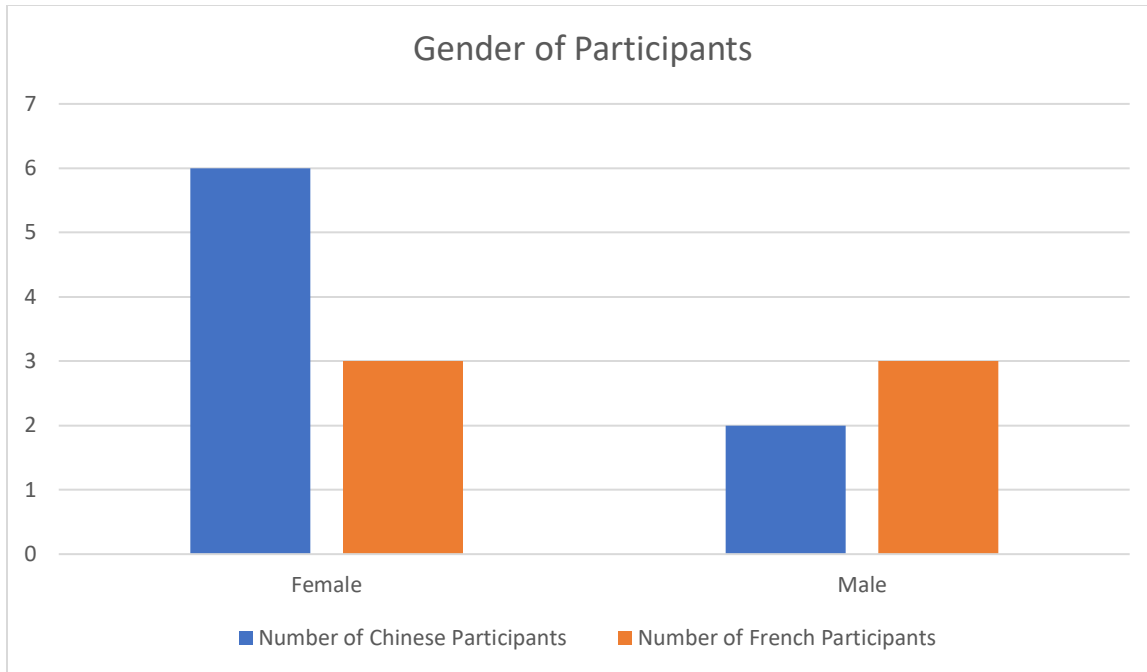


Figure 7

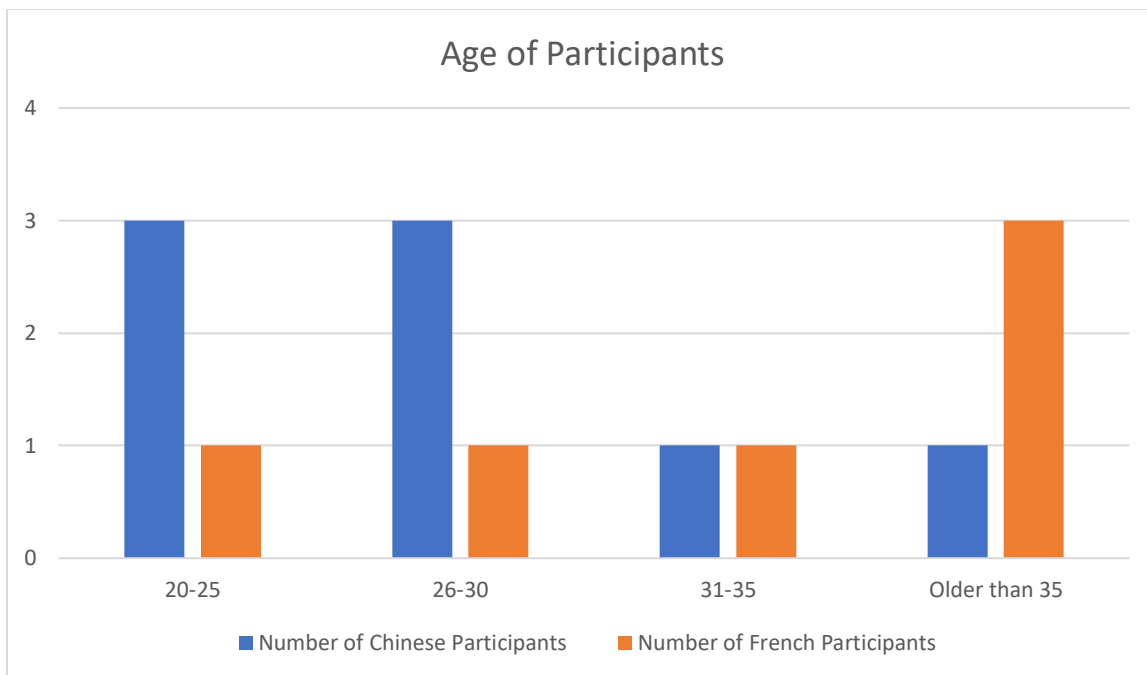
In terms of their professional activities, seven of the fourteen translators are professionals or self-employed, six people are in the process of completing their education credentials, and one person was not working at the time of participation in my study due to regulations on her visa

status in her country of residence. Furthermore, a breakdown of participants' demographic data like gender and age for both the Chinese and French groups are shown in Figure 6 and 7.

Overall, there are more female participants in my study than male participants (see Figure 6), which is consistent with the gender ratio of existing studies carried out with TED Translators (Cámara, 2015). A survey of the participants' age shows that my participants are a relatively younger group, with only four people being older than 35. Moreover, most people who participated in my study have spent a certain amount time translating for TED, with 12 of the 14 participants having been with TED for more than six months. The French participants have spent significantly more time translating for TED than the Chinese participants, all of them having been in TED Translation Project for more than two years. Similarly, the French translators have translated more TED Talks, which explains their elevated status in the translation system at the time of their participation in my study. Since they are all translation reviewers or language coordinators/supervisors, the French participants have translated TED Talks that touch on a wide a range of themes, while the newer translators from the Chinese group said that they stick to translating Talks that they feel comfortable translating (see Figure 12). Thus, it seems that the more time one spends in the TED Translation Project and the more experiences one gains, the wider the selections of Talks for translation will be regardless of personal interests or comfort zones. While most participants in my study are hoping to contribute to the flow of information through their participation in the TED Translation Project, the more time they invest in translation work for TED, the more of a major role they get to play in information flows on the TED platform.



*Figure 8*



*Figure 9*

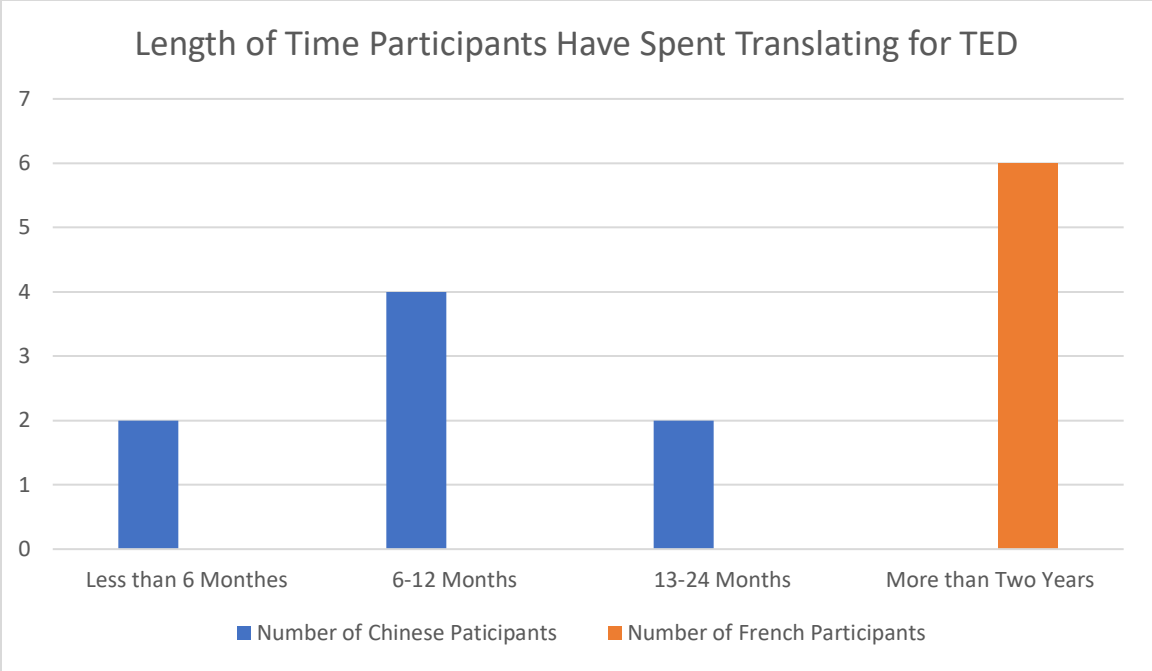


Figure 10

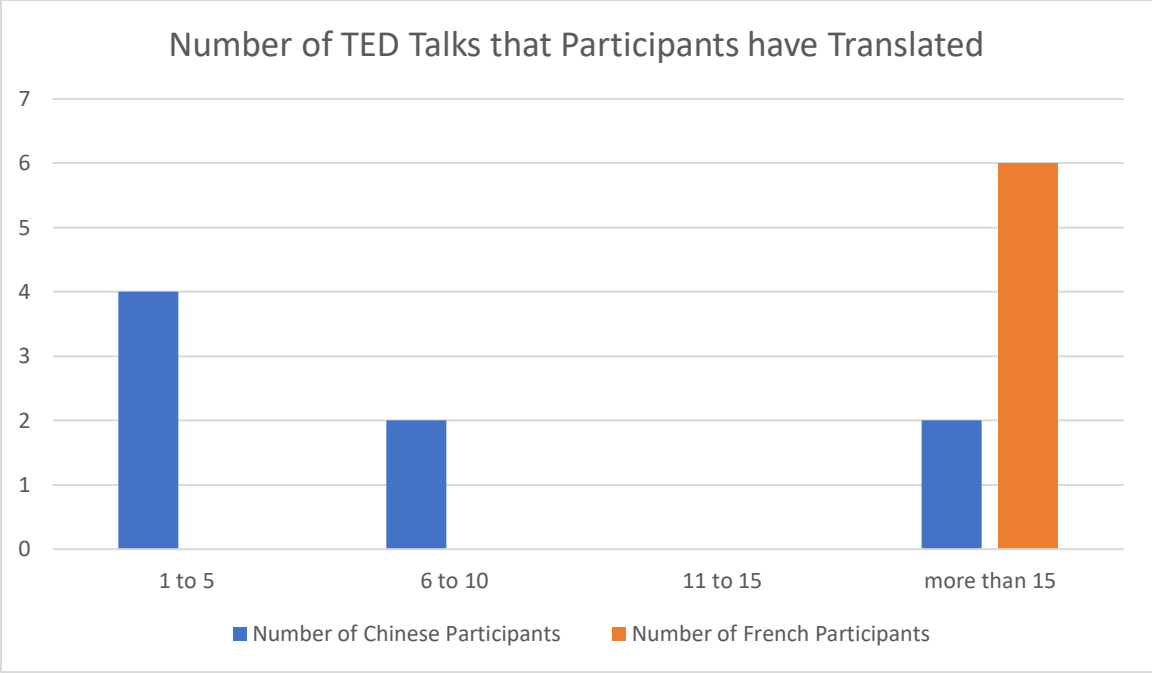


Figure 11

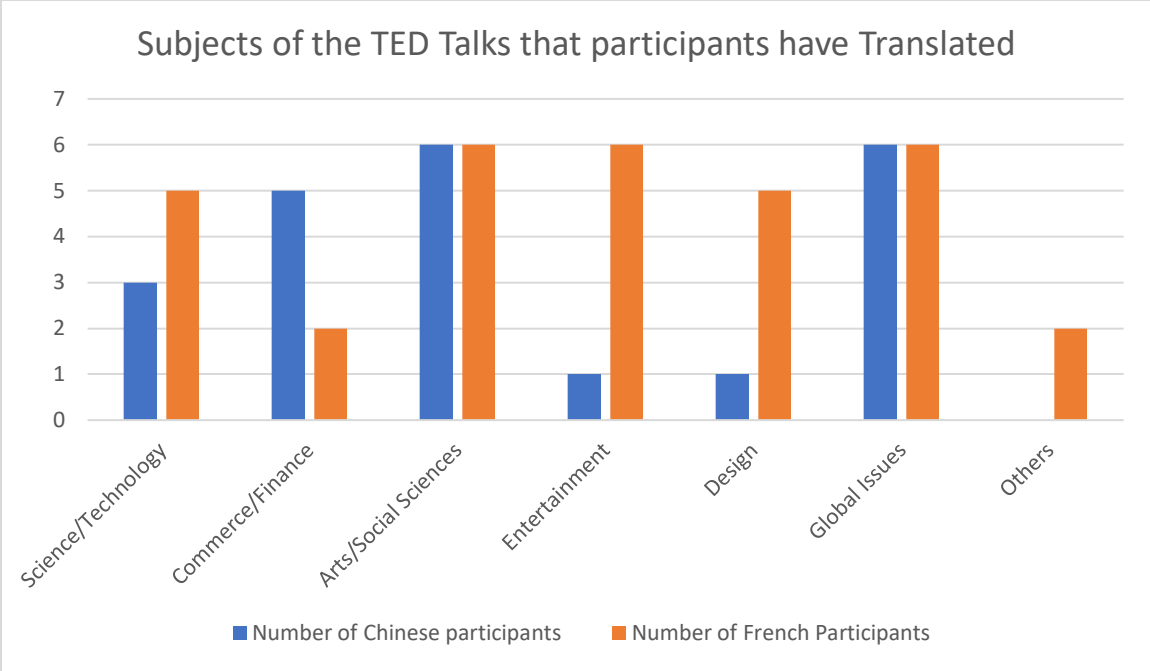


Figure 12

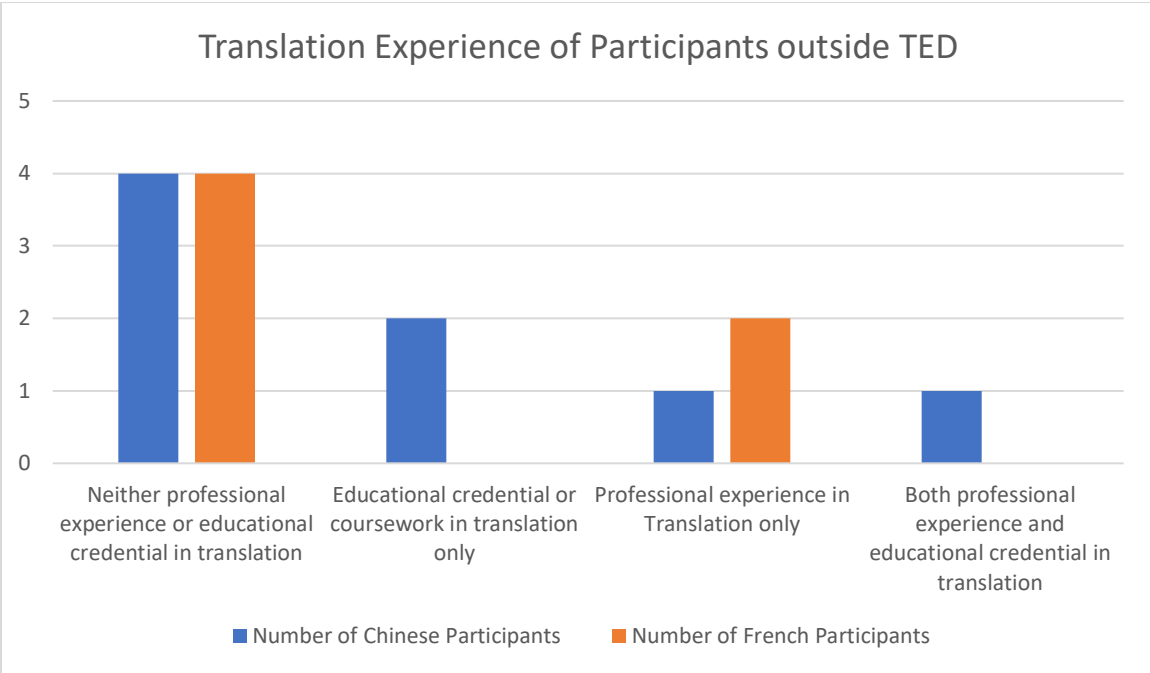


Figure 13

Another question of interest regarding my participants’ backgrounds is whether they have been trained as and/or worked as translators. Existing literature on crowdsourcing suggests that

participants come from all walks of life, including professionals who devote their spare time to productive activities that they consider meaningful outside workplaces (Howe, 2008).

Professional experience in translation includes paid freelance work, as well as translation carried out as part of their paid work duties even though their job title may not define them as translators. The results show that most of the translators surveyed did not have professional experience in translation when they participated in the research, nor did they receive training in translation as part of their education. Some of the participants have done paid translation work although they never had the job title of translator—one participant did freelance translation work although her degree is in health sciences rather than translation, and two participants reported that they translated documents at work routinely because of their multicultural and multilingual backgrounds. In terms of educational credentials in translation, one participant has worked towards a certificate in translation as part of her formal education for immigration purposes although she has never considered translation as her main profession; another participant has done coursework in translation as part of his university degree in English as a second language, but this does not lead to a credential specifically in translation. Only one of the fourteen TED Translators has both educational credentials and professional experience in translation. However, a survey of my participants' career backgrounds also suggests that part of their past ties in translation come from work-related activities. Thus, it is questionable whether they can be completely seen as complete 'amateurs' in translation. Experience-based learning well describes participants' past trajectories in translation and, not surprisingly, their experience with TED as translators, which will be explained later in sections on translation as learning and lived experience.

Although the sample surveyed in this study is very small compared to the total number of people translating for TED, the findings about participants' experience with practicing translation is consistent with the findings of other quantitative research with a larger sample that unpaid crowdsourced translation does not generally appeal to credentialed and professionally trained translators (e.g. see [McDonough Dolmaya, 2012](#)). A quantitative study by Camára (2015) reveals that a minority of people surveyed in her study—about 17 percent—of TED Translators practice translation as a profession. Although this is a smaller percentage compared to that of TED Translators who come from other professions, McDonough Dolmaya (2012) suggests that professional translators are more willing to participate in TED and put their real names and credentials/experience in translation on their TED profile, in comparison to other crowdsourcing initiatives such as Wikipedia and Facebook translation, and that this is due to TED's "higher symbolic and cultural values [because of] the translation of speeches given by high-profile figures at TED events" (p. 188). This is seemingly due to TED's approach of granting its translators exposure and visibility on the web, which will be discussed later with regards to participants' motivations. Notably, whether or not TED Translators come from the translation profession does not necessarily guarantee more engagement and activeness within the TED Translation program, such as involvement in the supervision, coordination and organization of translational activities. For example, none of the French translators who participated in my interview identify as professional translators and few of them show the intention of practicing translation professionally. However, based on their productivity as TED Translators and their engagement in coordinative/mentoring activities that go beyond translation, they can all be considered highly devoted members of their language group, including high-profile individuals with overseeing, mentoring, communication and coordination responsibilities.

Having presented the demographic data of my interview participants, I will now move onto their motivations for joining the TED Translation Project.

### 3.2.1 Why are the participants translating for TED?

The first question that comes to mind in an investigation of crowdsourced translation is why people devote time and efforts to translating for free. Crowdsourcing may or may not involve reimbursements in small amounts for the participants as incentives, but monetary rewards are not what incentivizes people to translate for TED. In TED, participation in translation is considered a volunteer activity and thus not paid. To learn about incentives for my participants to join TED Translation Project, I asked specifically about their motivations and how they think they can benefit from their participation in the TED Network. Before the start of my research, I summarized a couple of possible incentives for TED Translators based on the information available on TED.com about its translation project; ideas such as, contributing to the dissemination of TED Talks on certain subjects of interest and gaining visibility on the TED platform by receiving credit for their translations came up, and I created research questions based on these incentives. Based on the set of codes emerging from my data, I put the incentives for my informants to translate for TED in four main categories: translation as active consumption of educational materials, translation as a means to increase one's visibility, translation as a means to provide social benefit, and translation as lived experience of learning. The first three categories will be presented in detail in Chapter Four where the participation in TED is theorized as immaterial labour. In this section, I will focus on one single category that is particularly relevant to approaching TED Translators as CoPs—translating for TED as lived experience.

### 3.2.2 Translation as Lived Experience of Learning

Lived experience of participation, coming from people's engagement in practice, is an integral part of identity negotiation in Wenger's CoP Theory. Wenger suggests that discursive or reified aspects of social identity, such as a title, a recognition, a prize, a position, or a role as defined in a certain group, must be lived through engagement in practice to reflect the actual process of belonging to a community of practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 149). As mentioned at the beginning of the current section, TED Translators receive various forms of recognition that are displayed on their personal profile. These forms of recognition are also brought up by my interview participants. However, what makes them meaningful to the participants is not titles or recognition alone but how they connect to their real experience of participation. Translation as a learning experience is the first important theme emerging from my collection of interactive data, and underlies the subsequent analysis of how TED Translators may be considered as CoPs. Moreover, the interview participants see their practice of translation as different from institutional learning since it involves practicing translation in a context situated in the real world (volunteering) and communicating and developing relationships with others who engage in the communal practice throughout their learning trajectory. Wenger suggests that it is through the lived experiences of practice that the participants in that practice give meaning to the discursive and reified aspects of their identity as tied to their CoP. Thus, despite the various means of recognition and accreditation that TED offers its translators, such as personal profile, having their names appear in the subtitles they worked on, receiving digital badges for their contribution to the translation project, it is only through TED Translators' lived experience of translating TED Talk subtitles that they negotiate the meanings of such dimensions of identity. Important as they are to incentivizing TED Translators, a full list of such means of reification themselves will be

explored later in section 3.4.4 of this chapter, and how TED Translators make sense of them will be further discussed in Chapter Four in relation to crowdsourced translation as immaterial labour. In this section, the focus is on their accounts of their experience of participation, which is indispensable to the negotiation of meaning given to the practice.

When asked about why they translated for TED, all the participants in the interview brought up participating in the TED Translation Project as a means for them to gain experience and knowledge. They identified two dimensions of learning in their participation in TED as translators—the first one being translation as a way to better understand and benefit from the content of TED Talks and the second one being the acquisition and enhancement of linguistic competences and translation skills. Given TED as a well-known platform for the production and dissemination of educational materials through TED conferences consisting of TED Talks, most of my participants are first drawn to TED by an interest in the content of TED Talks. Thus, when addressing what benefits they garner from their participation in TED, some participants present translation as an I to be introduced to a wider range of TED Talks and to gain more knowledge of what TED Talks cover. For example, reviewer<sub>FR1</sub> has explained how translation may complement and enrich the learning experience that TED Talks offer: “I learn a lot. [...] When you watch a TED Talk or listen to TED Podcast, you learn. But when translating TED Talks, you learn double, because it not only requires you to know how to translate a word, but I often go on Wikipedia to read: what is this thing? When they talk about certain people, for example, who is this person? Thus through translation, I am gaining all this knowledge in this process, and this makes me happy.” This perspective was echoed by Translator<sub>CN 1</sub>: “[Participating in TED] creates an opportunity for me to learn progressively, and I absorb more knowledge from the content that [TED] speakers share when I am translating, and as a translator I get a better

understanding of what is shared. If I were merely a viewer, my understanding might be not as deep. By translating the talks myself, I understand the talks better”. The intellectual effort involved in translation also requires gaining knowledge of the topic of the TED Talk. Thus, Translator<sub>CN</sub> 2 explained why translating TED Talks helps them gain knowledge regarding what is being addressed in the Talk as follows: “When I come across a topic which appeals to me and which I do not know well, I would claim the translation task. I would claim this task because I would first learn more things about it before starting translation.”

It seems that for some, translating for TED can help enrich what they learn from TED as viewers. Moreover, all participants see a learning opportunity where they can gain and/or improve their translation skills in their practice. Learning how to translate is not the main reason that my participants gave for joining TED since they mostly identified incentives such as helping others, being attracted to the cause of TED, making TED Talks more widely accessible, leveraging their existing knowledge of or experience with translation if applicable, or simply trying something new. In other words, they did not strategically join TED to learn how to translate. However, they acknowledge that learning in practice is a major benefit that they get out of their voluntary participation. According to Reviewer<sub>FR</sub>2 who also participates in other crowdsourced translation projects apart from TED such as Coursera: “I am a volunteer translator for many organizations and it helps me learn vocabulary; it helps me learn [translation] techniques. ” The process of quality assurance based on peer revision also provides opportunities for translators to review revisions and feedback from their more experienced peers. The benefit of such functionality of the platform Amara is perfectly captured in the following statement from Reviewer<sub>FR</sub>3: “I would first look at the changes made by reviewers and language coordinators. This also helps me a lot with doing better translations. Thus, once a TED Talk translation has

been published, I would systematically review what has been changed or not, and what I could have done better.”

As mentioned in the previous section, TED Translators receive credits for their work and contribution to TED. When asked about whether it is important to include their name and give them credit for the translations that they carried out, Translator<sub>CN 2</sub> answered: “I’d say yes and no. Yes because it is part of my practice of translation. Since I commit time and energy to a translation project, I think it is a kind of recognition to include my name in a video that I subtitled, and thus I’d say yes; yet no because I did not join TED so that my name would appear on the credits, but for the experience of translating. This is what I like. I also like to do volunteer translation work.” In a similar way, while most translators consider it important to receive a certain form of recognition or acknowledgement of their contribution to TED, they often present such recognitions as situated in real experience of practicing translation. The “official” endorsement coming from TED is important to them but only as it is connected to their actual participation in “communal” activities, since my interview participants emphasize the importance of having their volunteer work recognized and endorsed. They are unsure of any actual benefits that such endorsements will bring to them personally, but tend to situate their understanding of its importance as contextualized in the TED Project, e.g. with regards to TED’s cause of spreading ideas. As Reviewer<sub>CN 1</sub> explains: “[The endorsement from TED for my work] is Important because it makes it easier to showcase my translation work and to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge. I identify as a TED Translator, and I get a sense of accomplishment”. The experience of participation consists of not only the practice of translation but sustaining communication with others in their collectivity, maintaining a certain role that entails shared accountability and developing a new set of interpersonal relations. TED

Translator's practice of translation as lived experience that gives meaning to the non-monetary rewards coming from TED is the basis for conceptualizing TED Translators in the forthcoming section 3.4. However, before delving into TED Translators as potential CoPs, it is also necessary to examine the technological platform and the communication/collaboration technologies that enable the formation of such CoPs. Since The TED Translation Project is situated in a virtual environment, the mediating role of technologies and the online platform that facilitates the sharing of knowledge/information and the translation activities will show the interplay between sociality and digitality in studies of CoPs in a virtual environment.

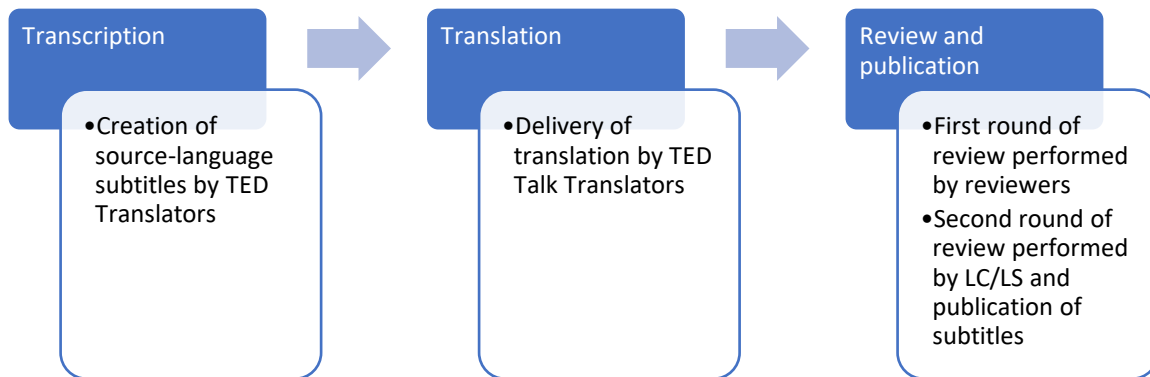
### ***3.3 Translators' engagement with technologies on the TED Translation Platform***

In the previous section, I touched on how participation in TED grants translators the opportunity to obtain lived experience of their engagement in shared translation activities and, as a result, hone their translation skills. Since TED Translators carry out their work virtually, their communications and production are facilitated and mediated by the digital tools and platforms they engage with. In this section, I will present how communication technologies play an important role in the TED Translation Project and how the translators make use of technologies, as my research question 1.3 highlighted. The analysis in this section is based on a combination of investigative, interactive and immersive data to generate a global picture of what technologies of Web 2.0 and 3.0 facilitate the sociality in TED Translator collectivities. Research interest in collaborative phenomena in the age of Web 2.0 and 3.0 draws attention to the interplay of technological developments and online social practices. According to researchers looking into digitally-mediated translation, there exists a “symbiotic relationship between [non-professional translation] and technology over the years” (Jiménez-Crespo, 2019, p. 245). How technologies

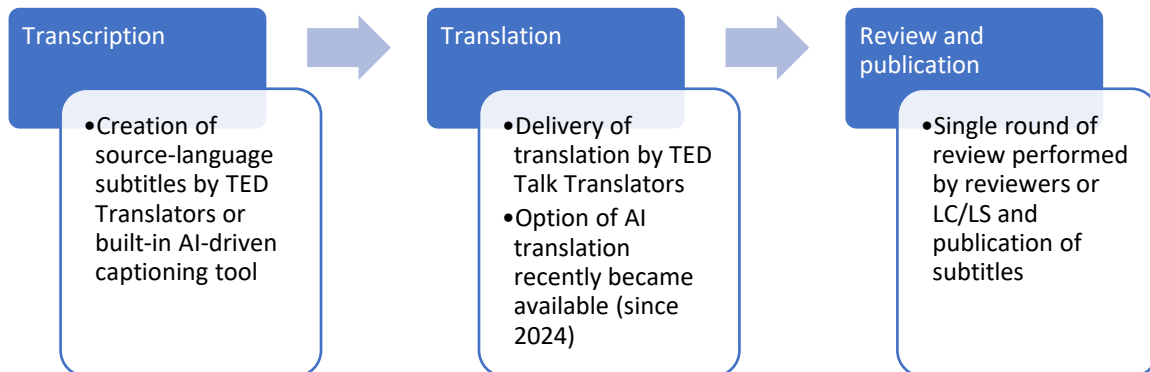
have transformed translation practices is a good example of what critical media studies scholars would consider a dialectic of the social and the technological. According to O'Hagan (2016), technological advancements since Web 2.0 have had significant transformative effects on translation practices in terms of translator's autonomy and translation models. More specifically, the democratizing effect of the open-source-software movement has empowered translators in terms of translator's involvement both in the development/maintenance of digital tools used and the search, annotation and circulation of translation materials that often mean to address geographical inequalities in access to information. However, such celebratory presentations of translation practices in Web 2.0 and 3.0 have also met with criticism. Many of critical views of translation under Web 2.0 and 3.0 focus on the social dimension of technology and the societal impact of participatory translation practices that have emerged as a result of connectivity and technological advancements. For example, critiques emphasize the negative impact on translators' image caused by crowdsourced and amateur translation practices through de-professionalizing translation (McDonough Dolmaya, 2012). Ethical issues have also been raised about unauthorized use of translations produced by amateurs by for-profit organizations (Zwischenberger, 2021). Research also points to nuanced relations between translators and voluntary translation platforms that mediate crowdsourced and online collaborative translation. In other words, how much autonomy translators possess and how much they can benefit financially and professionally from their participation depends on the organizational model of the translation platform (Piróth & Baker, 2020). Thus, the democratizing effect of recent technological advances on translators may be a simplistic presentation. Such controversy around the relations between translators, emergent translation practices and technology/connectivity emphasizes the importance of examining the role that technologies play in translator

collaboration. More specifically, of particular interest here is how translators make use of technologies when they participate in crowdsourcing, and what relations exist between the implementation of technology and the organizational structure on the crowdsourcing platform.

See Figures 14 and 15 for the diagrams representing the workflow.



*Figure 14: Outline of the TED Translation Project Workflow on Amara (pre-2021)*



*Figure 15: Outline of the TED Translation Project Workflow on Captionhub (post-2021)*

As aforementioned, TED Translation Project has a vertical, hierarchical structure. This organizational feature is also built into the technological tool that TED imposes on translators. TED has partnered with different off-the-shelf cloud-based collaborative tools that make audiovisual translation relatively easy and straightforward for its participants. Since the launch of its translation program in 2009, TED’s partners have changed from dotSUB to Amara.org, and eventually in 2020 TED switched to Captionhub as its newest partner for web-based translation

platform. It has been argued that partnerships with TED may help deepen the market penetration of such web platforms although TED itself claims to be a non-profit organization (Pérez-González, 2012), which shows the intricate relations between business models of technology and crowdsourced translation practices, including those with non-profit initiatives. TED's partnership with dotSUB ended before the beginning of this research project and thus there is little that this research can say about how exactly dotSUB was implemented into the TED Translation Project, but with both Amara and Captionhub, TED has a customized working interface designed specifically for its translator teams, and in both cases the structure of the TED system is implemented into the design of the custom-made web platform. On Captionhub, for example, roles in the TED Translation Team on the platform are structured as linguists, reviewers and language supervisors (LS). Linguists are the entry-level roles in the TED system, i.e., bilingual/multilingual participants who passed the entry quiz and whose application to join TED has been approved. Access to the TED translation team on the custom-made interface of the platform is limited to those whose applications have been approved by TED. Approved participants can access the interface and take on tasks in the TED system that corresponds with their roles. Linguists can work on translation or transcription tasks within their language team(s) but they are not able to take on review tasks in their current role, as those tasks belong to a reviewer or an LC/LS. Also, a member of a particular language group can only access language tasks that fall into their language combinations. For example, a translator from the French language team cannot view or access translation tasks from English into Spanish on Captionhub. For multilingual participants, it is possible to join two or more language teams at once provided that they specify their language combinations to the TED staff. A similar system was seen with the TED interface on Amara.org where translator roles were delineated and built into the web

platform. However, the working interface of Amara is less restricting in terms of the translation structure and roles, and there was no restraint on who can view/take on what tasks. This has caused problems for translator teams since a TED Translator may claim a review task without being pre-approved as a reviewer, or a translation task outside his or her language team. Thus, TED had to rely on the “freeze and rollback” (Jiménez-Crespo, 2019, p. 247) option to freeze any further editing of translation tasks in progress, should such a task be claimed by an unqualified user and return the translation to a previous version to stop deterioration of translation quality. The more controlled environment in *Captionhub* prevents this problem by limiting available tasks on different user interfaces in correspondence with the users’ respective roles in the system. The rollback function is retained in the new translation system but now geared more towards correcting errors in the source-language transcript that translators may spot while translating. Thus, it seems that technology-wise, TED is moving towards a more controlled translation environment aiming for less human intervention in the workflow.

When it comes to performing translation tasks, the interface in Amara and Captionhub is similar in the sense that they provide a foolproof, guided environment that is easy to navigate for people without prior experience in subtitling<sup>1</sup>. Videos for subtitling are uploaded by TED, the initiating party, and the source-language transcription is done either by the initiating party or by participants who volunteer to transcribe the videos. Although the platform supports automatic transcription, the transcripts still need approval and, possibly, revision by a human post-editor, usually a reviewer or LC/LS of the language of video. For all translation tasks, the source text and the target text are displayed side by side in the translation panel and the user can complete the translation by filling in empty lines in the edit section. Changes to captions are saved

---

<sup>1</sup> see Appendix for screenshots of the customized interface for TED translators on Amara and Captionhub.

automatically to avoid any hassle for the user. Moreover, timecodes are added automatically to subtitles and users can also drag runs of subtitles forward or backward on the timeline to adjust the in-and-out-time of subtitles for better synchronization with the audio. The editing panel allows translators to easily split or merge lines to adjust each line's reading speed. Although the two platforms are similar in terms of functionality, there are certain differences between the two. For example, Amara offers the option for users to follow a particular video they are interested in for updates about the availability of source text for translation, which no longer exists on Captionhub. In the meantime, certain enhancements have been made in Captionhub to reduce the need for human intervention and improve efficiency of the translation workflow. A feature that exists on Captionhub but did not exist on Amara is the display of reading speed for each line of translation. More specifically, to ensure the best viewing experience for spectators, TED requests that each line of subtitle should contain no more than 42 characters to ensure a reading speed of 21 characters per second at the maximum (TED, n.d.). Translators must thus break up longer lines while keeping linguistic segments together. Captionhub calculates the reading speed for each line of subtitles by word per minute or character per second, and generates an error message should the word count exceed the maximum allowance. Thus, if a translator exceeds the word limit that TED has set for each line of subtitles, he or she cannot proceed to submit the translation task for review without self-correction, which potentially saves time for human reviewers. Moreover, to prevent people from claiming work tasks for which they are not qualified, accessibility in each user interface is now restrained by the user's role and position in the TED Translation system. Thus, a TED user can only find translation tasks suitable for his or her role as a participant and view the progress of translations that they are currently working on.

Despite improvements made to the workflow with increased control, what seems to have been lost after the transition of platforms is openness and transparency of the translation process. For example, anyone from the TED Translator team can view all intermittent translations of TED Talks stored in Amara’s database and compare two different drafts with any edits and changes highlighted. This feature offers a way for new members to learn about translating TED Talks. More specifically, they would compare different versions of translation and the edits made by more senior translators to learn how to translate for TED. However, now users of the platform can only view the intermittent translation drafts of the talks which they themselves are working on. Given the differences between the two platforms, interviews and personal exchanges with TED Translators reveal that they do not consider Captionhub as significantly more user-friendly than Amara for subtitling; on the contrary, some of them appreciate the functionality of Amara more than Captionhub<sup>2</sup>. This may be a response to the unfinished, in-progress work of customizing Captionhub for TED Translators, since the Captionhub interface is still under development for fixing glitches and adding new features. Nonetheless, it is uncertain to what extent the transition of platforms improves translators’ user experience, since TED has only collected feedback on the functionality of the new platform from a small group of translators who participated in *BETA* testing rather than sending out large-scale surveys to the larger community of translators. Moreover, interviews with the translators show that transition of the platforms seem to have been the unilateral decision made by TED that was never in real negotiation with translators—the actual users of the platform. According to Reviewer<sub>FR</sub> 1, part of the reason that TED switched platforms that has been disclosed to translators is that TED had trouble asking Amara to add custom-made functions to the TED interface. However, it remains

---

<sup>2</sup> See appendix for responses from my interview participants on how they rate the two platforms’ functionality

unclear how translators' user experiences were taken into account when decisions on TED partnership with off-the-shelf subtitling platforms were made.

Overall, the structure of the technological platform for subtitling stays close to the organizational structure of the TED Translation Project. Collaboration among translators in TED is powered by the platform with tiered systems aiming for timely publication of subtitles. While existing studies suggest that a cyclical process of review and editing is adopted by many online collaborative initiatives to allow for self-correction of errors in the translation, the enhancements made to the TED translation platform aim to make it more enclosed and controlled and to reduce the need to go back to the previous stage. This suggests that the TED translation system is geared towards a more linear process to ensure efficiency.

This said, the TED Translators also try to engage other off-the-shelf technological tools to facilitate their communication and cooperation processes outside the TED platform. Most evidently, the translators make use of various networking and communication tools apart from the built-in messaging functions in the cloud subtitling platform to facilitate exchanges. The built-in communication functions of the subtitling platform allow translators to receive email notifications when a team member attempt to contact them. However, translators also need instant messaging to communicate more efficiently with their peers and social media platforms with content-sharing functions to coordinate their actions. The French translators mentioned that Facebook and the associated instant messaging tool Messenger are what they use the most for communication with others; my Chinese informants opt for WeChat for both one-on-one exchanges and group discussions since access to Facebook and Messenger etc. is blocked in Mainland China. A third-party instant messaging platform was also implemented in the temporary TED mentorship program to facilitate the communication between mentors and

mentees. However, since the mentorship program has been suspended with no definite date for re-opening, not much information is currently available about this third-party software, except that my informants who have experiences with it consider it less user-friendly than the messaging tools that they are used to for communicating with other translators, and that none of them ever returned to this platform once they finished the mentorship program.

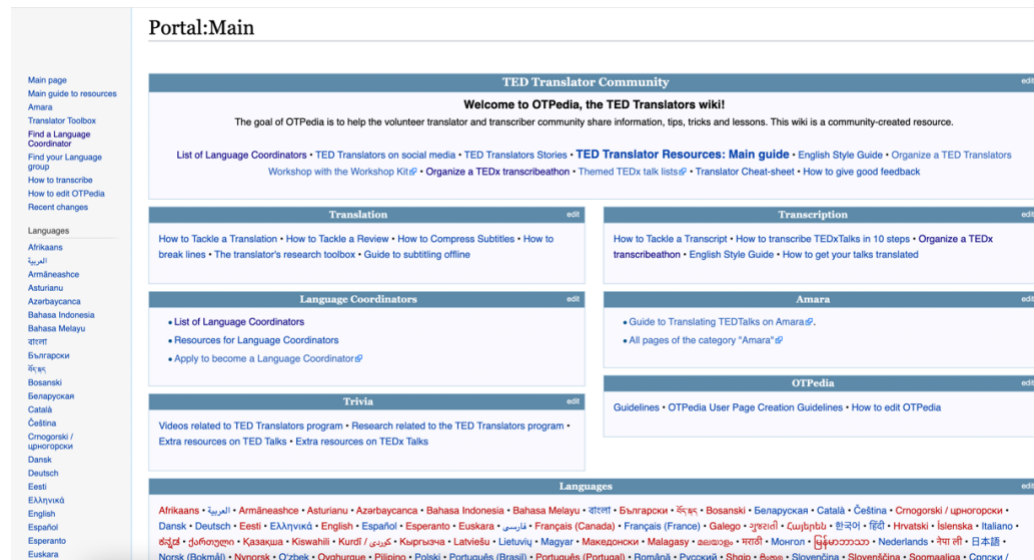


Figure 16: Homepage for TED Translator OTPedia (Wiki portal)

Apart from general communication among translators, I am also interested in knowing what technological tools other than those that TED partners with are present in the translation process and the coordination of translation activities. Exchanges with my informants, including experienced LC/LS, revealed that none of them ever used professional software such as translation memory tools. However, they have used collaborative tools for compiling bilingual linguistic units that can be recycled and used to coordinate translation activities<sup>3</sup>. For example, certain French translators created a number of Excel files on Google Doc and posted the links to the translator forum on Facebook. This allows them to work collaboratively by noting down

<sup>3</sup> See appendix for screenshots of cloud documents compiled by translators.

names of people who volunteers to translate or revise translations, with details such as names and links to talks currently under editing on the subtitling platform. Some active members, especially reviewers and LC/LS, also co-created an Excel file to compile linguistic corpora that serve as points of reference for the larger translator collectivity, which work similarly to translation memories in the sense that translators can consult them for translating recurrent expressions.

Compared to the Chinese translators, French translators seem to engage more in the cocreation of such resources with the help of off-the-shelf digital tools for communication and collaboration, a process that also creates more digital archives about their participation in various self-organized activities. They created shared documents on Google Docs to coordinate planned translation activities. For example, the Appendix includes an Excel file shared on the French translators' Facebook Group for coordinating the translation of TED Talks on happiness. The file includes titles, links to the translation platform, status of translation and names of current assignees of TED videos that fall under the theme. Translators can edit the document anytime and anywhere to add their names to projects and update their progress on the videos they are working on, which helps to boost productivity.

Moreover, dedicated members from the French group also work collaboratively on shared Excel files to compile a small bilingual corpus that serves as a source of reference for the less experienced translators. For example, a Google Doc file included in the appendix was created in order to show how to translate TED Talk Disclaimers. The corpus includes aligned bilingual lists of expressions that may appear frequently in the disclaimers required for independently organized TED Talks. Archives from the French translator forum show that a LC/LS proposed the idea of creating a corpus for recurrent terms and/or expressions in TED Talk disclaimers, bringing up a discussion among active translators. Historically, resources and information to help

the larger TED Translator team are put on the wiki portal for each language team, but only LS/LC can edit the portal. Thus, this group of French translators opted for the use of collaborative cloud tools for an easier, less enclosed way to compile resources. They created an Excel file developed and shared on Google Doc, titled *Glossaire Disclaimer TED*, with translations for long and short expressions in TED Talks that the file creators deem recurrent. For each example of a recurrent expression, not only the source and target texts are given, but there is also detailed contextual information available such as which TED Talk Series and which TED Project the expressions come from, and information about which translator added the entry and on what date<sup>4</sup>.

However, none of the aforementioned files are kept update to date since all changes made date from before 2021. The collaborative activities in the French translator team that the cloud-based tools enable seem to have ended abruptly. This may be caused by changes in the dynamics of this translator collectivity, with reduced level of activity since the transition of platforms. The consequences and possible causes of such changes will be discussed later in the section focused on interactions between translators on the TED Platform.

Some Chinese translators took a similar initiative by compiling information using a similar online collaborative file-editing tool developed by Tencent, a Chinese technology and media company that provides cloud services. Accessing the files from the smartphone may allow for more flexible participation in co-creative activities since people enjoy the ease of visiting and editing the file from their smartphones. Such files retain a similar structure as the ones produced by the French translator group—there are separate columns for translators to register their own names and enter links to the translation tasks that they have claimed, names of the persons who

---

<sup>4</sup> The names of TED Translators who participated in the development of such files were removed from Appendix for the sake of their confidentiality.

reviewed the tasks and the status of completeness of the task. Translators can also add other content such as examples of translation from English into Chinese for TED Talks and information about locally organized TEDx Talks in China. However, just like the cloud files in the French translator group, translators seem to be active on the cloud document only for a short period of time and the document has not been updated recently. Thus, it seems that translators' engagement with collaborative tools to facilitate translation is not persistent on the TED platform.

Apart from cloud collaborative tools that can help to facilitate the production of translations, machine translation (MT) tools may also be used in crowdsourced and online collaborative translation. Yet, the use of MT in non-professional or online collaborative translation has yet to be more fully explored by scholars of Translation Studies. Although Translation Studies has focused on the use of MT in the translation industry, the use of MT beyond professional translation needs more attention since many crowdsourcing platforms now offers built-in MT solutions. In TED, Captionhub did not provide a built-in MT solution like certain crowdsourcing platforms do until very recently. Thus, my interview participants reported leveraging external MT tools such as Google Translate. However, they said that they tend not to rely on MT except for the occasional need to translate foreign language words that they do not understand at all. However, general discussions in the translator forum revealed that other translators who did not take part in my interviews may engage with machine translation tools to a greater extent, such as comparing the outcomes of several different machine translation applications and choosing the best one, although it has been pointed out by people playing the reviewer role that complete reliance on machine translation does not yield the best results for translating TED Talks. More recently, the emergence of more advanced AI translation tools such

as New Bing and ChatGPT provide more free solutions for volunteer translators. TED Translators' attitudes towards their implementation in initiatives like TED, however, appear divided. The TED Translators who participated in my interview tend to avoid MT unless it involves a language that they do not master, such as when foreign language terms from neither their source or target language that appear in the TED Talk they subtitle. The reason is that they translate TED Talk for the intellectual labour associated with translation. However, interactions in the online discussion space for TED Translators reveal that people have different views of using MT to translate TED Talks. More specifically, during an interaction between Chinese reviewers who did not participate in my interview, one reviewer complaint that the emergence of AI translation tools like Chat GPT and their increasing use by TED Talk Translators made them less passionate about the TED Project. They thought that such changes could potentially make the volunteer imitative of TED less human-centered. However, other TED Talk reviewers disagreed with this person, saying that using MT to help produce TED Talks could be a good thing because it provided the translators with multiple translation options while boosting productivity. However, they all seemed to agree that translating TED Talks manually can offer the translator a particular experience, which MT cannot offer. Thus, it seems that the intellectual labour and the experience of translation involved in TED Talk translation are essential to motivating people to translate for TED. This topic will be further discussed in Chapter Four when TED Talk translation is conceptualized as immaterial labour.

### *3.3.1 Integration of digital tools in TED Translator's collaboration*

Earlier in this chapter, I presented a breakdown of my fourteen informants' backgrounds, experience with TED and motivations to be involved in TED through information collected from

their responses to my SurveyMonkey and interview questions. To avoid repetition, in this section I intend to focus more on their collaboration process as digitally mediated and how exactly they facilitate the flow of translations of TED Talks with the help of digital and other human agents.

The ‘everyday’ translator, also called a linguist, is an entry-level role that helps with transcription and translation in the TED system. The everyday translators have the power to choose what they want to translate by claiming any free translation tasks on Captionhub, the subtitling platform. The translators can also claim transcription tasks, which prepare talks for translation. They are expected to complete a translation or transcription and submit the draft for review within 30 days of claiming the task; otherwise, the system will ‘free’ the task to be taken up by another person. As the first step in the translation workflow, transcription involves filling in captions for TED Talk videos that do not come with source-language captions, and thus does not involve interlingual translation. Only those TED Talks that do not come with original captions need transcription, most of which are speeches given by a franchised third-party individual or organization, also called TEDx Talks. Translation of TED Talks, on the other hand, involves translating the source-language captions into a different language. Since TED has presented its translation project as an opportunity to eliminate language barriers in the circulation of general knowledge, most volunteers sign up to translate TED Talks. Based on information gathered from senior TED Translators, transcribing may be perceived as a boring, less incentivizing task by the general translator community and there are usually far more people doing translation than transcription. Nonetheless, transcription is considered as important as translation by senior members since it is the first step towards translation and crucial for the circulation of TED videos produced in non-English languages, which do not usually come with

original captions. Thus, in the eyes of these translators, transcription is important for the representation of their own culture(s) on the TED platform.

Translation follows transcription in the collaboration process, and is generally perceived as the most enriching, entertaining and rewarding type of work in the TED Translation Project. My participants mentioned many benefits of translating TED Talks, such as second language learning, honing translation skills, padding one's CV, or enjoying the intellectual work required for translation. Translation in TED may become a condensing process. For example, given that French translations are often wordier than the English, French translators often need to condense the texts to accommodate TED's caption requirements for the number of characters per line. Instructions on condensation are provided on the French TED wiki page that serves as a source of information for French translators. According to the instructions, omission of certain information during translation is acceptable for condensation purposes as long as the key messages are retained. For example, interjections, salutations, filler language, modifiers of intensity or quantity etc. may be omitted, while things like metaphors/figurative language, repetition of synonyms and rhetorical devices may be simplified.<sup>5</sup>

Reviewing, which is the last step in the workflow, refers to the peer vetting of translation drafts that are not yet published. At the review phase, translators with reviewing rights can also pick TED Talk subtitles translated into their working language(s) and conduct a quality-assurance procedure, such as checking the quality of language, the fidelity of translation and whether the translators have abided by TED's rules for subtitling. Some of my interview participants with reviewing rights consider this kind of work as more tedious than translation, especially when the quality of translation is bad, and thus less appealing to TED Translators.

---

<sup>5</sup> The original article on TED wiki portal, titled "Comment condenser les sous-titres", has been taken down by TED to be integrated into the Captionhub platform, and therefore inaccessible.

However, some of the other participants consider reviewing translations as a different kind of participation in TED

Given that TED is a voluntary program that completely depends on people's willingness to help, it is common for translators to cherry-pick TED Talks that are more appealing to them or from which they can benefit. For this reason, translation tasks are often taken up more quickly than transcribing and reviewing tasks. However, for members more committed to the TED project, there is a sense of responsibility apart from pleasure when it comes to carrying out their roles and functions. They think of their work not only in terms of personal benefits and pleasure that can be gained but also in terms of the wider impact on the functioning of the translation program and the attainment of bigger goals. Such goals may include pushing for the circulation of talks that are produced in certain languages and/or cover certain topics, especially for the representation of their own culture(s). The senior French translators, for example, have tried to encourage the transcription of French-language TED Talks through coordinated activities so that the translation of French talks will not be blocked by the lack of French transcripts.

In the past, all TED translations needed to be reviewed twice before they were published to make sure that they met the TED requirements for reading speed, number of characters per line, merging/splitting lines etc. as well as more general translation evaluation criteria such as fidelity, syntax, register and punctuation. Subtitles were reviewed by a junior reviewer and then a senior reviewer, who was also a language coordinator, for double assurance. Since TED translators are not tested or pre-screened for their level of language, the involvement of someone whose linguistic expertise and engagement in the translation project have been recognized by the official TED team seems important to the translator collectivities for quality assurance. For example, LC/LS<sub>FR</sub> 1 consider their roles as language coordinators as to safeguard the quality of

translation since no real measure has been put in place by TED to assess the linguistic competences of TED translator applicants. However, with the review process streamlined since 2021, translations only need to go through a one-time review before they are published. Apart from the reviewer who approves the subtitle, no other party is involved in the supervision of translation quality. Measures have been put in place to monitor the quality of translation with such changes—one needs to publish at least ten sets of subtitles, which was previously set at six, to qualify as a reviewer. However, in the eyes of the most experienced members of translator collectivities, the effectiveness of such measures to maintain quality is questionable, which will be examined later.

Unlike most fansub or online collaborative translation initiatives that take measures to enliven the translator group and encourage connections among members for managing translation quality (e.g. see Yu, 2019), no such initiative is taken at an organizational level by TED to encourage exchanges among translators on translation issues. Thus, it is not necessary for a translator to connect with others when translating a TED Talk. This said, once finished, translations of TED Talks still need to pass through one or two layers of evaluation and/or revision before they are published for viewing. Therefore, the translator needs to work with the reviewer to produce work whose quality is up to standard should a translation be returned to the translator for not living up to expectations. This collaborative process of self-repair is indispensable in non-professional translation (O'Hagan, 2016). This type of self-correction is often a cyclical process which involves continued identification of translation errors/problems by participants from a potentially massive open community, and thus results in translations never ceasing to evolve (McDonough Dolmaya, 2015; Yu, 2019). However, the TED translation workflow appears more linear, hierarchical and streamlined, lacking the process of negotiation

that occurs often between translators with different opinions or even between translators and viewers/readers in self-solicited online translation groups.

Thus, opportunities for exchange between translators are mostly limited to the built-in messaging or comment functions of the digital platform for subtitling. This stands in contrast to self-organized online collaborative groups which often promote open discussions of translation issues to boost productivity in the group and tighten connections between members (e.g. Li, 2015). Nonetheless, the affordances of social software have allowed translators to create and maintain, to a certain extent, a space for exchange among themselves as they utilize third-party social networking and communication platforms.

One may ask how much translators rely on the TED network for problem-solving in translation. While the TED translators work collaboratively on a networked platform so that translations undergo a process of self-correction within the translator collectivity before it goes to the public, translators may not rely on the TED network to solve problems other than technical glitches. More specifically, there is no mechanism in place to connect translators with one another during the translation process. Translators who participated in my interview suggest that for any specific translation problem, they would first try to use resources at hand to find a solution before they initiated contact with others from the TED Translator group. Participants in my interview suggested that they would primarily consult digital resources both within and outside TED for guidance on translation, or their personal contacts outside TED. Generally, chat rooms or Facebook groups serve as a last resort for translation problems. Most interviewees said they work independently most of the time. Translator<sub>CN</sub> 4 made the following comments on how useful the translator network can be when it comes to solving actual translation problems:

“I tried to seek some help from the chat group but actually... yeah I asked them: ‘I am a new member and is somebody willing to add me so we can talk about the problems we have [when translating]’. Someone asked me, and we just talk about life issues, not the real translation issues. I guess because people have

different schedules, like when I am doing assignments, maybe they are just to work on their own stuff. So I don't want to waste their time [on] deal[ing] with my issues. [...] I thought there would be many people working on assignments at the same time like I do. [Actually] there are not many videos available and there are not many volunteers available. And in the group chat, some of them are even not volunteers. [...] So I don't think it's a good idea to ask other volunteers for help. I may ask my friends more and ask my mentor.”

The LC/LS who participated in my interview stated that strengthening connections between translators has been one of the major goals for the activities that they co-organized, but close connections between translators are not always the reality. In TED's system, reviewers have the option of sending feedback to translators on how to improve their translations or asking questions about specific translation problems, but exchanges between translators and reviewers do not always occur. Rather, it depends on the work style of particular individuals participating in the translation task whether or not to initiate contact with their collaborators. Based on my own experience as a TED Translator, one person doing the review may be more willing to exchange with the translator on the best translation of certain words or terms, while another may silently make the changes without any communication. Meaningful communication among translators is not a must in TED's system for it to continue functioning. The communicative functionality of the subtitling platform also seems not to meet the needs of the translators. Jiménez-Crespo (2017) points out that the technology implemented can help distinguish crowdsourcing and self-organized online collaborative translation practices in the sense that crowdsourcing relies much more on customized cloud-based platforms, and the collaborative tools used in crowdsourcing are also tied into the management and organization of translators. Thus, the sociality on a crowdsourcing platform such as that of TED is largely affected by the technological features which are built in to meet the needs of the initiator of crowdsourcing.

Although the subtitling platform allows translators to communicate by sending messages and leaving comments on translation drafts, interview participants said that they are generally not

satisfied with the communication functions of the subtitling platform, and thus they engage with other technological platforms for communication purposes. As previously mentioned, a substantial amount of interactions among translators takes place on Facebook: there exists a Facebook group for all TED Translators to reach out and connect with others, and there also exist smaller language-specific Facebook groups for each of the language teams in TED to connect. The Simplified Chinese Translators mostly aggregate in a Wechat Group due to restrictions on visiting Facebook in Mainland China. Thus, it seems that social media platforms are essential to sustaining communications and productivity in the TED Translation Project. In order to find out about how TED Translators make use of social media platform, a quantitative analysis was carried out on the purposes of posts in the TED Facebook Group and the respective language groups' enclosed group for communication. Because of the much smaller number of posts and lower level of activity in the two language-specific groups compared to the generic group, a shorter timeframe was used for the analysis of posting in the generic group. Screenshots of the Facebook groups are stored and annotated in NVIVO for coding. The posts are categorized under the following subjects and the number of posts in each type is calculated against the total number of posts in percentage. All posts in the TED Facebook Group used by all TED Translators that were either posted or received new replies between December 2020 and December 2021 were coded based on their topics and/or purposes for a content analysis. The results of content analysis are displayed in Figure 1.

<b>Topics</b>	<b>number of posts</b>	<b>percentage</b>
<b>Looking for reviewers to speed up review and publication of subtitle translations</b>	239	47%
<b>Seeking technical support</b>	105	20.70%
<b>Questions about workflow</b>	36	7.10%
<b>Announcement of news, activities or events</b>	32	6.30%
<b>Questions about the availability of subtitling tasks</b>	19	3.70%

<b>Request for translations to be created</b>	15	3%
<b>Exchange of information or resources on subtitling</b>	14	2.80%
<b>Questions about volunteer roles</b>	12	2%
<b>Questions about criteria for becoming a TED Translator</b>	10	2.00%
<b>Trying to establish connection with new people or strengthen existing connections</b>	9	1.80%
<b>Discussion or questions on rules of translation or transcription</b>	6	1.20%
<b>Reporting issues with source captions</b>	5	1%
<b>Request for acknowledgement/credit</b>	4	0.80%
<b>Request for original captions to be created</b>	2	0.40%
<b>Total</b>	508	

*Table 1: Online interactions in the TED Translator Facebook Group between December 2020 and December 2021*

As Table 1 shows, nearly half (47%) of the online interactions in the Facebook group were initiated by TED Translators to speed up the reviewing process of the subtitles they created. More specifically, translators who would like to have their subtitles reviewed and approved as soon as possible will post a short message on the social media platform, beginning with a brief greeting to other members and then explaining the reason for posting, with the titles of or links to the talks subtitled (as seen in Figure 2). Translators who did not include links to the subtitles waiting to be reviewed or their titles would be informed by the admin of the group or other senior members to add such information to speed thing up. Posts requesting reviews to be done also seem to constitute most of the interactions in language-specific social media groups as well. Tables 2 and 3 show a content analysis of the posts in language-specific groups of the French and the Chinese translators.

The TED Facebook Group are used by TED Translators for purposes other than speeding up the approval and publication of subtitles, but posts with other topics are much less frequent. As the table in Figure 1 shows, about 20% of the posts are made by members seeking technical assistance with the subtitling platform. About 7% are questions about the workflow, 6% are

communication of news, 3.7% about how to find available tasks, and the rest concerning other aspects of the TED Translation Project. Interviews with TED Translators reveal that posting in the social media group with links to translation avoids unreviewed translations being lost in the dark and never making it to the general audience. It seems that social media platforms as a technological agent not only sustain exchanges and interactions between translators but also exert a direct influence on the network by making the completion of translation possible.

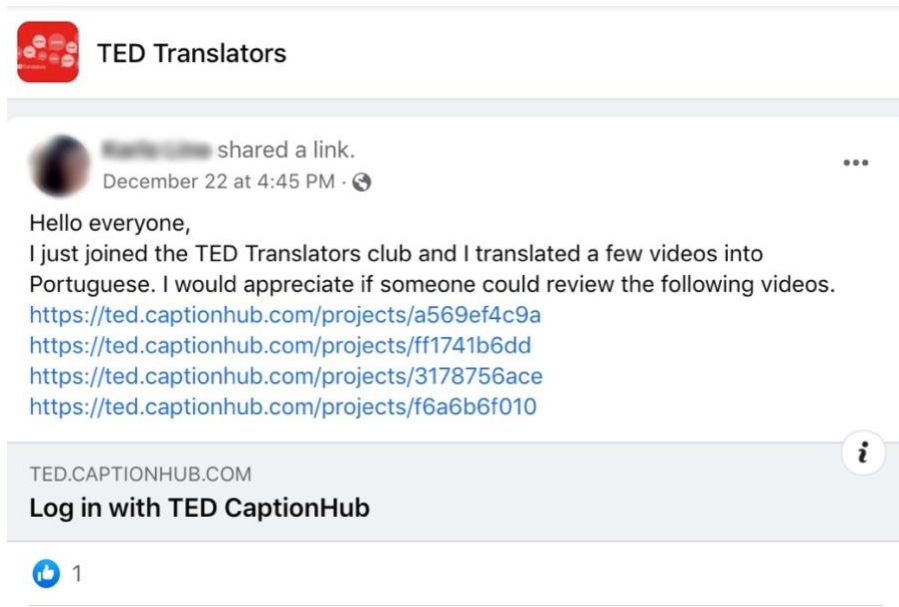
Interviews, personal communications with TED Translators and archived interactions between translators in their online groups show that TED Translators have taken initiatives to enroll new technical actors to fulfill their own objectives of translation. More importantly, the enrolment of new technical actors also fulfills the objective of creating and strengthening ties between TED Translators which they see as a missing feature of subtitling platforms that TED has partnered with.

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Number of Posts</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Looking for reviewers to speed up review and publication of subtitle translations</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>61%</b>
<b>Requesting translations/transcriptions to be done</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Announcement of news, activities or events</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Trying to establish connection with new people or strengthen existing connections</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Seeking technical support</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Exchange of information or resources on translating/subtitling</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>199</b>	

*Table 2: Online interactions in the Facebook Group for French TED Translators between January 2020 and July 2024*

A content analysis was not carried out for the Wechat Group used by Chinese Translators for the following reason: due to Wechat being an instant messaging application, the messages sent to the Group chat are often fragmented and may be repetitive, which makes an analysis

trying to compare the percentage of messages/posts grouped under different topics/purposes against the total number of posts/interactions to find out what exactly people use the group for less helpful. In Facebook Group that adopts the structure of a forum, each post has a sub-thread for subsequent discussions, which makes categorization more precise. However, in Wechat Groups one person may divide the same idea in several separate messages sent to the group chat sequentially. There are also repeated posts if the previous post did not receive enough attention, such as repeated messages by an admin to remind group members of rules for using the Group chat. Moreover, there are many messages sent to the Group chat consisting only of filler language that does not add new information to an existing topic or introduce a new topic. Such repetitive and fragmented ways of communication are not observed in the French Translator Group and the generic Facebook Group, given the different functionalities of the platform and the different user habits. Thus, a large number of interactions or posts among users may not result in a comparable quantity of meaningful interactions to demonstrate the purpose that users use the group chat for. Nonetheless, the purposes of Chinese Translator for posting in the Wechat group are similar to those in the generic and the French Facebook Groups. The messages usually serve the purpose of : a) posting links to their translations on the subtitling platform for them to be reviewed; b) socializing with other group chat members, such as by presenting themselves (in the case of newcomers) or welcoming new members (by old members), c) sending out greetings, asking for information on senior members who provide support to others (e.g.LC/LS), d) sharing resources on TED which is often done by the LC/LS, discussing translation-related or TED-related issues, e) discussing more general issues about languages and beyond, and e) asking for technical support.



*Figure 17: An example of TED Translator Posting in the Facebook group to speed up reviewing process*

Another technological tool identified by the researcher from interviews and archival data of online interactions amid translators is the excel spreadsheet, which is used to coordinate translation and/or create resources. In the interview, one LC/LS has said that the use of spreadsheet makes it easy for all translators who collaborate on the same translation task to communicate and agree on all the changes to be made to the translation draft during the review phase. It is, however, up to individual translators working on the task to determine if they want to use spreadsheet to collaborate, since some are dissatisfied with the built-in collaboration and communication functions of the subtitling platform and others are not. However, the French Translators frequently use a spreadsheet to collaborate on thematic translation events. As archived conversations in the Facebook Group and interviews with French Translators show, in order for members of the French Translator Group to connect more easily and increase the level of activity and productivity of the group, the LC/LSs and some of the active reviewers have

organized virtual events where translators are encouraged to translate as many talks as possible that fall under one theme within a month. Figure 3 shows an example of such documents<sup>6</sup>.

	A	B	C	D
1	<b>Titre</b>	<b>Lien</b>	<b>Statut</b>	<b>Tâche assignée à</b>
2	Getting free or self-impotence is the key to happiness	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	En cours de traduction	
3	What makes a good life / Lessons from the longest	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	En cours de traduction	
4	How mindfulness meditation redefines pain, happiness	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
5	Leading the way to happiness   Kelly Hannon	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	En cours de traduction	
6	What's the secret of happiness the Danish way   Maane	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
7	What's the secret of happiness the Danish way   Maane	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
8	Why surprises for happiness and health   Bj Røgg	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
9	How your body affects your happiness: Tai Chi at	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
10	The link between happiness and health	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
11	What's the secret of happiness   Emma Seppälä	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	traduction complet, mis en	
12	What happiness looks like around the world   Helen	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
13	Happiness: The paradox and the cure.   Sachin Jha	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
14	The great escape: the importance of spreading	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
15	Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness   James Brown	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	traduction complet, mis en	
16	Lacking the global epidemic of workplace unhappiness	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
17	The value of unhappiness   Tate Linden   TEDxHendon	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
18	Happiness by design   Eben Pury Leanae	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
19	Moments of happiness   Maha Alusi   TEDxBerlin	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
20	The economics of happiness   Meena Norberg-Noorge	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
21	Watering the roses: time balance and happiness   John	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
22	Happiness and the senses   Catherine Young	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
23	The joy of wondering, searching and snoring   Manako	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	En cours de traduction	
24	Turning happiness into misery: your ocean activism	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
25	The joy of less   Kim Coupounas   TEDxBoulder	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
26	You can be fat and nappy   Sone Ragen	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	En cours de traduction	
27	Why we're unhappy - the expectation gap   Nat Vware	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
28	Be happy without being perfect   Ur. Mace Uomar	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	En cours de traduction	
29	What if these benefits make you nappy?   Maanen Douory	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	A traduire	
30	Year-on-year wisdom - is you're unhappy, change	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>	traduction complet, mis en	
	happy brain: how to overcome our neural	<a href="https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks">https://amara.org/en/teams/en/tasks</a>		

Figure 18: Excel Form Created by French TED Translators to Organize collaborative Translation of Thematic TED Talks

	B	C	D	E	F	G
<b>Term</b>	<b>Translation</b>	<b>Part Of Speech</b>	<b>Definition</b>		<b>Comments</b>	<b>Translation2</b>
About	À propos	Preposition	Website section title			
Apr	Avr	Noun	Short for April. Please make it 3 characters or less.			
attendee	participant	Noun	Somebody who has attended a TED or TEDx event. Often used in combination with the name of the event (e.g. "TEDxMetropolis attendees").			
attendees	participants	Noun	Plural of "attendee," defined as: Somebody who has attended a TED or TEDx event. Often used in combination with the name of the event (e.g. "TEDxMetropolis attendees").			
Aug	Août	Noun	Short for August. Please make it 3 characters or less.			
beautiful	beau	Adjective	One of the ways you can rate a TEDTalk. Meaning: Attractive to the senses, charming.			
business	business	Noun	A theme in TEDTalks. This is a tag that the user can click to view similarly themed talks.			
community	communauté	Noun	A group of people that share common characteristics or interests. Often modified, e.g. "TED community."			
confusing	déroulant	Adjective	One of the ways you can rate a TEDTalk. Meaning: Chaotic, unclear, puzzling because of an unclearly presented message or intent.			
courageous	courageux	Adjective	One of the ways you can rate a TEDTalk. Meaning: Requiring or demonstrating courage, brave.			
curated by	organisé par	Adverb	Identifies the name of the person who selected the talks in a playlist (e.g. "Curated by Jill Bolte Taylor").			
curator	organisateur	Noun	Organizer, license-holder. Sometimes a synonym to "TEDx organizer" or "TEDx licensee."			
curators	organisateurs	Noun	Plural of "curator," defined as: A person who has selected the talks in a playlist.			
Dec	Déc	Noun	Short for December. Please make it 3 characters or less.			
design	design	Noun	A theme in TEDTalks. This is a tag that the user can click to view similarly themed talks.			
entertainment	divertissement	Noun	A theme in TEDTalks. This is a tag that the user can click to view similarly themed talks.			
event	événement	Noun	Often a synonym of "conference," e.g. "a TEDx event" a TEDx conference. Occurs often — you may want to think of some synonyms for variety.			
events	événements	Noun	Plural of "event," defined as: Often a synonym of "conference," e.g. "a TEDx event" a TEDx conference. Occurs often — you may want to think of some synonyms for variety.			
fascinating	fascinant	Adjective	One of the ways you can rate a TEDTalk. Meaning: Captivating, attractive, arousing great interest.			
Feb	Fév	Noun	Short for February. Please make it 3 characters or less.			
fellow	membre	Noun	A TED Fellow. The TED Fellows program is designed to bring together young world-changers and trailblazers who have shown unusual accomplishment and exceptional courage.			
fellows	membres	Noun	Plural of "fellow," defined as: A TED Fellow. The TED Fellows program is designed to bring together young world-changers and trailblazers who have shown unusual accomplishment and exceptional courage.			

<sup>6</sup> The names of people who contributed to the file are not included in the figure for confidentiality reasons.

*Figure 19: Excerpts from a Glossary Created by a French TED Translator as a Translation Guide (See Appendix for the Complete Document).*

An Excel spreadsheet is also employed by translators to create shared resources that document the group's accumulated experiences and knowledge about translating TED Talks. An example is given in Figure 4, but the shared resources crowdsourced by TED Translators will be discussed in more detail in the next section that presents TED Translator groups as communities of practice.

To conclude, in this section, I presented investigative and immersive data collected on field sites in order to offer a more detailed presentations of the digitally-mediated environment in which TED Translators carry out their volunteer work and interact with one another, and how they engage with the communication and collaborative technologies that facilitate their interactions. The translators' adoption of digital tools not leveraged by TED shows the centrality of sociality to the work carried out by TED Translators, since they opt for tools that are more collaborative than those which TED partners with. Overall, TED Translators seem to be actively using various social networking platforms to speed up their workflow, as demonstrated by the large percentage of posts in the Translators' groups being requests for review/translation/transcription tasks to be claimed. Thus, it seems that more social connections in the translator network would result in more productivity in the TED Translation Project. Moreover, an analysis of communication patterns in different translator groups also points to how sociality may be mediated by technologies, and lead up to different group dynamics in virtual collectivites.

Having introduced the TED Translators who participated in my interview and presented an analysis of TED Translators' engagement with technological tools both provided by TED and

third-party, I will move on to examine TED Translators as CoPs on the basis of what has been previously covered in this Chapter and more examples taken from my research data.

### ***3.4 TED Translator communities as candidates for CoPs***

The previous sections have shown who the TED Translators are and how they leverage communication and collaborative technological tools to carry out their work. This section presents a comparative analysis of the Chinese and French translator collectivities weighed against the principles of CoP, to determine how well the data collected align with the definition of CoP as set by Wenger. As Wenger (2006) acknowledges, network and community should be seen as complementary concepts since the two are often intertwined in the informational society. TED Translators can be considered as a network facilitating the dissemination of educational materials since they are all connected by collaborative digital platforms to work on translation and transcription. However, to better understand how technological advancement creates new possibilities for social organization on networked platform, we need to examine the negotiation of meaning in TED Translator groups by conceptualizing them as CoPs. Wenger (1998) argues that it is through engagement in practice that people produce and negotiate the meanings of themselves and the world they live in. Thus, analyzing TED Translators as CoPs, i.e., examining how they engage in the negotiation of meanings for their activities, will help answer my overarching research question on the relationship between communication technologies and evolving forms of social organization. However, the question remains as to what extent the French and Chinese translator groups may be considered CoPs. While the previous sections describe who the TED Translators are and the technological and organization structures under which they work, this section will examine how such features align with the three dimensions of

practice that underly the negotiation of meaning in CoP theory: mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. It is through defining and understanding what the membership of TED CoPs means that the relation between corporate/institutional actors and individual translation actors on networked, crowdsourcing, cooperative platforms can be understood, and the question of the impact of these platforms on our society can be answered. Moreover, to answer my second research question on what difference may exist between the French and the Chinese translator groups, I will also examine whether the principles of CoP apply to these two groups differently.

#### *3.4.1 Mutual engagement*

The processes of communication and collaboration among TED Translators made possible by various communication and collaborative technologies, as explained in the previous section, helps demonstrate the dimension of practice called mutual engagement. Mutual engagement refers to sustained efforts made by members of a collectivity of practice to maintain a flow of interaction through which the practice is constructed. Practice does not exist in abstract terms (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). It is through this flow of interaction that the CoPs' practices gain contexts and meanings, which participants define and negotiate collectively.

To find out whether mutual engagement exists in TED Translator CoPs, I will further break down mutual engagement to present more specific examples taken from the immersive/archival and interactive/elicited data on TED Translator CoPs. According to Wenger (1998), there are three major components of mutual engagement: continuous efforts to maintain the flow of interactions among members, mutual relationships among members that are being sustained through such interactions, and a heterogenous group of members coming from diverse

backgrounds and being integrated into the CoP by finding their positions and roles in it. Thus, a stable flow of interactions, sustained mutual relationships and the heterogeneity of members sharing a same goal or domain makes stable, meaningful, and coherent membership possible. In the current case study, the group dynamics of TED Translators as presented in the previous section may help demonstrate these three components of CoP and what forms of mutual engagement may exist in TED Translator collectivities. The previous section presents the technologies that facilitate sociality on the platforms where TED Translators congregate. However, technologies always require human incentives for communication and cooperation to fully play their role in digital societies. Thus, I will explain why translators leverage digital tools and platforms for mutual interaction and engagement.

Firstly, in both the French and the Chinese translator communities, TED Translators make continuous efforts to create opportunities to interact and maintain relationships with others, especially in their own language group, which enables their engagement. The most active members playing coordination roles within translator communities see it as initiatives to encourage/engage translators and facilitate the translator communities. For instance, the initiatives taken by French LC/LS include posting statistics about top contributors in translation and/or transcription periodically in their own Facebook Group. The TED Official also adopts this strategy by sending out emails to all subscribers of their communications with information on the top contributors of all TED Translator groups, but it came later than the initiative taken by LC/LS of individual translator communities. According to Wenger, enabling the engagement of community members, or “[w]hatever it takes to make mutual engagement possible” is essential to the practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 74). Thus, the creation of opportunities for members to communicate and interact so that a CoP can be coherent enough to function is key to mutual

engagement. The archival and interview/elicited data collected show that communication among translators is recognized as a key driver of productivity in the TED Translation initiative. In the content analyses in section 3.3, messages and posts sent by translators to push their translations through the review system demonstrate that, for translation tasks to be accomplished, i.e., published, translators need to take the initiative in seeking connections with others in their group. More specifically, translated subtitles are not automatically assigned to reviewers after completion, but reviewers can choose to claim a certain task. Due to translators outnumbering reviewers, a problem identified by many of my interview participants from both language teams, and also in discussions in TED Translators' online groups, is that many draft translations often remain in limbo due to a shortage of reviewers. As a result, translators often opt to post messages and links to their translations in their Facebook/Wechat group to create opportunities for interaction with reviewers and facilitate the publication of their translations. As the content analysis in Table 1 in Section 3.3.1 shows, almost 50 percent of communications/posts initiated by TED Translators in the generic TED Translator Facebook Group serve the purpose of finding a reviewer for their unpublished translations. How my participants make sense of this shortage of reviewers will be discussed in the next chapter. In the current discussion on mutual engagement, it can be argued that the productivity of TED Translator communities depends largely on the level of sociality and interactivity among translators as shown by the need to request that reviews be done. There is no requirement regarding the minimum or maximum number of subtitles that a reviewer needs to accomplish within a certain period of time, and thus the maintenance of mutual engagement, i.e., mutual relationships and continuing opportunities for interaction among TED Translators, is crucial to facilitating the translation workflow.

The opportunities for interaction that TED Translators have created as they pursue the goal of completing translations may or may not become the grounds for more long-term, sustained mutual relationships. Most of the interactions that occur on social networking platforms used by TED Translators are between strangers rather than people who have worked previously together or known each other, as people mostly address a crowd or the whole translator community when they post questions or requests for review of their translations in the translators' online groups. Further, given the fluidity of participation in online activities, it takes additional efforts to transform such interaction into sustained mutual relationships among the translators, which the majority of them cannot commit to. For example, Translator<sub>CN</sub> 4 said that she intended to make new connections with other translators in the Simplified Chinese Wechat group by initiating contact, but because of time conflicts in their schedules, she found it hard to sustain contact with her new connections. In some cases, certain TED Translators develop sustained, stable interpersonal relationships through their practice of translation. For example, Reviewer<sub>CN</sub>2 and Translators<sub>CN</sub> 1 and 5 reported that they have developed mutual relationships through mentorship and set up their own chat group for day-to-day greetings and interaction, which according to Translator<sub>CN</sub>1 is "helpful for translators with less experience like us to communicate and share information in private". Also, both the interviews and archival data available online show that all of my French participants work as a group and collaborate with one another in translation and other activities in the translator group. LS<sub>FR</sub> 1 and 2 have collaborated on a long-term basis and they also maintain constant contact with Reviewers<sub>FR</sub> 1, 2, 3 and 4 as they co-produce translations. LS<sub>FR</sub>1 noted that they would opt to work with translators with whom they are familiar and who are known to them for producing good translations. The more they work together and recognize each other for their competence in translation, the more sustained the

mutual relationships become. Compared to the Chinese translators, the French translators seem to better recognize the importance of maintaining connections and mutual relationships among individual translators. However, the development of more meaningful, sustained relationships through practice seems to be limited to a small group of people who recognize each other's competency and does not extend to the whole French language team.

Certain measures have been taken to help create and sustain long-term, meaningful mutual relationships among TED Translators. More specifically, certain TED language coordinators have voluntarily participated in the organization of group activities for TED Translators called "transcribe-a-thon" and "review-a-thon". On the crowdsourced resource hub for TED Translators "TED wiki", a guidance framework is published with general guidelines on how to organize transcribe-a-thons and review-a-thons, why it is important to organize such activities, etc. The goal of such events is presented as helping promote TED Talks that are organized by local communities and individuals and having them ready for translations (locally organized TED Talk events do not come with TED's official transcripts and therefore need to be transcribed before they can be translated) ("How to organize a transcribeathon", n.d.). The French LC/LS who participated in my interview shared their experience with co-organizing transcribe-a-thons where a day would be blocked for French-speaking translators to transcribe locally produced TED Talks (or TEDx Talks) in French. Moreover, the official TED Team has also been active in launching events called review-a-thons where reviewers are encouraged to review as many unvetted, unpublished TED Talks as possible within a set period. While the transcribe-a-thons are organized internally and all communication and coordination stay within the different language groups, the review-a-thons are usually publicized to all TED Translators. Reviewers and language coordinators/supervisors first confirm their participation with TED, and then TED

sends out bulk emails to its newsletter subscribers and translators with information on how and when to participate in the review-a-thons. Thus, while both activities serve the goal of reinforcing the engagement of translators in communal activities, the review-a-thons receive more corporate support from TED since this activity furthers its goal of boosting the number of translations published. However, both types of activities are carried out as a result of the motivation and voluntary participation of TED Translators. Thus, it is still the willingness, motivation and engagement of participants in the crowdsourced translation that trigger opportunities for mutual engagement.

Apart from productivity, quality assurance is another incentive for translators to reinforce mutual engagement and relationships. For the TED Translators who participated in my interview, the quality of their translations have generally benefited from interactions and establishment of mutual relationships with translators who have spent more time in TED. My Chinese interviewees, on the other hand, talked mostly from the point of view of everyday translators since none of the senior Chinese translators with supervisory/coordinative roles participated in my Interviews. However, the everyday translators said that establishing mutual relationships with more experienced translators in their community either through initiating contact or through the mentorship program that TED had once implemented for translators helped hone their translation skills. For the French translator group, the LC/LS and senior translators with the permission to review translations shared their observation that more connections among translators leads to better translation quality and more efficient workflow. This is also the reason why they engage in community maintenance work for their language group. For example, I asked LC/LS<sub>FR2</sub> who participated in the organization of communal activities for translators why it was important to keep their community active, and they responded:

Why is it important to keep a community active? I think it helps everyone improve. There are people who just translated and submitted the translations which are not good. It's better when we know each other and it is in such a way we improve. [...] We might wanna enter a community but afterwards, it is important to have a sense of belonging and contribute there, even though this remains as something where people come and take what they want. There is no obligation, no payment, nothing at all. Thus, I think this is important to improve the overall quality.

The participant mentioned that because there is no obligation associated with the voluntary positions in the TED Translation Project, mutual relationships and engagement among TED Translators are important to making sure that the community moves towards the same goal since people may join such a volunteer project with diverse incentives and motivations. According to Wenger, mutual engagement is a process of “engaged diversity” (Wenger, 1998, p. 72) and it is through this process whereby people coming from diverse backgrounds and with potentially diverse interests or objectives engage in shared activities and the negotiation of meaning occurs, and practice is constructed. The interviews with TED Translators show that they have diverging interests and different goals for joining TED. For examples, they have listed altruism/interest in giving back to the society, learning new things, improving their translation skills or gaining visibility through the TED Project as their motives. They also come from all walks of life and have different experiences with translation as shown in Section 3.2. When faced with a large group entering the community with diverging goals and/or interests, those who take on leadership roles resort to creating opportunities for continuous interaction/building mutual relationships to reinforce engagement.

Moreover, social connectivity, while recognized by TED Translators as essential to sustaining a sense of community and to improving quality/productivity of their work, is not built into the subtitling platform that they work with. The platforms Amara and Captionhub have built-in functionalities for communication and collaboration that are rather limited compared to

most social networking and corporate tools for communication nowadays. For example, when a TED Translator reaches out to another translator through the subtitling platform, they will be notified through email to check their message inbox. This does not meet the communication needs of TED Translators, which explains their initiative to leverage external tools and social networking platforms. Put differently, sociality and interactivity are not well integrated into the subtitling platform for TED, as they do not seem to be priorities for the TED Translation Project.

While mutual engagement can be observed in both the Chinese and the French translator communities, it is the result of the initiative of translators rather than TED. More specifically, contribution to the TED Translation Project is separated from contribution to communication maintenance work for the language communities themselves: it is possible for contributors to review and/or approve many subtitles without posting any message in the communal space of exchange for translators. Thus, contributing to TED and contributing to the translator communities seem to be two separate strands of work. While contribution to the TED Translation Project through producing translations and transcripts of TED Talks is rewarded and recognized in various symbolic, non-monetary form on the TED Platform, the community maintenance work in everyday interactions does not seem to have received an equivalent amount of attention and support from TED.

Moreover, since roles in TED are assigned by the TED platform based on a strict set of definitions delineating each role and built into the functionality of the platform (e.g., on captionhub, a linguist/translator cannot claim a review task), there is little flexibility in taking on these roles compared to, for example, fansub communities where members can assume certain roles based on the recognition of their peers (e.g. Xie, 2021, p.156). Thus, there is a much lower level of negotiability involved in the roles of TED Translators if they are to be considered as

CoPs. This delineation also results in different access to information about the TED Project among TED Translators. For example, communication and/or information intended for translators with supervisory roles and responsibilities are not shared with the general translator community. According to Wenger, mutual engagement is a process whereby participants coming from all walks of life find unique places and roles in their community of practice, and it is through their mutual engagement in practice that they gain and mutually negotiate a new identity (1998, p.75-76). However, while mutual engagement can be observed in both the French and the Chinese translators, the extent to which they can negotiate and mutually recognize their roles/identities associated with this practice is affected by the organizational structure imposed on them. For example, their places in the translation workflow and their access to information relevant to the TED Translation Project are affected by their places in the organizational structure as determined by a third party, i.e., TED, which supervises the translation project but does not participate in the practice of translation and thus is not part of the mutual engagement.

However, insofar as mutual engagement shapes the negotiation of identities for TED Translators, the initiating party TED does play a role. More specifically, TED exercises an influence over the places and roles of translators in their CoP and controls access to information about the TED Project. Moreover, TED plays a role in defining what matters to the translator CoPs as they get to define the importance and mission of the TED Project, as well as the direction in which the TED Translation Project goes. In such a way, TED may affect the negotiation of identities by constituting what it means to belong to the TED Translator Group (see Wenger 1998, p.74-75). Thus, TED affects the extent to which the translators can fully negotiate their places and, eventually, their identities through practice.

In short, mutual engagement can be observed of TED Translators participating in the TED Project as they participate in maintaining a flow of interaction in order to make the translation workflow function. TED Translators are a large, heterogenous group—there are current more than 60000 active users in the TED Translator Team on Captionhub, and the information collected on TED Translators investigated in this current and other existing studies all show that they have diverse backgrounds in terms of their educational and professional experiences. While the subtitling platforms that TED has partnered with have limited functionality in terms of communication among users, TED Translators try to create opportunities for interaction and nurture mutual relationships along the way as they work towards the same goals. Individual translators with different roles in the community tend to show initiative in keeping a flow of interaction and creating/strengthening connections among themselves either to get their translations published or to boost the overall quality of the translations produced for their language pair. For everyday translators, creating continuing opportunities for interaction with other members helps in getting their translations published, their questions answered, and grants them access to resources etc. For translators with coordinative responsibilities, such opportunities for interaction reinforce relationships among translators help advance their goal of maintaining quality translation for TED Talks. However, mutual engagement depends largely on the initiative of TED Translators, and the creation of opportunities for interactions and mutual relationships have never been a major component of TED’s strategy for developing its translation project.

### *3.4.2 Joint Enterprise*

Joint enterprise refers to the collective goal that members of a community of practice work towards and co-define in the process. A joint enterprise is negotiated by community members through their mutual engagement and includes their efforts and energy they expend to respond to the situation in which their practice takes place. Thus, the joint enterprise is not static but a negotiated process (Wenger, 1998, p. 81). This process also produces a regime of mutual accountability among community members as they negotiate, make sense of and respond to their situation, co-defining what matters to their community and what does not. Since joint enterprise always involves a process whereby those involved co-interpret what matters to them as individuals and as a collective, joint enterprise can never be fully defined by an external party such as an institutional actor, and thus Wenger has adopted the term indigenous enterprise to describe how joint enterprise is internally produced by community members despite the presence of possible contextual constraints. Indigenous enterprise refers to the process whereby members of CoPs establishes its goal outside of the control of external imperatives imposed on them (Forde et al., 2022, p.168). While CoPs always dwell in and are shaped by circumstances outside of the control of the members, their joint enterprise is produced “within the constraints and resources of their situations” (Wenger, 1998, p. 79) and thus inherently “indigenous” (Wenger, 1998, p.78). The external imperatives, conditions, demands and resources are always negotiated by the members of the CoP before they can shape their practice (See Wenger, 1998, p.80). By developing the concept of indigenous enterprise, CoP theory demonstrates how practice is owned and negotiated by the CoP involved.

Since the TED Translation Project is a crowdsourcing initiative, TED Translators work under various imperatives, constraints, demands and resources coming from the outside. The presence of external imperatives and constraints on TED Translators’ work is the focus of my

third set of research questions, and in Sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4.1 have touched on the technological and organizational constraints that TED Translators need to navigate as they participate in the Translation Project, such as the different roles assigned in the translation workflow. Section 3.4.2 will further explore to what extent a joint enterprise is developed and negotiated by TED Translators based on the investigative/archival and interactive/elicited data collected. Because TED acts as the body from which most imperatives facing TED Translators are imposed and many resources on TED Translation Project are available, the translators' joint enterprise will be discussed in close relation to the influence of TED. Moreover, since joint enterprise involves processes among members of CoP whereby they collectively negotiate and establish their objective, a study of the joint enterprise requires a close examination of interactions among CoP members as they pursue their goals, navigate their resources and respond to their situations. However, because of the large, mainly anonymous crowd participating in TED, my understanding—as a researcher—of the production of joint enterprise among TED Translators is based on archival data available on the virtual fieldsites and interactive data collected from the small group of TED Translators who willingly participated in my study. Moreover, since most interactions among TED Translators take place in private as they involve one-on-one interaction between a translator and their reviewer. It is the analysis of the collective process of negotiation may be limited since it is not possible to capture private interactions and meaning negotiation processes among all TED Translators. However, it is still useful to leverage what can be found in public spaces regarding the development of a joint enterprise since all members of a TED Translator group can access such information while interactions and exchanges in private are restricted to those who are involved. It is also important to collect data from those who have more seniority in the TED Translator group as they have

more connections and potentially have more information to share regarding the dynamics of their language communities. Thus, when recruiting participants, I strategically tried to invite those with reviewing/supervisory duties within the French and the Chinese translator groups to compensate for the inability to access the process whereby all TED Translators collectively produce their joint enterprise. As mentioned in Section 2.4, such efforts yielded more positive results with the French language group than the Chinese group. The joint enterprise of a given CoP needs to be analyzed and discussed in regard to the broader situation and external influence since the joint enterprise incorporates the response of community members their situations (see Wenger, 1998, p.77-78). In Section 3.4.1 I argued that TED is not involved in the mutual engagement of the translator communities since they are not involved in the day-to-day interactions among translators, nor do they play a major role in the community maintenance/facilitation. This said, TED remains as an important external influence/situation since the information TED circulates and the actions that TED undertakes are important to shaping what the translators deem as their collective mission or goals. Because of the close connection between TED Translators and the initiating party TED in pursuing and defining the goal/mission that they work towards, the potential development of a joint enterprise for the TED Translators will be discussed regarding TED's influence in Chapter Four.

Discussions in Section 3.2.1 on the altruistic motives of TED Translators and in Section 3.4.1 on senior Translators' efforts to engage others to work towards the collective goal of producing translations sheds light on a mutual sense of accountability among TED Translators. Mutual accountability involves understanding what matters to the community and/or what should be the focus of their practice, being willing to share information and resources, being accountable for others by not making their lives difficult etc. (Wenger, 1998, p. 81). The

translators' answers to my interview questions demonstrate that there is a general agreement on what matters to the TED Translator collective, i.e., their purpose being to support TED in their project of spreading ideas across languages. Apart from a consensus on what should be the focus of their practice, i.e., translating TED Talks, the sense of mutual accountability is also developed through being accountable to their peers by making their work easier, either by being polite and easygoing in their interactions or by producing quality translation that requires less revisions. More specifically, all interactions among translators in the different group chat groups used by TED Translators, i.e., the generic Facebook Group and chatgroups for French and Chinese translators, all posts begin with a greeting to their peer translators. Moreover, in the Wechat Group for Chinese translators, being nice to peers in the group chat is written as a general rule for the group. This was put in place because of previous disputes that happened in the Group Chat that involved unfriendly use of language and caused tensions between members. Thus, the resulting joint enterprise towards showing mutual respect through the use of language can be seen as the response of members of a CoP to situations that affect their practice.

Being accountable to their peers also entails producing quality translation that requires less revisions. For example, Reviewer<sub>FR</sub> 1 emphasized in the interview that producing poor translations that contain errors and/or do not respect TED's rules for formatting increase the workload of reviewers and/or language coordinators/supervisors and is thus bad for the reputation of a translator. Reviewer<sub>FR</sub>1, Reviewer<sub>FR</sub>2 and LC/LS<sub>FR</sub>1 commented that to make their work easier, they tend to collaborate only with the translators whom they know and who produce quality work that they recognize, since "revising a bad translation is more difficult and frustrating than translating from scratch", according to Reviewer<sub>FR</sub>1. The notion of translator's reputation reveals the development of a regime of competence (Wenger, 1998) for this specific

group of French translators as they negotiate their enterprise and will be discussed later in Chapter Four.

The development of a sense of mutual accountability by TED Translators can also be seen in their response to their situation and/or external mandates. More specifically, TED has also exercised its influence in shaping TED Translators' sense of accountability. According to Wenger (2011), CoPs are often leveraged by corporates/organizations and developed in such a way that their joint enterprise aligns with the agenda of the corporate/organization involved. Several examples from the TED Translation Project can be used to demonstrate the presence of an external agenda based on the translators' enterprise. Firstly, TED has produced a set of general guidelines for participation in the translation project, in such a way to nurture a sense of mutual accountability among translators in their translation practices. For example, TED suggests that participation in the translation project should be collaborative and cooperative: "Be courteous and direct your critiques at the work [...]; [c]hoose words and phrases that are more universally understood [...]; [...] don't make changes just for the sake of making changes; [b]e cooperative, and find a way to resolve disputes." ("Guidelines: collaboration", n.d.). Thus, not only does a spirit of collaboration and peer support emerge from the practice of the TED Translators, but it is also part of TED's agenda to manage the translators. In a similar way, TED sets the agenda to determine the purpose of the TED Translation Project as transcending language barriers in the production and diffusion of general knowledge. As mentioned in Section 1.1 in Chapter One, TED has produced a strong rhetoric about what constitutes the mission and purpose of the TED Translation Project—that of spreading important ideas and thoughts across the world (e.g. "Get Started", n.d.). This agenda plays well into how the TED Translators make sense of their collective objective.

However, Wenger also emphasizes that the joint enterprise is defined by the efforts of CoP members to negotiate, respond and adapt to external conditions. For example, the joint efforts of certain French TED Translators to reinforce the engagement of their peers as explained in Section 3.4.1 can be seen as a response to TED's lack of recognition of the importance of communication and community maintenance work. As aforementioned in Section 3.4.1, it is the most engaged members of a TED Translator group that make an effort to strengthen connections between translators in the group, while TED is largely absent in the actual community maintenance and management work. While TED adopts an approach to reinforce productivity of the translation crowdsourcing initiative in terms of the volume of translations produced, it leaves the quality assurance and community building work to the language coordinators/supervisors of the language group. No language test was given at the time when people wish to join TED as translators and they are expected to self-report on their language skills. According to Reviewer<sub>FR</sub> 3, translators joining their language community may have lower levels of French since many of them are second language learners. However, this is not a problem for the Chinese community since the vast majority of TED Translators are mother-tongue speakers. As a result, none of the Chinese reviewers who participated in my interview mentioned the problem of reviewing the translations of a second language speaker/learner; however, they did report encountering more advanced translation problems with translating into Chinese such as understanding the cultural context of an expression and finding equivalents in their domestic context. In both cases, the reviewers and/or LC/LS act as the gatekeepers of translation quality as they review and approve subtitle translations. Maintaining and improving translation quality thus becomes a major goal for the LC/LS and reviewers quoted in Section 3.4.1 for moderating the translator community. As investigative/archival and interactive/elicited data show, such initiatives have become the

joint enterprise of a self-selected group of French TED Translators interested in the work of community building. However, since such initiatives have taken place only for a short period of time only involve the TED Translators who were active at that time, it is unclear how relevant such initiatives are to the French TED Translator group as a whole.

Another indigenous enterprise of TED Translator groups examined in this study is related to translators' concerns with the information flows from English into non-English languages on the TED Platform. This shows another divergence from TED's agenda of having as many TED Talks translated from English into other languages as possible to increase their influence on the global stage. More specifically, interview data show that translators from both the French and the Chinese translator communities participating in my interviews show interest in facilitating the diffusion of information originally produced in their native languages by both translating and transcribing. Based on the past activities as demonstrated by the archival data and chat threads in the TED Facebook Group, the French translators demonstrated a stronger initiative in organizing actual activities to produce more transcriptions of TED Talks originally produced in French. Such activities aim at the diffusion of TEDx Talks on the TED platform. More specifically, TEDx Talk is a subcategory of TED Talks that are produced not during TED conferences but during franchised events with TED's local partners across the world. While TED Talks are only produced in English, TEDx Talks are produced in various languages, including both French and Chinese. Some of the self-organized activities of the French translator community includes choosing a theme, such as "happiness", and transcribing all TEDx Talks that fall under this theme, according to LC/LS<sub>FR</sub>2. In the interview, LC/LS<sub>FR</sub>1 see TEDx Talks as bottom-up initiatives that are not taken by TED but by other actors on the TED Platform: "TEDx Talks are good, but they are not what TED is interested in. Nonetheless, some TEDx organizers have tried

to create stronger connections among them and take action.” They then used their participation in the organization of a TEDx event in their local city as an example of their engagement and accountability with other like-minded people participating in TED towards putting TED Talks into meaningful actions: “in this sense, I feel that I am part of a community where people do not want TED Talks to be empty words.” This LC/LS also approaches the objective of TED Translation Project critically and brings up their own agenda for their participation: “Essentially, I think that TED aims to promote its talks and get clicks. The translators contribute to this by translating TED Talks into all other languages. In this sense, I feel like a drudge for TED. But I do this because it brings me something.” They also elaborate on the advantages of participating in the TED Project as making new friends/connections, engaging with their local community and getting pleasure from the intellectual work of translation. Thus, TED Translators may see the TED Platform as an opportunity to implement their own agenda, which may be individual or collective, and this is how they develop and pursue an indigenous enterprise.

The discussion in Section 3.4.1 on mutual engagement has already shown certain divergences in the goals pursued by the TED Translators and the initiating party TED in the TED Translation Project—although both TED Translators and TED are invested in getting translations of subtitles done, i.e., vetted and published in good shape, TED Translators also work towards the enhancement of sociality and interaction in their collective while TED shows far less investment in this respect and focuses more on the productivity of translators and the translation project. In response to this divergence, certain TED Translators have developed their own indigenous enterprises and a sense of mutual accountability in finding and co-defining this enterprise. Moreover, based on the actual collective activities that can be traced through the

archival and interview data, the presence of an indigenous enterprise is more evident in the French translator community than in the Chinese translator community.

Mutual accountability appears to be stronger among the more engaged members of the TED Translators community, i.e., those who are most active and/or those who assume additional responsibilities of supervising translation practices, like the LC/LS quoted above. This can be observed in archived interactions among TED Translators regarding the creation of shared resources for their community members. For example, in the Facebook Group for French-speaking TED Translators, a thread shows how some of the most engaged members have proposed, discussed and implemented the creation of resources which they think would benefit the whole community. The interaction/thread begins with a member initiating a conversation on the possibility of creating a collaborative document to standardize expressions in TED Talk translations:

Hi everyone, I wonder if it would be useful to create a vocabulary for terms and expressions that occurred frequently? First, for the disclaimers and expressions that appear in multiple TED Talks, especially expressions such as TED-Ed, the Audacious Project, Work Life, etc. I think using Google Doc for this purpose would be a good idea, but it also has drawbacks, so do you have other ideas? It would be for creating a generic vocabulary for technical terms that may not be easy to find out and the translations may thus be different?

This person's goal for creating such a document is to propose building a glossary for translating words from the disclaimers of TED Talks and to seek validation from other group members about the usefulness of this small project, as well as on what technological platform the document should be made available. More specifically, a disclaimer in TED Talk provides additional information about the talk or the speaker that the viewer may need to know and contains terms specific to the TED Project which may be difficult to translate. The post attracted attention and replies from some of the most active participants in the French Translator Group. To ensure anonymity, the username of each person who replied to this post is replaced by their

position within The TED Translation Project, such as reviewer or language coordinator, which reflects that they have been active and experienced members within the translator community but protects their confidentiality. However, it should be noted that to ensure the anonymity of those quoted, the person labelled Reviewer 1 in this online interaction is not the same as the interview participant labelled as Reviewer<sub>FR1</sub> in this study, and the same rule applies to others. The replies are as follows:

Reviewer 1 : Great idea ! What do you think are the drawbacks of using Google Docs ?

LC/LC 1 : Issues with security ?

Reviewer 1 : Which means ?

LC/LS 1 : I was wondering if granting strangers access could be an issue. I am no expert on this...

Initiator to LC 1 : Exactly. There are a few possibilities :

- Make the file public, and whoever has the link can view and edit it. There could be the issue of unwanted changes being made to the file.

- Share the file only with specific people. This way, we can avoid the problem of unwanted changes, but this could become a barrier to access which I would like to avoid. Some people might also be worried about potential issues of confidentiality/information sharing.

The first solution seems most appropriate, but not perfect.

Reviewer 2 : I see. I will take a look, but I know that there are two types of links to share

Google Docs : one that does not allow modifications, read only, and the other that allows modifications. I will look up more information.

Initiator to Reviewer 2 : Yes, but I think it would be ideal to have a collaborative document (not read only). Google Doc has a feature of protection as we have the option of viewing the changes made and reverse to an earlier version if necessary. Thus, I think it is very « safe ».

LC 3 :

I am not sure if there are that many recurring terms. But there is already a page called « Vocabulary » in The TED Translation Project which could be updated if necessary.

Moreover, TED Translation Project already has a glossary regarding the most frequently used terms in TED.

[link to the Google Doc file]

Initiator to LC 2 :

That's right, but that is not about disclaimers that I mentioned and this is what this thread is for. For the TED Translation Project, as Reviewer 2 has said, it's a good idea. But I do not know who has/may have access to it as an editor.

LC 2 :

If I am correct, only the language coordinators have the authorization to edit the French pages of TED Translation Project. Thus, you can send your proposals to LCs for them to be updated, or post them here on the Facebook page so that others can comment.

The other possibility is to add a file on this Facebook Page which is open to all members. Anyways, you could prepare a list and put the translations in a file accessible for all for discussion.

Reviewer 2 : Great idea ! We can put here a vocabulary specific to TED that reoccurs frequently. Would the TED Wiki be the right place for it ? [link to the French Wiki portal] ? I don't see how it is collaborative ...

Initiator's reply to Reviewer 2 : It is indeed a good idea. There are certainly other things to update as well. @LC 2 Do you have any experience with the Wiki ? It seems that we can request an account.

The 3 different threads of replies to this initiative of creating a glossary reflect how the production of reified tools or links to resources for translating TED Talks reflects a mutual sense of accountability and is the product of negotiation among members of the community. First, everyone participating in this thread is engaged in the discussion because of their sense of accountability to the community which comes with their roles as defined in the organizational structure of the translator community. The idea of creating additional collaborative, accessible resources apart from what was available from TED was welcomed by other members since the intention was to improve the overall quality of French TED Talk translations by standardizing expressions in translations of TED disclaimers. Then, it was followed by a discussion about the confidentiality/security of information, as well as who should/can have access to the file and what those with access should do. In other words, working towards the collective goal of supporting the community with more resources, the French translators also need to decide who belongs to a group that can have access to the resources and/or editing permissions. Features of the technological platform such as Google Doc can either make the document accessible and modifiable to all members or restrict access to only a small group of users. Concerns were raised and discussed by members about restricting access to a small number of people only to prevent

undesirable modifications of the document by unqualified individuals, or making the document public and accessible to anyone, which avoids creating barriers to accessing information. This shows a concern with boundaries—in other words, who have rights to view and/or modify the links to resources that embody community members’ accumulated experience, competence and learning history. Later, another member who is a LC/LS questioned the necessity of constructing a specific glossary for translating disclaimers since a page on vocabulary already existed in the TED Wiki Page for French translators and this person proposed updating existing resources for the French Translators in the TED Translator Wiki. However, due to organizational/technological constraints introduced by TED on Translators from different “tiers”, the initiator did not have authorization to modify the TED Translator Wiki pages, and thus posting the document in the Facebook Group seems a better solution to encourage participation by other community members in editing, updating and improving the glossary. In the end, the initiator decided to make the glossary publicly accessible and thus a collaborative project.

Such online interactions focusing on the creation of shared translation tools thus reflect how community members are negotiating such values while the abstract concepts, the lived experiences and the knowledge being produced are reified. The glossary as an artefact reflects a dynamic history of collective learning and engagement. Such interactions show how engaged members of the French translator group consider themselves as accountable for creating resources that can help the whole community improve. Such efforts of the joint enterprise eventually create “shared repertoires”, which will be discussed in Section 3.4.3.

### 3.4.3 Shared Repertoire

Joint enterprise and mutual engagement of a group of people involved in a certain practice create a collective history of the community called shared repertoire, which is another key dimension of practice in CoP as defined by Wenger. More specifically, the sustained efforts of TED Translators to facilitate communication for reasons such as to facilitate the translation of subtitles give rise to a shared repertoire of digital archives as part of the community's collective history. This section explores TED Translators' repertoire which may include "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts" that they have collectively produced, and that have become resources for mutual engagement as points of reference and thus become part of their practice (Wenger, 1998. P.83).

Shared repertoires "reflect the collective history of mutual engagement," remain "ambiguous" and produce meanings open for interpretation by CoP members (Wenger, 1998, p. 82). Shared repertoires have both reificative and participative aspects in the sense that they are about the 'thingness' of practice as artefacts and the open interpretation of the meanings of such artefacts in the sense that they become materials for meaning negotiation by CoP members as they engage mutually in practice and pursue their joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998, pp. 83-84).

The shared repertoire that TED Translators have developed through their practice in translation can be categorized in two types, which I name as follows: translation conservation and management repertoire and the translation guideline and glossary repertoire. The translation conservation and management repertoire refers to the technological platforms and tools that are used to store and manage TED Talk translations, i.e., the cloud-based collaborative platforms where TED Translators store and complete their translations. While the conservation and management repertoire contains a large amount of translation data, each translator cannot view and access anything other than the translations that they themselves produce on the current

subtitling platform Captionhub. Thus, the translation conservation and management repertoire cannot provide much useful information on the negotiability of practice for TED Translations. As a result, I will focus on the second type of shared repertoire produced by TED Translators in their pursuit of the joint enterprise: the translation guideline and glossary repertoire.

#### *3.4.3.1 Translation guideline and glossary repertoire*


As TED Translators engage in the shared activities (i.e., producing subtitles for the TED Translation Project) and digitally sustained interactions over time, they participate in compiling a repertoire of resources, stories, tools, ways of doing things. TED Translators are engaged in the production of resources other than those developed by TED to tackle translation norms, translation quality. Although TED has published online a set of explanations and guidelines for translators to adhere to in their translation, such as limiting each line to 42 characters, no more than two lines per translation, using simple and universally understood language etc., The TED Translators who participated in my interview highlighted translation problems that are more complicated and often cannot be answered by these guidelines. For example, Reviewer<sub>CN1</sub> commented that translating word for word may interfere with the fluidity of the target text and sometimes it may be impossible to find equivalents for translating certain expressions. The French translators have also highlighted the problem of finding translation equivalents, awkward sentence structures, translator's lack of proficiency in the target language etc. Thus, the translators have tried to crowdsource and develop additional resources on translation guidelines based on their experience and engagement in the practice of translating TED Talks. Such resources form the first category of shared repertoire for the TED Translators: the repertoire of

translation guidelines and glossary. Examples include the TED Translator Wiki portals and shared, collaborative files that provide a bilingual glossary for TED Translators.

As mentioned in the previous section, there is a resource hub called TED Translator Wiki portals, which are introduced by TED and further developed/updated by the LC/LS of each language group. The TED Translators participating in my interview said that they often use the Wiki portals as reference for translating TED Talks. The TED Wiki portals for the French and the Chinese translator groups are as shown in figures 17 and 18, followed by English translations.

## Portal:Français

(Redirected from French (France))

<b>TED Translators en français</b> <span style="float: right; font-size: small;">edit</span>	<b>Amara mode d'emploi</b> <span style="float: right; font-size: small;">edit</span>
<p><b>Bienvenue sur le Wiki des traductions et transcriptions des conférences TED en français !</b></p>  <p><small>Drapeau de la Francophonie</small></p> <p>Ce wiki fait partie de l'OTP <sup>?</sup>, le Projet de Traduction Ouvert à tous de TED <sup>?</sup>.</p> <p>Ces pages sont éditées par les coordinateurs de langues français pour les traducteurs et transcrip-teurs francophones. Elles contiennent les lignes directrices de TED concernant le sous-titrage, ainsi que des astuces et des outils...</p> <p>Nous espérons qu'elles vous aideront à répandre les idées des orateurs pour le public francophone et non francophone.</p>	<p style="color: red;">Template:Portal:Français/Amara mode d'emploi</p>
	<b>Table des matières</b> <span style="float: right; font-size: small;">edit</span>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fonctionnement du programme TEDTranslators</li> <li>Comment transcrire</li> <li>Comment découper les phrases</li> <li>Comment condenser les sous-titres</li> <li>Comment représenter les sons</li> <li>Petit guide de rédaction française</li> <li>Boîte à outils</li> <li>Les Coordinateurs de Langues</li> </ul>
<b>Citations</b> <span style="float: right; font-size: small;">edit</span>	

Portal: French	
French TED Translators	Amara User Guide
Welcome to the Wiki on the translation and transcription of TED Talks in French!	Template:Portal:French/Amara User Guide
This Wiki is part of OTP, TED's Translation Project open to all! These pages are edited by the French Language coordinators for French-speaking translators and transcribers. They include	Table of Contents
	How the TED Translator Program works
	How to transcribe
	How to break up sentences
	How to condense subtitles
	How to represent the sounds

<p>TED instructions on subtitling, as well as tips and tools...</p> <p>We hope that they help you spread the ideas of speakers for both the French-speaking and the non-French-speaking public.</p>	<p>Small guide on Writing in French Toolbox The Language Coordinators</p>
---	---

Figure 20: Welcome page of TED Translator Wiki in French with Translation

## Chinese (Simplified)

欢迎加入中文TED翻译维基网

<p><b>Contents</b> <a href="#">[hide]</a></p>
<p>1 欢迎加入 TED 译者简体中文团队!</p> <p>2 联系团队? 讨论译作? 想加入简中译者伙伴们?</p> <p>3 常见问答 <b>Q &amp; A</b></p> <p>4 <b>TED 简体中文译员</b></p> <p>5 如何在 <a href="#">CaptionHub</a> 平台上进行翻译</p> <p>6 小贴士</p>

欢迎加入 TED 译者简体中文团队!

TED译者简体中文字幕格式要求及常见问题参见表

字幕每条显示时间	(一般情况) 1~7秒无需做调整 (特殊情况) 以匹配讲者语速为准
一秒内显示字数上限	10字/秒
每字幕条行数上限	不超过2行
标点符号	请为全文添加标点符号; 因为完整翻译会在 TED 官网以 Transcript 形式呈现
换行位置	每行不超过16字。大于等于16字, 请按 shift + enter 换行; 小于16字的无需换行, 译者也可视具体情况换行。 注: 请按中文语法习惯断句, 尽量保持上下行字数一致。不把偏正短语从“的”字分开

Chinese (Simplified)
Welcome to the Wiki on the Translation of TED Talks in Chinese.
<p>Contents</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Welcome to the team of Simplified Chinese Translators!</li> <li>2. Wanna reach out to the team and discuss translation? Wanna join your fellow Simplified Chinese translators?</li> <li>3. Frequently Asked Questions</li> <li>4. Simplified Chinese TED Translators</li> <li>5. How to translate on the Captionhub Platform</li> <li>6. Tips</li> </ol>
Welcome to the Simplified Chinese TED Translator Team!

Table of Reference for the Required Format of Simplified Chinese Subtitles and Frequently Asked Questions	
Display time for each line of subtitle	(Generally) 1 to 7 seconds, no need to adjust (In exceptional circumstances)
Maximum number of characters shown per second	10 characters / second
Maximum number of lines for subtitles	No more than 2 lines
Punctuation	Please use punctuation throughout the text, because the complete text will be presented as a transcript on the TED website
Where to insert a line break	No more than 16 characters per line. If you reach 16 characters, please press shift + enter to insert a line break; no need to insert a line break if less than 16 characters, but it is also up to the translator whether or not to break a line. Note: please split lines in accordance with Chinese grammar and try to use the same number of characters for each line. Do not break attributive/possessive phrases at “of/ ’s”.

*Figure 21: Welcome Page of TED Translator Wiki in Simplified Chinese with Translation*

The TED Translator Wiki provide information about the TED Translation and translation guidelines that are generic or specific to each translator community of TED translators, especially the novices. Unlike other collaborative files that TED Translators develop and share with their language community, TED Translator Wiki portals can only be edited by the LS/LC, thus they are not open to all translators from TED to co-edit, which has been flagged by discussions among French TED Translators on creating a new translation glossary as shown in Section 3.4.2. Moreover, the content of each TED Wiki portal also differs as LC/LS may prioritize different aspects of translating TED Talks. For example, the Chinese wiki serves more as a reminder of and an addition to the official TED guidelines and adapts the rules for Chinese translators, such as changing the 42 characters to 16 characters as Chinese phrases tend to contain fewer characters than the English language. However, the French translator Wiki portal

contains much more new content which is not covered by the TED guidelines. For example, it contains detailed information on how to transcribe, how to break down long phrases, how to condense information while subtitling, French writing rules etc. The French LS/LC who developed the Wiki portal did not participate in my interview and thus it was hard to confirm the exact rationale behind developing such a detailed set of translation guidelines. However, the French LC/LS and reviewers who participated in my interview repeatedly flagged the problem of people who lack proper language proficiency wanting to translate TED Talks into French. Moreover, LC/LS<sub>FR2</sub> commented that the translation guideline resources like the Wiki have served as “peace agreements” to resolve possible conflicts or disagreements among translators. Thus, it can be argued that the development of a repertoire of detailed, rigid sets of rules for translation reflects the mutual accountability of the French translators involved towards producing what they consider as quality translations. Another type of repertoires developed by TED Translators that serve as a translation guide and quality assurance measure are bilingual glossaries that aim to standardize expressions in translations and help translators quickly retrieve French translations of recurring expressions. Following the interactions among TED Translators shown in Section 3.4.2 as an example of mutual accountability towards improving translation quality, a bilingual glossary on translations of expressions for TED disclaimers can be found in Figure 19. This file is collaborative as it has been edited by different LC/LS and reviewers from the French translator team<sup>7</sup>. According to LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub>, this glossary was developed to align disclaimer translations that are “accepted” by the translators involved in the development of the file and shared to all French translators via Facebook.

---

<sup>7</sup> The names of people who contributed to the file are not included in the figure for confidentiality reasons.

Expression	Utilisée dans	Projet	Traduction	Commentaires
This animation is part of TED-Ed's series, "There's a Poem for That," which features animated interpretations of poems both old and new that give language to some of life's biggest feelings.	There's a poem for that	TED-Ed	Cette animation fait partie de la série TED-Ed « Il y a un poème pour cela », des transpositions en dessins animés de poèmes à la fois récents et anciens qui mettent des mots sur certaines des émotions les plus fortes de notre vie.	
An animated interpretation of someone's poem	There's a poem for that	TED-Ed	Une transposition en dessin animé du poème de ...	
View full lesson:	TED-Ed	TED-Ed	Voir la leçon complète :	
Lesson by ... directed by ...	TED-Ed	TED-Ed	Leçon de ... réalisée par ...	
This ambitious idea is part of The Audacious Project, TED's initiative to inspire and fund global change.	Audacious Project	TED	Cette idée ambitieuse fait partie de l'initiative de TED « The Audacious Project » destinée à promouvoir et financer le changement à l'échelle mondiale.	
The Audacious Project	Audacious Project	TED	The Audacious Project	
WorkLife with Adam Grant	WorkLife	TED	WorkLife avec Adam Grant	Si possible, ajouter la traduction « La vie au travail »
I'm Adam Grant. This is WorkLife, my TED podcast. I study how to make work not suck.	WorkLife	TED	Je suis Adam Grant. Vous écoutez WorkLife, mon podcast avec TED. J'étudie comment le travail peut ne pas craindre.	
Thanks to ... for sponsoring this episode.	WorkLife	TED	Merci à ... d'être le sponsor de cet épisode.	
This talk was given at a TEDx event using the TED conference format but independently organized by a local community. Learn more at <a href="https://www.ted.com/tedx">https://www.ted.com/tedx</a>	TEDx	TEDx	Cette présentation a été donnée lors d'un événement TEDx local utilisant le format des conférences TED mais organisé indépendamment. En savoir plus : <a href="http://ted.com/tedx">http://ted.com/tedx</a>	<a href="https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wuwWTq9M4KMEgnokwfw-Bx1VwHYpW9Lrqz2R04Iedf?usp=sharing&amp;edit=1wAR0N214ZEYXkLEd04Duu8TCOE1a1Npx0m72kL13D2oeWB1b0dy5a6Sz_eY">https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wuwWTq9M4KMEgnokwfw-Bx1VwHYpW9Lrqz2R04Iedf?usp=sharing&amp;edit=1wAR0N214ZEYXkLEd04Duu8TCOE1a1Npx0m72kL13D2oeWB1b0dy5a6Sz_eY</a>
The TED-Ed Clubs program supports students in discovering, exploring and presenting their big ideas in the form of short, TED-style talks. In TED-Ed Clubs, students work together to discuss and celebrate creative ideas. Club Leaders receive TED-Ed's flexible curriculum to guide their Members in developing presentation literacy skills to help inspire tomorrow's TED speakers and future leaders.	TED-Ed	TED-Ed	Le programme TED-Ed Clubs aide les étudiants à découvrir, explorer et présenter leurs grandes idées sous la forme de conférences similaires aux conférences TED. Dans les TED-Ed Clubs, les étudiants travaillent ensemble pour discuter d'idées innovantes et les célébrer. Les dirigeants du Club suivent le programme modulaire TED-Ed pour guider les membres du Club dans le développement de leurs compétences de présentation, afin d'inspirer les conférenciers TED de demain et les futurs dirigeants.	
To learn more about TED-Ed Clubs or to start your own club, go to <a href="http://ed.ted.com/clubs">http://ed.ted.com/clubs</a> .			Pour en savoir plus sur les Clubs TED-Ed ou pour commencer le vôtre, allez sur <a href="http://ed.ted.com/clubs">http://ed.ted.com/clubs</a> .	
The Way We Work	The Way We Work	TED	Notre Façon de Travailler	
Ugly History	TED-Ed	TED-Ed	Triste Histoire	
Think Like A Coder: Ep 1	Think Like A Coder	TED-Ed	Pense comme un programmeur : épisode 1	
This is episode 1 of our animated series "Think Like A Coder." This 10-episode narrative follows a girl, Eric, and her robot companion, Hedge, as they attempt to save the world. The two embark on a quest to collect three artifacts and must solve their way through a series of programming puzzles.	Think Like A Coder	TED-Ed	C'est le premier épisode de notre série animée « Pense comme un programmeur ». Ce récit de 10 épisodes suit une fille, Eric, et son compagnon robot, Hedge, alors qu'ils tentent de sauver le monde. Les deux entreprennent une quête pour recueillir trois artefacts et doivent résoudre une série de puzzles de programmation.	
DIY Neuroscience	DIY Neuroscience	TED-Series	De la neuroscience à faire soi-même	
Small thing. Big idea.	Small things. Big ideas.	TED-Series	Petite chose. Grande idée	
NOTE FROM TED: This talk represents the speaker's personal views and understanding of political activism; some viewers may be offended by it. TEDx events are independently organized by volunteers. The guidelines we give TEDx organizers are described in more detail here: <a href="http://storage.ted.com/tedx/manuals/tedx_content_guidelines.pdf">http://storage.ted.com/tedx/manuals/tedx_content_guidelines.pdf</a>	TEDx	TEDx	AVERTISSEMENT DE TED : cette conférence engage l'opinion personnelle de l'intervenant sur ... Son discours peut offenser certains spectateurs. Les événements TEDx sont indépendamment organisés par des bénévoles. Les consignes que nous donnons aux organisateurs TEDx sont détaillées ici : <a href="http://storage.ted.com/tedx/manuals/tedx_content_guidelines.pdf">http://storage.ted.com/tedx/manuals/tedx_content_guidelines.pdf</a>	
NOTE FROM TED: This talk, which was filmed at an independent TEDx event, appears to fall outside TEDx's content guidelines. The speaker's claims around neuroscience and energy are not supported by credible scientific evidence. The guidelines we give our TEDx organizers are described in more detail here: <a href="http://storage.ted.com/tedx/manuals/tedxcontentguidelines.pdf">http://storage.ted.com/tedx/manuals/tedxcontentguidelines.pdf</a>	TEDx	TEDx	AVERTISSEMENT DE TED : Cette conférence, qui a été filmée lors d'un événement TEDx indépendant, semble ne pas respecter les directives de TEDx en matière de contenu. Les affirmations de l'orateur concernant les neurosciences et l'énergie ne sont pas étayées par des preuves scientifiques crédibles. Les directives que nous donnons à nos organisateurs de TEDx sont énoncées en détail ici : <a href="http://storage.ted.com/tedx/manuals/tedxcontentguidelines.pdf">http://storage.ted.com/tedx/manuals/tedxcontentguidelines.pdf</a>	

Figure 22: Crowdsourced Glossary for Translating the Disclaimer of TED Talks

Figure 20 shows another glossary in the shared repertoires of the French TED Translators. The glossary not only contains the English and the French terms, the part of speech, but also a short definition of these terms specific to the world of TED. According to LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub>, they have used the glossary as a reference for expressions that are complicated or hard to translate. Unlike the disclaimer glossary, there is no information available through the archival data on TED Translators that provides information on the context for the development of this glossary, since it was developed in 2014, and none of the TED Translators who participated in my interviews could offer information on who created it and for what reason. However, given the purpose that LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub> has devised for it, the glossary is used to improve translation quality and standardize expressions in translation. In doing so, it also serves as a guide for those who consult it to understand the context for the “terminology” that it presents by offering definitions. For example, it defines “TED initiatives” as “a variety of projets and initiatives that seek to leverage

the power of ideas to change the world (e.g. the TED conference, TEDx events, TED Open Translation Project)”. Thus, it can potentially affect how TED Translators understand and interpret the TED Project.

B	C	D	E	F	G
Term	Translation	Part Of Speech	Definition	Comments	Translation2
About	À propos	Preposition	Website section title.		
Apr	Avr	Noun	Short for April. Please make it 3 characters or less.		
attendee	participant	Noun	Somebody who has attended a TED or TEDx event. Often used in combination with the name of the event (e.g. "TEDxMetropolis attendees").		
attendees	participants	Noun	Plural of "attendee," defined as: Somebody who has attended a TED or TEDx event. Often used in combination with the name of the event (e.g. "TEDxMetropolis attendees").		
Aug	Août	Noun	Short for August. Please make it 3 characters or less.		
beautiful	beau	Adjective	One of the ways you can rate a TEDTalk. Meaning: Attractive to the senses, charming.		
business	business	Noun	A theme in TEDTalks. This is a tag that the user can click to view similarly themed talks.		
community	communauté	Noun	A group of people that share common characteristics or interests. Often modified, e.g. "TED community."		
confusing	déroutant	Adjective	One of the ways you can rate a TEDTalk. Meaning: Chaotic, unclear, puzzling because of an unclearly presented message or intent.		
courageous	courageux	Adjective	One of the ways you can rate a TEDTalk. Meaning: Requiring or demonstrating courage; brave.		
curated by	organisé par	Adverb	Identifies the name of the person who selected the talks in a playlist (e.g. "Curated by Jill Bolte Taylor").		
curator	organisateur	Noun	Organizer, license-holder. Sometimes a synonym to "TEDx organizer" or "TEDx licensee."		
curators	organisateurs	Noun	Plural of "curator," defined as: A person who has selected the talks in a playlist.		
Dec	Déc	Noun	Short for December. Please make it 3 characters or less.		
design	design	Noun	A theme in TEDTalks. This is a tag that the user can click to view similarly themed talks.		
entertainment	divertissement	Noun	A theme in TEDTalks. This is a tag that the user can click to view similarly themed talks.		
event	événement	Noun	Often a synonym of "conference," e.g. "a TEDx event" a TEDx conference. Occurs often — you may want to think of some synonyms for variety.		
events	événements	Noun	Plural of "event," defined as: Often a synonym of "conference," e.g. "a TEDx event" a TEDx conference. Occurs often — you may want to think of some synonyms for variety.		
fascinating	fascinant	Adjective	One of the ways you can rate a TEDTalk. Meaning: Captivating, attractive, arousing great interest.		
Feb	Fév	Noun	Short for February. Please make it 3 characters or less.		
fellow	membre	Noun	A TED Fellow. The TED Fellows program is designed to bring together young world-changers and trailblazers who have shown unusual accomplishment and exceptional courage.		
fellows	membres	Noun	Plural of "fellow," defined as: A TED Fellow. The TED Fellows program is designed to bring together young world-changers and trailblazers who have shown unusual accomplishment and exceptional courage.		
Term	Translation	Part Of Speech	Definition	Comments	Translation2
TED		Noun	A nonprofit devoted to ideas Worth Spreading. It started out (in 1984) as a conference bringing together people from three worlds: Technology, Entertainment, Design.		
TED Book Club	TED Book Club	Noun	A program where participants receive inspired 2-3 book selections four times a year via Amazon Kindle software/hardware or as physical books.		
TED Community	Communauté TED	Noun	Website section title. Leads to a section that allows the user to search for other users who set up a profile at TED.com.		
TED Conferences	Conférences TED	Noun	Term referring to a number of conferences held annually, like TED, TEDGlobal or TEDActive. In this context, this is not the proper name of an organization and the term should be translated.		
TED Conversations	Conversations TED	Noun	A social media platform on TED.com that connects people for conversation, collaboration and debate.		
TED Fellows	Membres TED	Noun	The proper name of the TED Fellows program. The TED Fellows program is designed to bring together young world-changers and trailblazers who have shown unusual accomplishment and exceptional courage.		
TED Initiatives	Initiatives TED	Noun	A variety of projects and initiatives that seek to leverage the power of ideas to change the world (e.g. the TED conference, TEDx events, TED Open Translation Project).		
TED Open Translation Project	Projet de Traduction Ouvert TED	Noun	The TED Open Translation Project brings TEDTalks beyond the English-speaking world by offering subtitles, interactive transcripts and the ability for any talk to be translated by volunteers worldwide.		
TED Open TV Project	Projet de Télévision Ouvert TED	Noun	A project aimed at sharing TED's incredible content free to the world via television.		
			The TED Prize is awarded annually to an exceptional individual who receives \$1,000,000 and the TED		

Figure 23: Crowdsourced Glossary for Translating recurrent words and terms in TED Talks

The aforementioned shared repertoire of translation guidelines developed by TED reflects a history of engagement and negotiation among TED Translators regarding the competences sought after in their translator group or community. Given the rudimentary nature of the TED guidelines on translation and the lack of any real screening in the language proficiency of TED Translators by the organization of TED, it is up to senior TED Translators who feel a mutual accountability towards assuring the quality of TED Talk translations to negotiate what

constitutes a “regime of competence” (Wenger, 1998, 136). The results of the negotiation may become reified in the repertoire that they develop and affect the future translation practice so long as such resources are consulted by French TED Translators. Moreover, what constitutes competence in TED Talk translation is also open to interpretation and co-negotiation. They may not represent a set of rigid, fixed rules to be imposed on all French translations. For example, excerpts from interviews with the two LS/LC<sub>FR</sub> participating in my interviews shed light on the negotiative nature of what constitutes competent translations in TED.

Researcher : Do you develop rules or norms apart from the TED translation guideline ?

LC/LS<sub>1</sub> : Yes and no. I work a lot with a language coordinator and we have the same sensibility. It’s easy. We have the same protocole. First of all, if there is no orthographic error, or error with the accord of time, we check if the message is accurate and well translated. And then, we monitor the quality. This process is sort of simultaneous. For example, we simplify some phrase structures. We do this because sometimes, the translator stays too close to the original text. Thus, taking a more distant look, we try to simplify the grammar. But I know that there is another language coordinator who is very nit-picky and corrects everything, while I don’t think it is all necessary because we watch out not to impose our style. On the contrary, we also check the speaker’s style as they speak so that the register is more or less the same in the French. If the speakers talks casually, we adopt a more informal language. If this is a more serious person, we adopt a more polite language. We pay attention to this, but there is not really a rule. We did not establish rules for quality. This has more to do with our personal preference.

LC/LS<sub>2</sub> (*in email communication with the researcher*): TED’s rules form the minimum base. For the rest, I evaluate mostly the level of French. I understand English. Thus I am able to compare the two texts and decide whether the translation reflects the meaning. Certain translators translate too word for word, which can result in expressions that are not correct. Still, I rarely reject a ‘mediocre’ translation, since this becomes a value judgement that has no base. I only reject translations where the level of French is poor or there is real proof of not understanding the English (mistranslation and faux-amis).

These excerpts reveal that competences in translating TED Talk can be subjective as they depend on the specific people involved in the review process, and in some cases, are negotiated among different people engaged in the same practice (in the case of LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub>). LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub> chose to work with a peer with whom they share the same ‘sensibility’ on what constitutes acceptable translations. In this process, they also develop ways of doing things—what to watch out for when

revising translations. The things agreed upon include checking grammar, syntax, fidelity, register/tone etc. In both excerpts, the LS/LC involved think that their role is not to impose their personal style and/or preference for translation, which could happen if too many revisions are made. Nonetheless, these are not set rules since other LC/LS in the same language group may have a different way of revising translations, as LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub> mentioned. There is no protocol, either reinforced by TED or independently developed by the translators, to decide on a set of rules/guidelines for revision for all TED Translators doing revisions which are agreed upon by all members of the community. However, the TED Translators may decide among themselves what constitutes/who is a good/competent translator. For example, according to LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub>, they once found a community of French translators with whom they shared the same sensibility and where people recognized each other's translation skills, it played a major role in the development of their sense of belonging/community on the TED Platform. While TED Translators are a large group, those who recognize each other's translation skills/competence tend to find each other and work together frequently, which applies to all French translators who participated in my interviews. This reveals that membership in the TED Translation Project as a community of practice entails a set of skills and competences that go beyond what is required of people to be bestowed the title of TED Translator. Not all French TED Translators work closely, and it is those who are in closer contact and who recognize each other's competences/ways of doing things that show stronger engagement and produce more shared repertoire. However, it is also unclear to them to what extent/whether or no the TED Translators outside their immediate circle/CoP consult and co-negotiate the shared repertoire they produced. When asked about how often French TED Translators may use the glossaries/Wiki portal for reference when translating, those who participated in my interview responded that they are not sure.

In conclusion, compared to the Chinese TED Translator group, the French translators have produced a substantially richer shared repertoire for the translation of TED Talks. While both Chinese and French translators encounter translation problems that cannot be resolved by the information that TED has made available, the latter show a stronger initiative in developing concepts, guidelines and ways of doing as they engage in TED Talk translation. In part, this may be due to a more dire need on the part of French translators to standardize translations and assure translation quality. However, such initiative appears to be limited to a small group of French translators who recognize each other's competence. Thus, the meaning (co-)negotiation process that occurs in the development of the shared repertoire may not apply to all of the French TED Translator group, and since most translators work independently on the subtitling platform, and there is no obligation to adhere to the same protocol in the publication of subtitles, the information about how each translator negotiate the shared repertoire, e.g. how they interpret such information and integrates it into their practice, remains unclear.

#### 3.4.4 A crowd or a community of practice?

The emergence of communities of practice converges with learning processes in CoP. As previously mentioned, communities of practice are groups of people who share a common goal or interest and become better at what they do it as they interact (Wenger 2014). In this process, individual participants negotiate their sense of self and their relations with the social context where they are situated. Thus, communities of practice are not just any communities. They are an embodiment of the learning history of the group of people involved. Through participation, individuals give meanings to the activities that they engage in and produce conceptual and material artefacts that *reify* such meanings. According to Wenger (1998, 2006), the interplay of

participation and reification is what makes socially meaningful learning possible, and both participation and reification are dynamic processes that are subject to (re-)negotiation as individuals make sense of their social experience and identity.

As defined in Chapter Two, crowdsourcing means that a multitude of people is being solicited by a third party for their intellectual skills to work on an open project. There are different models of translation crowdsourcing and they may or may not involve people working as a community of practice, although it has been considered as “a practice firmly grounded in the participatory culture of Web 2.0” (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017, p. 13). Thus, in comparing the French and the Chinese TED Translator groups in terms of their motivations and their ways of doing things as volunteer translators, here comes the question of whether they should be considered as a crowd or more so as a learning community based on practice.

Despite their linguistic and cultural differences, the Chinese and French CoPs share similar motivations to translate for TED such as learning, networking, helping improve accessibility to materials produced by TED as the previous section outlines. Both groups work towards a shared domain of interest and are mutually engaged in their pursuit of the goal of translating TED Talks. However, the French translators appear to be more pro-active in their pursuit of a joint enterprise towards reinforcing connections and collaboration amongst French translators to improve translation quality and/or develop competencies in their CoP values. The fact that the Chinese TED Translators were not as concerned as the French translators with the overall translation quality may be due to the fact that most of my Chinese participants are not responsible for reviewing/approving translations. Moreover, since all of the French translators who participated in my interviews are LC/LS or translation reviewers, their devoted attitudes may not represent those of everyday translators in their language community. Nonetheless, through the elicited and

archival data available about their engagement in TED Talk translation, the group of French TED Translators who participated in my interviews can be shown to have formed a CoP that has a higher level of activeness and develop an indigenous enterprise. As they work on and respond to their situation under the external influence of TED and in their pursuit of their joint enterprise, they mediate and co-negotiate their practice, determining what additional measures can be taken to pursue what they see as important. While the Chinese TED Translators can also provide examples of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire, they do not seem to demonstrate an indigenous enterprise that differs from the one established by TED.

Since TED focuses on the volume of translations, the accountability towards producing ‘good’ translations by ‘competent’ translators shift to the TED Translators, and seemingly, each language community is to determine what specific measures to take to pursue their joint enterprise. Thus, the collaboration and cooperation that may occur among TED Translators can be seen as one of their responses to their situation. In Chapter Four, in terms of TED Translators’ learning structure, I will come back to the definition of “competence” for TED Translators. More specifically, I will discuss how TED Translators’ learning journey or structure is negatively affected by the structure that TED creates for translators’ practice.

## **Conclusion**

As argued in Chapter Two, applying the concept of immaterial labour to the study of crowdsourced translation sheds light on the dependence on the digital economy on a shadow labour force that concedes underpaid or unpaid labour in exchange for non-monetary returns. As shown in this chapter, analyzing the organization of TED Translators through the lens of CoP examines this process from the perspective of the subjects of immaterial labour—i.e., those

involved in the practice of crowdsourced, participatory translation. Thus, it is important to look at groups of TED Talk Translators as CoPs because this framework helps demonstrate how participation in immaterial labour/crowdsourced translation helps create a social structure for those conceding the labour and how their engagement in the practice leads to the negotiation of their identities—i.e., how they understand their position in regard to the organization TED and how they make sense of their work on the TED Platform. It also reveals what kinds of non-monetary returns the translators pursue through their involvement in the TED project. In other words, the translators receive a learning opportunity and an opportunity to make themselves visible as translators and to develop new social networks.

Based on the three dimensions of practice in the CoP Theory, it can be argued that the motivations for TED Translators to take part in the translation crowdsourcing initiative and the ways of doing that they adopt on their digital platforms to facilitate TED Talk translation demonstrate how they can become CoPs through engagement in their practice. Examples of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire show how the TED Translators demonstrate different dimensions of practice as a community that creates opportunities for interaction, learning and meaning negotiation for the members. While they are all on the same platform, different translator communities may perceive, make sense of and respond to their situations differently. Moreover, individual translators may pursue their individual agendas while they engage in the collective practice of translation. As a result, different translator communities may show different levels of engagement with the practice and pursue different joint enterprises. For example, the French translators demonstrate a greater concern with the quality of the translations produced, which helps their indigenous enterprise take shape. As a result, they develop a stronger joint enterprise for reinforcing connections and show a stronger interest in and

accountability towards aligning translations through reified information. In this regard, they behave more like a CoP than a crowd.

Moreover, there is an important external actor to TED Translators' practice: TED as a corporate initiator of translation crowdsourcing that imposes external constraints on the translator communities and the actual translation practice. The analysis of the three dimensions of practice from sections 3.4.1 to 3.4.3 reveal the impact of TED on shaping the situation of TED Translators and their response. TED Translators may be seen as a CoP in a corporate context because it is the corporate actor TED, rather than the translators, that owns the resources and translations created by the translators. The impact of the corporate actor—TED—on the emerging translator CoPs will be discussed in Chapter Four which focuses on participation in the TED Translation Project as a kind of immaterial labour. This next chapter will demonstrate how the practice of translation in the TED project should be understood as immaterial labour. Moreover, it will expand on TED Translators as CoPs by demonstrating how the ways TED Translators negotiate their identities through their participation can enrich the understanding of crowdsourced translation as immaterial labour.

## **Chapter 4: Immaterial labour behind emerging CoPs of TED Translators**

### ***Introduction***

For a quick recap, the term ‘immaterial labour’ makes a distinction between physical labour and the labour “that produces immaterial goods such as services, a cultural product, knowledge or communication” (Hardt & Negri, 2001, p. 292), the latter being a product of the informationalization of capitalism. The prevalence of Internet content co-created by Web users in the age of participatory media is a powerful example of immaterial labour and its relation with the digital, networked economy. It has been argued that immaterial labour is fundamental to the entirety of work that sustains the Web as a medium where labour is not always equal to paid employment (Terranova, 2000), and that immaterial labour is a distinct feature of informational, post-industrial societies where the distinction between work and non-work activities or work and non-work time becomes blurred for intellectual, creative and cultural workers (Gill & Pratt, 2008). As discussed earlier in Chapter Two, immaterial labour is one of the many terms that Translation Studies scholars have used to label this kind of non-remunerated, collaborative translation that gives rise to translator communities. In alignment with my second set of research questions, this chapter will further illustrate why this term is important to my study of TED Talk Translators. Also, with examples from other studies on self-solicited translator initiatives, it will explore how TED Translators’ engagement in immaterial labour solicited by TED exposes them to a different journey of learning and identity negotiation.

Immaterial work is work where workers can take pleasure and is thus not completely controlled by the capitalist system. As a result, immaterial labour can help construct subjectivities for workers which autonomist Marxists see as potential forces of resistance against the control that capitalism exercises over workers' bodies. It is therefore important to closely examine through empirical research how cultural workers make sense of and give meanings to their work (Gill & Pratt, 2008). Terranova (2000, 2006), however, holds a more critical view of the relation between immaterial labour and capitalism. She suggests that the prevalence of immaterial labour in the networked, digital economy means that such labour should not be equated to paid employment. User-generated, co-creative content over the web can be harnessed and generate considerable profits for large, global media companies, yet labourers' subjectivities that emerge from immaterial labour cannot be fully contained by capitalism. Although there is no immediate answer to whether immaterial labour should be seen as a disruptive force or a new mechanism of networked, informationalized capitalism, the concept of immaterial labour deserves wider currency in translation studies at a time when translation is practiced more and more by amateurs for fun and personal enrichment and when crowdsourced, networked human intelligence has become fundamental to the digital economy. As debates on whether the harnessing of user-generated translation by large businesses through crowdsourcing is exploitative become more intense, the idea of immaterial labour points to the complex relation between work and leisure, labour and fun, professional and amateur, exploitation and co-creation etc. in the age of participation. Empirical research on the convergence between translation and immaterial labour can yield insights into "an immensely complex range of cultural and economic phenomenon" (Terranova, 2000, p. 55) that interferes with how information is produced, disseminated and consumed in our days. With a focus on how people negotiate their identities as

they become part of a community through practice and learning, the CoP Theory can help demonstrate in the context of the TED Translation Project how new forms of intellectual, cultural work becomes a source of subjectivity for participants, and how engagement in immaterial, free labour gives rise to larger structures that sustain the flows of information in our world.

In Chapter Three, I have shown that TED Translators demonstrate features of CoPs as they engage in the practice of crowdsourced translation and develop a joint enterprise in the pursuit of their practice. In this chapter, I will further explore their identity negotiation through their engagement in the collective practice and apply the concept of immaterial labour to how they respond to their situations and make sense of what they do and who they are. However, before I begin my discussion, I would like to go back to the problem of lack of consistency in the terminology used to designate various kinds of digitally mediated, partially paid or unpaid translation activities. In my view, immaterial labour has been used interchangeably with other labels in existing literature, and it has also been applied in ways that differ from my use of the term. Using a different study on fan translator CoPs as an example, I will emphasize how my use of the term is relevant for the study of TED Talk Translators.

In other research papers on digitally mediated translation under a different label, namely ‘online collaborative translation’, the focus is on self-solicited translation where translators decide on how to organize their translation activities and what tools to use<sup>8</sup>. This group of studies does not always adopt the label ‘immaterial labour’ to conceptualize the translation activity of interest. When the term is used, it serves to emphasize different aspects of the term immaterial labour to fit into a specific analytical framework and case study. For example, in Xie’s (2021)

---

<sup>8</sup> See Jiménez-Crespos (2017) and Zwißenberger (2022) for a more detailed definition and discussion of online collaborative translation and how it differs from crowdsourced translation as a working concept.

study of a self-organized translation community comprised of fans of a Japanese female idol group, the author conceptualizes the fans' translation practice as immaterial labour in the sense that it is comprised of participatory activities of mediating information as opposed to the 'material' aspect of their practice, i.e., consumption of commodities and services associated with the idol group. In this study, the translators' translation and mediation activities are shaped strongly by the affective ties between fans and their idol and interpersonal ties among the fans themselves, since the fans share a common passion for the cultural products that they seek to distribute through translation. Thus, the label 'imaterial labour' that I use is different because it explores the relations between different parties in crowdsourcing where people are implicated in cocreational, mediative activities for reasons beyond simply liking an idol, a group or certain individuals. While TED Translators demonstrate general interest in the content created by TED, discussion of the methodological challenges that I presented in Chapter Two has shown that their affective 'ties' with the TED Project and the connections among themselves are nowhere near those of the fan translators in, for example, Xie's (2021) study. As the following sections will show, it seems more useful to focus on the ways in which the TED Translators can benefit from their participation in the TED Project than on the affective aspects of their practice, since they are a much larger and more multifaceted group. More specifically, I would like to reiterate my position that by using the term immaterial labour, I hope to divert attention to the regulation or lack of regulation of the relationships between 'self-selected' respondents and the crowdsourcing initiative. I ground my use of the term in the Autonomist Marxist school which is essentially concerned with (modern-day changes in) labour/production relations and their regulation in the digital economy.

Because TED Translators' participation in crowdsourced translation seems to create fewer opportunities for them to negotiate their identity through continuous social encounters, online interactions among TED Translators which are accessible to me as a participant-observer did not play a major role in uncovering the learning and potential identity negotiation processes for TED Translators. On the contrary, speaking from my own position as a novice TED Translator, I will approach the 'immaterial labour' of TED Talk translators from an individual rather than collective perspective. In other words, I will look at how my interview participants interpret their participation in immaterial labour in the TED ecosystem.

#### ***4.1 Immaterial labour in TED Translators' work***

To apply the concept of immaterial labour to TED Translators' participation in crowdsourcing, I will first use examples from data elicited and collected from the TED Translators to show how features of immaterial labour converge with how they understand/or present the meanings of their work. Chapter Three has already touched upon the reasons why people to participate in the TED crowdsourcing project, and this section further elaborates on translators' motivations by showing that crowdsourced translation brings immaterial benefits to the participants and produces social value at large.

##### *4.1.1 Translation as Active Consumption of Educational Materials*

Consumer habits have been transformed by affordances of digital tools when it comes to the consumption of audiovisual contents. The engagement of active consumers in the co-production and circulation of media content has attracted substantial interest from digital media researchers (e.g. Deuze, 2006; Fuchs, 2008; Jenkins, 2006a). In translation studies, the involvement of fans

and other types of media consumers in the mediation of information through translation has been considered empowerment at the recipient end of communication, which creates new outlets for aesthetic standards and alternative views (O'Hagan, 2012; Pérez-Gonzalez, 2014, 2013). Moreover, despite the little attention paid to the role of translation in digital mediascapes outside translation studies, translation is one of the most important ways for dedicated, active consumers to participate in the circulation of information and media content (Orrego-Carmona, 2018). The work that amateurs devote to something that they are passionate about has been named "215resumption" or "playbour" (Eagleton, 1989; Fuchs, 2015), which indicates the convergence of production and consumption and the blurring of work and play time in the age of media convergence. Interest-driven online collectivities such as fan communities that translate and disseminate written and audiovisual materials have thus been examined in many studies on translation (e.g. Bold, 2011; Díaz Cintas & Sánchez, 2006; O'Hagan, 2009). Such interest-driven communities help to draw the attention of scholars in the field of translation and the more general forms of communication to the recipient end, which implies significant changes in the production-consumption relations in cultural industries on the large scale.

Similar to fan translators who are driven by a passion for the contents that they translate and help circulate, many of the TED Translators with whom I have spoken describe their interest in TED Talks as what motivates them to translate. For most of them, their journey as TED Translators started with watching TED Talks regularly as audiences. Their interest in the TED platform comes primarily from the depth and range of topics that TED Talks cover and the free, accessible learning opportunities that these videos engender. When asked about what attracted them to TED Talks as a way of learning, many participants commented on the length of the videos that do not usually last longer than fifteen to twenty minutes, and the form of presentation

which includes eye-catching techniques and animation. In terms of the content, most participants commented that TED Talks expose them to new knowledge or things that they do not usually have access to. For those who like to watch TED Talks, translating them allow them to process the ideas more deeply and motivate them to learn about new subjects. As reviewer<sub>FR 3</sub> pointed out: “Translating new topics regularly keeps me informed on things that I would not have a curiosity to learn about if I weren’t a translator.” Many participants described watching TED as an opportunity to acquire cutting-edge knowledge useful for both personal enrichment and career development. Others commented on TED Talks as an important opportunity to learn about other cultures, which is even more the case when it comes to translating TED Talks, since this offers them opportunities to develop networks across linguistic and national borders when they collaborate with other TED Translators. How translation of TED Talks becomes a means of cultural brokerage for translators will be explored later when the collaboration between TED Translations is discussed.

The popularity of TED Talks has prompted certain participants to share the content with people that they know, and translation becomes important since most people from their own social networks do not speak English well. For example, for Translator<sub>CN 1</sub>: “I share the content with some of my friends in China. So I think with my name on [the translation], it helps to engage my friends. They will watch it more attentively because they know me.” More specifically, the translators show an interest in producing cultural contents for consumption by those in their local community.

Moreover, participants with a background in education may use TED Talks as tools of instruction in their classrooms. Reviewer<sub>FR 2</sub>, who was born in North America but lives and teaches in South Korea, described her main motivation to be a TED Translator as making

educational materials more accessible for her students: “I use TED Talks for my courses. Sometimes, I found certain TED Talks that I wanted to use, but there was no subtitle in English or Korean, because especially for the TED Talks that are hard to understand with lots of specific terminology, I give my students access to the Korean transcript. [...] And when I found that subtitles were missing, a question came to my mind: ‘who translates this?’ Then I began to do research and found the application to be a translator and my main motivation was that there was a TED Talk that I liked but there was no English subtitle available”. The participant also noted that she would use TED Talks to inspire class discussions or debates, so subtitles are important for her students to fully understand the content. In this case, TED Talks are translated by ‘active consumers’ for circulation in specific settings for a specific target audience. However, in most situations my participants are not too concerned with the circulation of translated TED Talks or with who will watch them, but see the translation itself as a process of entertainment, enrichment, learning etc.

The TED platform, and in particular its translation project, has been the subject of study for research on situated learning (Cámara & Comas-Quinn, 2016). Translation is a way for them to participate in the production process in the sense that they make the TED Talks available in different languages, and thus transform them into active consumers.

#### *4.1.2 Translation as a Means to Increase One’s Visibility*

TED Translators are not paid, TED offers certain symbolic rewards in return for their participation in the translation project. Such rewards can be displayed on social media platforms but do not include any official certificates or recognitions for volunteer activities. The idea of gaining visibility and more social/symbolic capital through engagement in translation activities

seems to be important for TED Translator's translation practice, while it may or may not be the case for other crowdsourcing/online collaborative translation initiatives. For example, certain translation initiatives may choose to keep a low profile rather than become more visible to avoid retribution. More specifically, Yu (2022) illustrates that the self-solicited news translation initiatives translating into Chinese are at risk of shutting down as they gain a higher profile and are recognized as citizen media outlets that circulate foreign information on China's Internet. Thus, what an increased visibility means for crowdsourcing/online collaborative translators differs across different initiatives and different kinds of translation practices. In TED Translation Project, there is no risk associated with participating in the translation practice since the translation is requested by TED, the content owner, and the source texts are pre-screened for any sensitive content, as the discussion in Chapter One on TED's operational strategies has shown. Thus, TED Translators see their visibility/prestige on the TED platform as an important reward/recognition for their participatory translation activities.

While some TED Translators have requested for certificates of participation in volunteer activities that are, for example, needed by their school, TED representatives announce openly that they do not issue formal proof of participation for volunteer activities for TED Translators due to the excessive work needed to issue certificates for all participants. However, TED Translators do get accreditation on the TED platform for their contribution. For example, each translator gets their own personal profile on TED.com. These pages show the translations they completed, and can also be customized to display their backgrounds, skills and interests as well as adding external links to their social media accounts. Moreover, TED creates digital badges for translators who have completed certain activities or achievements for the TED network, such as participating in TED Events or the translator mentorship program. Results of my study show that

such rewards are major incentives for people to translate for TED even though they are symbolic. Notably, translating TED Talks is a way for participants in the TED Translation Project to increase their visibility. The urge to get visibility as a translator on the TED platform has led LC/LS<sub>FR 1</sub> to make the following comment: “Generally speaking, I’m under the impression that most of the volunteers preferred to be addressed as ‘translator’ rather than ‘reviewer’. This is the same for transcription. There are few people who transcribe. Why? I don’t know. I see it as a kind of narcissism”. In other words, the interest in being recognized as a translator seems to override interests in making contributions in the less visible roles in the TED system. Although the LC/LS did not identify a clear reason for such attitudes of TED Translators towards transcription and review, acting as and being identified as a translator works to the advantage of those wishing to be involved as volunteers. Even though translation is only one stage in the volunteer-based TED project that makes the talks more widely accessible, the platform diverts attention disproportionately to the translator role which is the reason that most people join TED. The translator role seems to have been thus tokenized on the TED platform to boost productivity as TED overstates the title of translator to attract contribution, which, as discussions in the section on collaboration between TED Translators will show, may have contributed to the current backlog of unreviewed translations for which TED tries to find reviewers and LC/LS are focused on.

Twelve of the fourteen interviewees in my study said that the acknowledgement of their work for TED and the resulting visibility they receive through the TED platform matter a lot to them. Interviews with the TED Translators show that these means of accreditation are not only meaningful for them in terms of their positioning in the TED Network, but also as something valuable from which they can benefit outside TED in the more general professional world. As an

influential organization for producing educational content, TED is seen as a big name that many of the TED Translators would like to be associated with. For example, several of my participants who have received digital badges for participating in certain TED Translator activities display such badges on their professional networking platforms such as LinkedIn. More people mentioned that their experience with TED goes on their LinkedIn profile or CV. For example, reviewer<sub>FR</sub> 2 commented on the importance of the visibility and recognition that she received from TED as a translator: “Because this is volunteer work, we are not paid for it. To be recognized and have a website for our work, I think it is important both personally and professionally, because if we want to be professional translators, this is one way to present our work and show what we have worked on. Thus, I think this is both professional and personal recognition for me. [...] It’s something very important to me and I put it on my LinkedIn profile.” The participants who showed interests in pursuing a career in translation all see their visibility on the TED platform as a way of proving their experiences in translation. However, none of them affirmed that experiences with TED have ever been helpful in endorsing their translation skills to a potential employer.

Moreover, visibility on the TED platform is interpreted differently by the participants in terms of its validity and what they can get out of it. When asked about the actual usefulness of TED’s accreditation to her, Translator<sub>CN</sub> 3 responded: “It means a lot to me [...]. I get self-fulfillment and make friends at the same time, so my life is enriched. But it also depends on whom TED accreditation is presented to. The experts on translation from CATTI<sup>9</sup> may not consider certificates from TED as really important. It is required to have a certificate from CATTI to translate children’s books. Even for children’s books.” Translator<sub>CN</sub> 3 thus sees TED

---

<sup>9</sup> CATTI: China Accreditation Test for Translators and Interpreters

accreditation as an endorsement of her participation in the TED program whereby she gets pleasure from translating and networking, but is not assured of its validity as proof of translation skills or experiences.

Those interested in pursuing a career in translation are not the only ones who value visibility on the TED platform for career development. Translator<sub>CN</sub> 2 explained why she thinks her volunteer experience with TED may help to boost her resume even though she does not work as a translator: “It’s really important. I feel that my work is valued and with this I can put this role in my life and in my resume to prove that I work for TED [...] because they are a big group that everybody knows. So it’s not that useful, but at least I can show the diversity in my resume. Like my internship is all about tax and accounting. So I want people to see the different side of me.” Through working in the TED network as a volunteer translator, she associates herself with the visibility of TED as a renowned organization and hopes this will endorse her skills or competences beyond what she was trained for.

As shown in the following excerpt from the interviews, Translator<sub>CN</sub>3 gave a positive response on the question of the relevance of receiving credit and visibility for being a TED Translator.

Researcher: “Does it matter to you that TED gives you credit for your work, including the personal webpage for TED Translators, certificate for having completed the mentorship program and the TED Translator Badge?”

Translator<sub>CN</sub>3: “I first learnt about the TED Translation Project when I saw translators from other countries posting their accreditation by TED on LinkedIn. I also posted mine on my linkedIn profile once I received it, and I think this represents a way of having my work acknowledged. As for what kinds of help it may directly bring me, probably none, but it takes time and every small effort to establish one’s name. It makes me happy to receive a certificate in return for the energy I provided. ”

As the above quotes demonstrate, the urge to showcase translation work done for TED to enrich one’s professional experiences is intertwined with feels of being valued for a contribution

that is essentially unpaid volunteer work. Thus, being visible as TED Translators and having the translation work showcased are valued by my participants not only as an asset for professional development but also for more general feelings of pleasure, recognition and inclusion.

Reviewer<sup>FR</sup> 2, for example, said that the visibility and acknowledgement that she got from TED for her work are important both personally and professionally: “For me, it’s really important. It’s so important because personally, it makes me happy and motivated to see the results of my work. This is motivating to me, but it is also important that people know TED translators are volunteers because we are driven by personal interest and commit our time and energy to such work. So this seems very important to me. Particularly, you see, I’d say this is surely something that goes on the CV. This is part of my accomplishments which do not necessarily fall within my career, but still part of my professional experiences.” Similar comments were made by other interviewees concerning the valorization of their contribution to TED—increased visibility of their volunteer work may be useful for their professional development and in the meantime, it makes them feel accomplished and part of a group, and it validates their translation experience.

In short, even though participation in TED Translation is neither paid nor formally recognized as professional experience, many participants seem to be drawn to the TED Translation Project for the visibility they are offered on the TED platform in hopes of boosting their career development. While many participants in my study are not pursuing or interested in a formal career in translation, they still believe that accredited participation in crowdsourced translation initiatives such as TED Translation Project will benefit their professional development by endorsing the translation competences and experiences acquired through the TED Platform. Additionally, such ideas are often intertwined with more general feelings of joy and accomplishment by having one’s contribution accredited and of being included in a group

well-known for their non-profit initiative. Visibility for the translators thus plays an important role in valorizing participants' unpaid contribution on this volunteer platform.

#### *4.1.3 Translation as a Way to Provide Social Benefit*

Previous studies on TED Translation Project and other case studies of crowdsourcing in non-profit contexts often mention altruism and the urge to contribute to society in meaningful ways as one of the main incentives for people to join (citations). Serving the common good by making TED Talks more widely accessible is a theme brought up frequently in my interviews. As LC/LS<sub>FR</sub> 2 explained: “I translate for TED because it is a way to serve others and it allows those who haven't heard about TED to watch TED Talks.” LC/LS<sub>FR</sub> 1 also described translating TED Talks as a way “to contribute to the society in a way that is accessible and makes sense to me—I strongly believe that education is important”. More specifically, people believe that translating for TED is beneficial to others because it helps address global access gaps in information flows. As translator<sub>CN</sub> 4 explained her motivation to be a TED Translator, she described her interest in crowdsourced translation as primarily driven by the presence of comprehension problems in cross-cultural communication: “sometimes I noticed some translation did not convey the full meaning of the original English sentence. Even the minimal discrepancy will make the scenario less funny or less meaningful. So I feel lucky that I know English so I can understand. But I also feel bad for those who cannot understand English or didn't learn English when they were kids. It's like my parents. [...] I hate language to be the culture barrier. So, I want to do my part to help people know what has happened in other countries, especially English-speaking countries.”

Notably, references to serving the general good through breaking down language barriers and/or helping with cross-cultural communication are often intertwined with participants' visions about their own positioning in the age of intensifying globalization and connectivity. Since TED is a global platform that overcomes geographical limits for the distribution and consumption of international audiovisual flows, TED Translators interpret their participation on the platform as a means to reinforce certain aspects of their identity that speak to the hype about transnationalism. For example, translator<sub>CN</sub> 3 explained her interest in translating for TED by bringing in her past experiences with transnational communications: "I pursued a master's degree in education with English as the language of instruction before the pandemic, and I participated in discussions and conversations with instructors from all over the world. This makes me realize how beautiful the world is because people living around the globe are all supportive and welcoming of one another regardless of their races and interests. So, I want to bring such sentiments—especially the kind words and useful knowledge—to people of my own country so that more Chinese people can learn what's happening around the world. And thus I joined TED." Participating in TED is thus a way for her to create or maintain links with an imagined transnational community that overrides localism. Apart from transnationality, transculturation is another aspect of participation in TED Translation Project that ties into participants' more general sense of identity or their social positioning. Translator<sub>CN</sub> 5 explained their interest in TED and what they see as useful in their participation as grounded in her past experiences of cultural encounters as an immigrant from China to Australia. Their self-image as a cultural mediator/broker that motivates them to participate in TED Talk translation will be further discussed in the next section on identity negotiation processes for TED Talk Translators.

To conclude, the participants in my interviews associate their involvement in the TED Translation Project with the creation of social value instead of economic value. This notion of TED Talk translation is also associated with the participants' sense of self, situating themselves in a globalized world where information that has universal values or benefits should be disseminated and where there is natural good in intercultural communication and information flows. The upcoming sections will further expand on the relation between participant's concession to immaterial labour through crowdsourced translation with the (re-)construction of their self-image and their relations with others. This will help demonstrate how immaterial labour gives structure to the social world.

#### ***4.2 Identity negotiation and Immaterial Labour in CoPs***

In this section, I will elaborate on learning as a point of convergence between the CoP theory and the Autonomist school of thought with examples from the engagement of TED Translators in crowdsourced translation. The moment of learning, or the ability to acquire competence through engagement in a practice that requires skills, helps connect CoP and immaterial labour in participatory translation. CoP is essentially a social learning theory, which means that it sees learning as the source of social identities and structures. In the Autonomist school, the subjects of labour are expected to be "autonomous" in the sense that they are expected to acquire the intellectual competences to master communication, cooperation and decision making required for today's mass production. What lies at the center of modern productivity is "a collective learning process" (Lazzarato, 1996) that transforms individual subjectivity through the engagement of individuals into the production of cultural, informational and intellectual commodity. More specifically for TED Translators, TED has outsourced not only the translation

work but also the work of collaboration, communication and quality assurance to the translator communities themselves. In the layered system of translator roles, the translators need to ‘self-select’ or volunteer to take the initiative in accepting different roles and responsibilities. This process seems to be tied to the development and demonstration of translation competence—i.e., the more experienced and seasoned the translators become, the more likely it is that they can take on the coordination and supervision roles. Thus, depending on individual initiative and goals, certain TED Translators engage in cooperation, communication and coordination through community-building initiatives, and their practice of participatory translation goes beyond translation to include other kinds of skilled practices. Thus, considering crowdsourced translation as immaterial labour, we can see how translation practices can easily intersect with other skilled practices in the technomediascapes, especially since corporations soliciting translation labour may outsource different kinds of labour under the name of crowdsourced translation. The multifaceted experience one may get from engagement in participatory, crowdsourced practices also means that many opportunities are created for participants to make sense of their work, create meanings and negotiate their identity throughout the process. Again, this is all based on the social learning processes that sustain the development of competences in immaterial labour.

The CoP theory considers socially situated learning as the source from which larger social structures and systems emerge, since it is through learning from practice that individuals negotiate their identities based on the meanings they make of the social world around them. This stance is also shared by the school of practice theory in the sense that the social world is shaped by organized social practices and the connections between different actors involved in these practices. In the CoP framework, the meaning making process by those engaged in the practice has two components: participation and reification. Section 3.4.1 to Section 3.4.3 have presented

and discussed different aspects of TED Translators' participation in translation crowdsourcing with examples from groups of TED Translators. On the other hand, *reification* refers to the production of tools, documents, stories, concepts, methods etc. by members of communities of practice, which both reflect and organize their shared experience of being a member of a particular community of practice (Wenger 1998, 2006). According to Wenger (2010), participation and reification are two intertwined aspects of social learning that gives rise to a community by creating an informal social structure among those engaged in the practice. Also through this process of social learning, the individuals involved actively negotiate their identity as the various reified aspects of practice become resources for them to make sense of their position in this social structure. Essential to this process is what Wenger calls a regime of competence co-defined by members of a community of practice, or "a set of criteria and expectations by which they recognize membership" (Wenger, 2010, p. 180). More specifically, a regime of competence involves understanding the enterprise of the community, i.e., what matters to the members, namely, being able to engage mutually with other members of the community in a productive way; and knowing how to leverage the shared repertoire of resources that community members have produced through their engagement in practice. Thus, learning in the CoP occurs when the individual tries to align their personal experience or knowledge with the collective history of learning that the whole community has produced.

The Autonomist school is concerned with labour and its products which may not be capitalized in the traditional sense. Autonomist scholars like Terranova who study the digital age argues that the Internet as a medium is sustained by a substantial amount of free labour. People who concede this free, unpaid labour to the maintenance of this medium do not look for monetary returns for their labour but work in exchange for "the pleasures of communication and

exchange” (Terranova, 2000, p.48). Apart from pleasure, data collected from the TED Translators also show that they concede their labour to TED in exchange for a wide array of benefits that may be deemed ‘immaterial’—i.e., tied to social/intellectual growth and enrichment. The moments of learning in the CoP theory are the moments when CoP members can acquire those benefits through their participation in conceding free labour, and it also give a structure to their community. Thus, by looking into the development (and negotiation) of a regime of competence for the TED Talk Translators and how they align their past experience and trajectories with the enterprise of their translator community, one can not only find out about how immaterial labour transforms individuals (as they acquire competences and skills through conceding the labour), but also the impact of immaterial labour on the relations that structure the social world. More specifically, I am talking about how immaterial labour shapes the practice of translation as it brings in new forms of competence, material entities and meanings, as practice theory (Olohan, 2021) and CoP theory (Wenger, 1997) both suggest.

This said, opportunities for TED Translators to develop stronger connections with other translators and potential translation actors involved in the project are limited. As discussed from my perspective as a novice TED Translator and a netnographic researcher in section 2.4.3.6, generally speaking, TED Translators are not engaged in habitual interaction with their peers. Thus, it appears that the amount of social learning TED Translators can benefit from depends on their personal initiative and how much they want to be involved in community-building processes. Certainly, my interview data show that being exposed to the content of TED Talks and being involved in the intellectual work of translation are considered important moments of learning for TED Translators. However, if we consider translation as the central practice in the TED ecosystem, the development of skills through interacting and communicating with other

translators, especially in the absence of TED as a quality assurance actor, the honing of translation skills through peer learning is still the biggest learning/self-enrichment opportunity that TED can potentially offer to the participants in its project. My research findings have shown that opportunities for this kind of learning are limited in the TED ecosystem.

#### *4.2.2 Learning, Regime of Competence and immaterial labour in CoP*

Together, participation and reification help produce a set of criteria that members of a CoP use to define competent membership, or what Wenger (1998, 2006) calls a ‘regime of competence’. A regime of competence has various components: it involves understanding what is important to the community, being able to engage with other members in a productive way, and using appropriately the body of resources that that community members have accumulated. A regime of competence is the result of the learning history of the CoP, and the processes by which members negotiate what constitutes competent membership for their community also produces a dynamic social structure among them (Wenger, 2010, p. 180). As participants in a CoP bring their individual knowledge, experiences and trajectories to the practice and align them with what is considered important for the community, they actively negotiate their identities as they learn to become part of the community (Wenger, 1998). For the TED Talk Translators, they develop the idea of a competent translator in regard to translating TED Talks. For example, the notion of a translator’s reputation came up repeatedly in the interview data I collected from TED Translators. Reviewer<sub>FR</sub> 1 offered the following perspective on the importance of having one’s competence recognized by fellow TED Translators in terms of the turnover time for translation: “The translators have a reputation and it was always important for me to have a good reputation. I noticed that while I translate a TED Talk, it would not stay in the queue for review for too long.

Often, there's a colleague from France whom I never saw in person, but we worked together a lot and I saw that she would often claim the review of my translation, and the reverse is true for me, because there is a level of trust when it comes to the reputation and the quality of work. [...]

Because personally, I have quickly realized that revising a bad TED Talk translation is slower and more frustrating than completing the translation yourself.” Similarly, LC<sub>FR1</sub> has mentioned specifically that they would go for translators who have a good reputation within the community when they decide on whom to collaborate with from a large pool of translators. They shared that they tend to take on the work of people whom they know when reviewing unvetted translations, because there is trust in the quality of the other person's work. Thus, it seems that having (or not having) the competent membership will determine one's position in their social system and the set of relations that are constructed around the practice, which is referred to as ‘participation and non-participation’ by Wenger (1998). Being a competent member will certainly assure full participation in the practice and activities of the CoP involved.

Although the regime of competence for TED Translators is demonstrated through the translators' awareness of the need to maintain a good reputation and its effect of the turnover time of one's translations, there seems to be no one-for-all rule on what exactly constitutes the required competences. As discussed in Chapter Three, different reviewers and/or LC/LS may have different ways of deciding what constitutes a good translation. There is no obligation for them to agree on the same set of criteria and thus the criteria for competent membership may not be consistent across the community. However, there seem to be certain translation skills and competences that TED Translators deem important specifically for their practice. During interviews and researchers' personal communications with the translators from both the French and Simplified Chinese Groups, another theme that was repeatedly brought up was the

translation of TED Talks as a particular type of translation that seems to require special knowledge and expertise. A few examples include the competence of translating scientific terms that appear in TED Talks, translating phrases and notions that are specific to the source-language culture in a TED Talk, and choosing the right register for translating a speech (e.g. spoken language or more formal language, depending on the style of the speaker). These criteria are nowhere to be found in guidelines or illustrations published by the TED Team as they are very specific to each translator community, but the translators from both the Chinese and the French language communities pay attention to such details and they take pleasure in reflecting on and trying to solve these problems when they translate. In some cases, being a competent member is defined as being able or willing to concede intellectual labour to a translation task. As LS/LC<sub>FR1</sub> mentioned: “Where we can tell the good translators from the bad translators is that, generally speaking, the good translators would think about different ways to express the same idea. The first thought may be to translate literally, and then we wonder if we can express the idea in a different way? Thus, as we think more thoroughly, it becomes a reflection. [...] Thus, this is truly an exercise for the mind, and generally, the good translators do so. The new translators do not demonstrate this reflection, and we try to teach them to do so by correcting their text.” They understood voluntary, crowdsourced translation as a mental workout, and this process becomes the purpose of their participation in crowdsourced translation, or put differently, in immaterial labour. As explained in Chapter Two, immaterial labour is known to give rise to and maintain cooperative networks that are essential to digital capitalism. The development of a regime of competence for those TED Translators who are mutually engaged and who co-negotiate their joint enterprise leads to the simultaneous development of interpersonal networks and relationships that reinforce learning among those involved. Because members of a CoP such as

that of TED co-define what they consider important competences for the members, they are committed to the development of learning networks that reinforce the learning of such competences.

As discussed in Chapter Two, there are three aspects to a regime of competence in the framework of CoP: mutuality of engagement, accountability to the enterprise, and negotiability of the repertoire. When comparing the TED Translator groups against these three criteria, it appears that a group of self-selected TED Translators who recognize each other's competences and/or reputation and share a common understanding of what is important to the community, i.e., those who participated in my research develop their own regime of competence as they engage with one another and co-create and leverage the repertoire of resources for their practice. In Chapter Three, I have argued that the French TED Translators who participated in my research seem to be a self-selected group that demonstrates the most important features of a CoP on the TED crowdsourcing platform. Thus, it is not surprising that they also co-define a notion of competence they recognize among themselves to help them decide whom to work with in the large pool of TED Translators translating into French. Although none of them stated that they would exclude people from their collaboration and practice based on the level of competence (which is also impossible in the TED system given that the self-selected core members of the CoP do not have the power to make rules on whom to include and exclude from their practice), they have a clear idea of the competences that they seek in TED Translators and use these criteria to differentiate the good translators from the bad translators. The unqualified translators are viewed as people to be mentored and who need to learn to acquire the necessary skills, competences and even attitudes to become a competent member, or to be avoided in the day-to-day practice of the competent members. Participation in immaterial labour through

crowdsourced, participatory translation thus creates social structures among those involved based on how well they recognize each other's competence required for the performance of such labour.

Moving onto the details of peer learning processes that TED Translators may experience, I must first admit that I collected little immersive and archival data to shed light on such processes. Given the lack of a space for TED Translators to openly criticize and discuss specific translations, the processes whereby TED Translators negotiate their translations with other translators, especially the reviewers, occur in private and are not accessible to me as the researcher. In the interviews, I asked my interview participants how they learnt to become 'better' and familiarize themselves with the translation rules in TED. In this indirect information about the translator learning processes, what I find most interesting is that TED Translators learn based on one-on-one or one-on-many apprentice models, as explained below.

An apprenticeship program has been introduced by TED to reinforce learning based on peer support for TED Translators. It is called the mentorship program and based on a platform different from the one used for subtitling and the diffusion of TED Talks (TED, n.d.) However, the mentorship program was halted before the start of this research while it was being transferred to a new platform and the transition has not yet been completed. Therefore, I was not able to collect much information about the functionalities of the mentorship platform or the program itself except for the data collected from interviews with TED Translators. Generally, translators who participated in my interview did not find the communication platform used for mentorship to be user-friendly, but they did mention that the mentorship program itself helped them gain new connections and learn to translate TED Talks. For instance, Translator<sub>CN1</sub> and Translator<sub>CN5</sub> came to know Reviewer<sub>CN2</sub> through the mentorship program since novice translators who

register for the program would be paired with a senior translator, who then would answer their questions about translating for TED and review their translations. Other translators who participated in my study also responded that the mentorship program has paired them with reviewers and LC/LS who played a major role in helping them become familiar with TED's requirements for translations and helped shorten the turnover time for their translation since they act as their reviewers. Based on such information, the mentorship program, which was once put in place for TED Translators, demonstrates how participation in the TED Translation Project becomes an opportunity for situated learning as participants acquire the knowledge of what is required of their participation with the support and companionship of people who are recognized as competent members. This is also an opportunity for them to develop new social relations as this process of learning requires communication, collaboration and cooperation with other members as part of the learning network. However, the halting of the program without updates for years also demonstrates that the downside of relying on a third party to provide such opportunities and initiatives means that the participants/translators have no control over what kinds of opportunities are available and on what occasions. This may weaken both the learning they might acquire and the benefits to their participation in the practice of their CoP.

The moments of learning, problem-solving and reflection occur throughout the donation of free labour by TED Translators to the crowdsourcing platforms. A few translators such as Reviewer<sub>CN1</sub>, Reviewer<sub>FR2</sub> and Reviewer<sub>FR4</sub> mentioned that they had volunteer experience in crowdsourced/online collaborative translation projects other than TED and they acquired the competences required for translation through participation in all these activities. According to Reviewer<sub>FR2</sub>, participating in different kinds of voluntary translation activities helps them acquire vocabulary, translations techniques, and plenty of experience they could carry on to the

TED project: “everything goes together and mixes, but all these experiences are good to have”. What differentiates immaterial labour from labour in industrial mass production sites is that subjects of immaterial labour are expected to be autonomous and active in managing “productive cooperation”, and thus collective learning becomes essential to the production process involving immaterial labour (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 134). The development of regimes of competence in crowdsourced translation initiatives such as that of TED Translation Project demonstrates clearly how learning in CoP converge with what subjects of immaterial labour at large need to accomplish.

#### *4.2.2.1 Comparison of Learning Structures in TED with Self-solicited Translator Initiatives*

If we compare how communications and connections among translators are moderated in the TED ecosystem to other online collaborative or fan translation platforms (e.g., in Yu’s 2019 study and Xie’s 2021 study) we can see that, in initiatives where translators have more say in how the translation initiative should be run, open discussions and criticisms which are accessible to all members of the community are encouraged and constitute an essential part of the translator community’s self-correction mechanism. This openness creates many opportunities for the translators and other translation agents involved, including the readers of translation content (e.g., in Yu’s 2019 study) to collectively negotiate their identities by figuring out what their roles within the translator community should be, bringing in their past personal and professional identities, and making sense of their translation activity and what they translate. For example, Yu (2020; 2022) comments on how the translators in her study negotiate their identities as members of their community with varying levels of seniority or experience and their identities as professionals or practitioners of different fields. In this case,

their translation activity therefore inevitably entails a reworking of their sense of self throughout their translation practice so that they can co-define what competence means to them and their community. Moreover, this openness makes all participants in the project feel invited to participate in discussions on translation problems, co-defining their joint enterprise, thus turning their translation activities into meaningful social encounters, which translates into long-term ties and connections that merge into the learning history of the community. Thus, their translation project is sustainable even though the translator CoPs are not always active (Yu, 2022, p. 109).

In contrast, the closed aspect of the TED ecosystem that I described at the beginning of Chapter Three entails means that translators participating in the TED Project do not have the opportunity to collectively negotiate their practice, e.g. collectively decide what constitutes good translation. This said, TED Translators also go through the process of participation and reification as discussed in Chapter Three. Thus, I suggest that there can be different types of CoPs in different translation initiatives and on different translation platforms. The TED Translators' CoPs largely depend on the corporate actor TED which provides and sustains the infrastructure for the TED project. However, it is questionable whether TED or TED representatives can be seen as part of the translator CoPs because of their complete absence in the actual translation activities. If we take the term “communities of practice” rather literally, how can one be part of the community when one is not involved in the actual practice? While actors other than translators can be involved in the practice of translation as Olohan (2021) argues, the strategy of TED to outsource translation, quality control and community moderation work suggests that it operates as an external entity outside of the translator CoPs. While TED

communicates with and takes actions that affect the translator CoPs at different moments,  
Overall.

TED provides the rudimentary structure under which TED Translators learn from and connect with others, and the Translators mostly stay within this structure. This is different from self-organized translator communities where translators need to create an organizational structure for themselves. As a result, in studies like Yu (2019; 2020; 2022) and Xie (2021), plenty of examples of translators collectively co-defining their practice and negotiating their identities can be found, which is not the case for my study. To obtain data that help shed light on how TED Translators make sense of their work in collaboration with their peers, I need to largely rely on the narratives of those who volunteered to participate in my study about their personal journeys and perspectives. This has eventually become a weakness of my study, but it also helps me peek into the drawbacks of the TED ecosystem in terms of TED Translators' journey. If we think about TED Translators' lack of engagement at the organizational level, we may argue that when translation practice involves immaterial labour, where a central corporate actor dominates, the translators' learning structure may not fully meet translators' needs as it is defined by the corporation, which does not engage in the translation practice. Since translators' identity negotiation is tied to the learning process and structure, TED Translators' translation practice creates fewer opportunities for identity negotiation, which may explain their lack of care for others who are part of their community. There are few opportunities for them to get to know others closely, and the development of connections and ties among them is generally irrelevant for their actual translation practice. Due to this learning structure, certain problems, such as vagueness over what exactly constitutes competence for TED Translators, are difficult to resolve and continue to bother the TED Translators.

## Conclusion

In this section, I discussed TED Translators' learning structure and regime of competence. More importantly, by comparing TED Translators' learning structure to that of horizontally organized translator CoPs such as in Yu's (2019; 2021; 2022) study, I would like to suggest that as TED Translators devote their 'labour' to TED, their CoP features a different learning journey or structure than the CoPs of self-solicited translators. If vertically organized translation practice is labelled as immaterial labour, a contrast can be drawn between it and the horizontally organized practices, which are mostly labelled as online collaborative translation, e.g. in Yu (2019). The different learning structures may explain most TED Translators' low engagement in community-building activities, since it is unlikely that this kind of engagement can help individual TED Translators develop competent membership.

### 4.2.2 Three Modes of Identification in CoP

Section 4.2.1 has demonstrated the connection between learning and identity negotiation in CoPs. The negotiation of identity in the CoP framework usefully demonstrates how participation in immaterial labour can create a new form of subjectivity for those conceding the labour as it affects how people make sense of their position in the system where they are situated. Thus, identity negotiation is also essential to how the social world is organized and shaped by practices. Wenger (2010) has emphasized the importance for members of a CoP to understand and make sense of their situation, the system they are in and their position in the system as they negotiate their identities. He further suggests that it is through three modes of identification that we can better understand how we negotiate our identity through socially

situated learning. The three modes of belonging or identification<sup>10</sup> are names as engagement, imagination, and alignment. With examples taken from the interview and archival data about TED Translators, I will explore to what extent the three modes can be observed in the participation of translators in the TED Project.

### 4.2.3 *Engagement*

Engagement as a dimension of practice in the CoP has already been discussed in Chapter Three regarding how it becomes a source of identification and source of coherence for a CoP. More specifically, TED Translators tend to engage one another at different moments of participation in their activities and in their pursuit of the joint enterprise of helping disseminate TED Talks by making them more widely linguistically accessible. When asked about where their sense of belonging to TED comes from and/or whether such a sense of belonging exists for them, TED Translators gave different responses, but all saw opportunities to engage with like-minded individuals in their community as a source of identification. For example, LC/LS<sub>FR</sub>1 has emphasized their sense of affiliation with actors in the TED Project with whom they share the same interest in producing and disseminating culturally rich and diverse contents. Moreover, their mutual engagement with other people doing the same translation work also grants them a sense of belonging to a community: “There is a certain pride associated with being a TED Translator and a feeling of being part of a community with similar aspirations. When someone contacts me via TED, I trust them more quickly.” Apart from being titled as a TED Translator, it is the actual engagement with other members pursuing the same enterprise that constructs a real sense of belonging. According to Translator<sub>CN</sub>4: “I love to join a group. To be a member in the

---

<sup>10</sup> The first term ‘modes of belonging’ is used in Wenger (1998), but later Wenger suggests that the second term ‘modes of identification’ seems more appropriate in the context of CoP (Wenger, 2010, p. 184).

program, it at least gives me an opportunity to meet people who share similar interests.” It allows participants in the practice to develop their trajectories into the CoP so that their learning and practice histories will not be empty words, as their identities are reified through participation—the titles, badges and personal pages that they received for being TED Translators are important and relevant to their identity construction so long as it reflects their actual trajectories of conceding labour to the practice of translation.

Wenger also emphasized that engagement is time-and-space-bound (Wenger, 1998, p. 174-175). The boundedness of engagement as a source of identity can be seen from the information shared by Reviewer<sub>FR1</sub>: “I remember that when we were on Amara, when I applied to be part of the Facebook Group, when I translated much more contents, I truly felt that I was part of the team. I got this feeling when the LC/LS sent us the numbers of TED Talks that our team has translated, this was encouraging and cheering... and it was something really motivating.” In other words, how they construct their identity through engagement is limited to the actual time that they are engaged in the practice and immersed in the set of social relations construed through the practice. Reviewer<sub>FR1</sub> was not an active TED Translator at the time of being interviewed. This was both due to the translation project being paused by the transition from one subtitling platform to another and the fact that they could not handle the complexity of what was going on in their personal and professional development at that time. Later on, in subsequent communication with the researcher, they shared that they dropped TED Translation for good due to the time lag caused by transitioning to the new platform and it was hard for them to pick it up where they had left off.

#### 4.2.4 *Imagination*

Engagement in a practice helps those involved construct an image of themselves and their position within the social world. Thus, our imagination of who we are and where we find our positions in the system we are in “can make a big difference for our experience of identity and the potential for inherent learning in our activities” (Wenger, 1998, p. 176). It involves a kind of work on the self which is different from engagement but no less real than the latter in the sense that it can create ideas about the self and the world that goes beyond the immediate engagement in practice (Wenger, 1998, p.177). It may involve the work of generalization as people may need to categorize large groups of people and decide where they belong and where they do not. In this context, imagination does not produce fantasies but becomes an important component of identification because it helps people envision connections beyond their direct involvement in the engagement that expand across time and space. With the message from TED that participation in the translation project is a way to give back to the society by diffusing knowledge across different languages, the TED Translators make sense of their work through envisioning new connections that this mission statement of TED embodies. More specifically, as TED Translators who participated in my interview make sense of their positions based on their involvement in the TED Project, they not only position themselves in the system and the set of relations created through their engagement in practice within the TED Project, but their engagement also helps create images of themselves as situated in the broader social, cultural and economic context. For example, when asked about why they joined TED, Translator<sub>CN3</sub> associate their participation in TED with an image of themselves as a world citizen:

“Before the pandemic, I completed a Master’s Program in education taught in English, and I got to exchange and converse with instructors from across the world. Such experiences make me feel the beauty of the world, as people living all around the world are inclusive and support each other. Therefore, I would like that the people of my own country experience such emotions (especially the useful knowledge that feels supportive), and that more Chinese people be aware of what is happening around the world, so I joined TED.”

In response to the same question, Reviewer<sub>CN2</sub> also addressed how they understand their own trajectory and their position within the world around them where social and technological changes take place both locally and internationally.

“Here are my reasons for being a part of TED:

1. I work in international trade and thus I want to enrich my vision and expand my knowledge.
2. As someone born in the 1980s and moved from the countryside to the city, I want to witness the transition that occurs around me and in my country, to integrate into the age of Internet and big data, to embrace the avant-garde technologies and to think and to explore.
3. Due to the pandemic, I can devote more time to understanding the world outside and helping the diffusion of the ideas and thoughts of great people in the Chinese world, to enrich and influence the lives of more people.”

Moreover, Translator<sub>CN5</sub> associated their role and their learning as a TED Translator with an understanding of themselves, professionally and personally, as a cultural mediator living in a different culture from the one where she was born. When asked about why they are interested in improving their translation skills through translating TED Talks, they gave the following response:

Researcher: “You mentioned that you want to hone your translation skills, so are you interested in working as a translator or doing paid translation?”

Translator<sub>CN5</sub>: “Here are my thoughts for now: I currently work in accounting, and I have a clear plan for my professional development, which means that it is unlikely I will switch to a new profession in future, as I like my job, and I develop all my skills with a focus on my main profession. Translation is an important skill for me, mostly because I am a Chinese but I live in an English-speaking environment, so I need to communicate with both Chinese-and-English-speaking clients—clients may not be the most accurate word, since I mean my colleagues, my supervisors and subordinates, my clients and potential clients, people with whom I may not do business directly. This is a large group with needs for both languages. This is why translation skills will be an asset for me. If I get to develop excellent translation skills someday through practice, and I can make some money from it, it would be great, but it is not my objective for improving my translation skills. In other words, even if I may never be able to make money from translation, I am still happy, and the thought of putting lots of efforts into it without getting anything in return will never cross my mind. [...] In a country that welcomes immigrants, with lots of people going from and to China, intercultural communication is quite common.”

In all three narratives, the translators make sense of their practice of translating TED Talks and their role as translators in the TED system while bringing in their perspectives on and their positions in the social and cultural systems that reach beyond TED. They discovered connections between their past trajectories and experiences of the social world and their current engagement in translating TED Talks through the idea of breaking down barriers for knowledge diffusion that TED has created for its project. For all three of them, their trajectories involve experiencing the foreign and the international through education (completing an education program in a foreign language) and profession (international trade) or both (living in a diaspora overseas). Thus, apart from incentives such as to give back to the society, to learn new skills and to develop new social relations as discussed in Chapter Three, what attracts TED Translators to engagement in immaterial labour on the TED platform is also an opportunity to negotiate their identities drawing on their experience of multiculturalism and internationalization. They can imagine themselves as part of a community where they play the role of a cultural mediator either by introducing new ideas to their local audience or embodying globalism and multiculturalism in their everyday life using their competence in translation.

Notably, an idea of the self which expands beyond the immediate system of TED and which resonates with several TED Translators from both the Chinese and the French language community is that of a cultural broker. This aspect is clear in Translator<sub>CN5</sub>'s quote above as they construct an image of themselves as an everyday cultural brokerage between the Chinese population and culture of their origin and the mainstream English-speaking culture and population in the country where they reside. Their understanding of their engagement and practice within TED and their learning trajectory to become part of the TED community is tied to their response to their position not only within the TED system, but also in the broader social

system where they are located, which, from their perspective, needs a certain amount of cultural brokerage. Similarly, the French translators' engagement in transcribing more TEDx Talks produced in French so that they could be translated on the TED platform, as explained in Chapter Three, also shows the initiative of cultural brokerage. During the interviews, LC/LS<sub>FR</sub>1 and 2 identified a need to challenge the linguistic monopoly of English in TED Talks and make ideas produced in French or other languages more visible on the TED Platform.

The idea of translation practice as comprised of cultural brokerage on an individual basis, instead of as organized activities of an institution, caught my attention because of my own positioning as a TED Translators translating from non-English languages into English. Since “translators as cultural brokers” is not a new topic in Translation Studies, at the start of my research project, I wanted to find out whether the TED Translators might be motivated by the urge to introduce their own cultural contents to a global audience on the TED Platform. I did not name this incentive specifically in any of my interview questions to avoid using leading questions. Instead, I asked the more open-ended question: why do you want to translate TED Talks? However, during some of my initial interviews, mostly with the French translators, they shared that they either helped organize or participated in collective activities—the review-athons—that aim to transcribe more French TEDx Talks so that they are more likely to be translated. Thus, I identified cultural brokerage as a potential component of the joint enterprise that TED Translators pursue and asked all TED Translators about their interest or initiative in acting as a cultural broker for their language/culture as a TED Translator. Looking at the actual data collected, I found out that even though TED Translators did not name engagement in cultural brokerage as one of their incentives to volunteer for TED, they welcomed the idea of translating content produced in their native language into English. The two French LC/LS, as

more senior and dedicated members, showed more engagement and awareness of the issue of cultural brokerage, which will be further explained in Section 4.2.2.3. However, here I would like to emphasize that as the researcher who is also a TED Translator who translates into non-English languages, to me it is important to help circulate the contents produced in my native language as well as in other non-English language(s) I speak. This helps diversify the contents circulated across the TED Platform and creates more opportunities for individuals and organizations outside of North America to participate in this project of knowledge dissemination. I would argue that without information flows from English into other languages, TED's proclaimed cause of making knowledge more accessible is weak. Thus, my discussion of cultural brokerage in TED Translators' activities is shaped by my own cultural identity and how I position myself in the world.

Moreover, TED Translators' engagement in crowdsourced translation helps them position themselves in affinity with actors who are not involved in the practice of translation and therefore do not engage with them. For example, LC/LS<sub>FR2</sub> understands their role and position in TED as one that goes beyond the immediate practice in translation and in affinity with other kinds of actors in the TED Project such as the TED speakers. During the interview, they commented on the awareness (or the lack of it) of the translation work in the TED Project and the visibility of TED Translators to the broader 'TED community', in the sense that both translators and other partners involved in the TED Project of knowledge creation and dissemination belong to the same category and that relations and/or connections should be naturally built between them. When asked about their perspective on the relationship between TED Talk translators and speakers, they gave the following response.

LC/LS<sub>FR2</sub> : "I found the connection between TED Translators and speakers to be missing, as they are not created by the organizers of TEDx Talks and TED has not talked about it much

either. During the TED summits, I have come across TED speakers whose talks I translated into French many times. Thus, I approached them and told them that I knew their work and I translated it into French. And many Americans were surprised that their talks have been translated into French, since their talks are for the Americans and French speakers are not at all their target audience. This was a bit unexpected. But otherwise, the relation between TED Translators and speakers is generally good, and they are surely happy with the work translators are doing—getting their contents translated and disseminated.“

TED speakers are not involved in the engagement and enterprise of TED Talk translators, but LC/LS<sub>FR2</sub> see themselves in affinity with such a group because of the same contents that they work on and the same platform that they belong to. The speakers do not engage with the translators except when translators reach out to them with questions on the source text, mostly for clarification on the vocabulary. This shows that the identity negotiation for TED Translators forming part of a CoP also involves imagining connections between social actors outside their CoP.

Based on the excerpts from interviews as above, TED Translators may use their past trajectories, their personal experiences or the connections they conceive between them and people not involved in their mutual engagement to negotiate their identities as part of the CoP. Moreover, from Sections 4.1.1. to 4.1.3, I have presented the motivations of TED Translators to engage in TED Talk translation in such a way that their participation could be seen as immaterial labour. Among the non-monetary or immaterial benefits that they receive in exchange for their labour, a major part involves (re-)imagining their positions in the social world. For example, they see being TED Translators as a way to give back to their community and/or society. This demonstrates work on the self as one re-imagines one's position and role in the broader social context through engagement in a practice that is labelled as a way to contribute to the society/broader community. Imagination helps them define their experience of being a TED Translator as they envision connections to a much larger system that goes well beyond their

immediate context of practice and engagement. While TED sends out statements of the life-changing impacts that they are trying to achieve through the dissemination of TED Talks, they did not provide or delineate clear indicators for the influence on people's lives that they may have achieved through disseminating their contents, except for the world-wide visibility they have achieved and the attention they received on digital platforms through views or clicks. However, according to a survey sent to TED Translators in 2022, they concluded that 78% of their respondents stated that their experience of participating in TED Talk translation made a difference on their lives (TEDTranslators, 2024). Thus, participation in the practice of crowdsourced translation, which is unpaid labour in this context, may be life-changing as it not only creates an opportunity to refine or learn new skills/competences, but also an opportunity to negotiate one's identities through constructing connections between oneself and other individuals/systems that go beyond the reality of the actual practice.

#### *4.2.5 Alignment*

Alignment refers to the process whereby members of a CoP go beyond their immediate joint enterprise and mutual engagement and align their participation with the broader enterprises that exist in their social context beyond the CoP (Wenger, 1998, p. 179). For example, fansubbers may align their identities with agendas of the consumerist cultural industries (Xie, 2021). While both imagination and alignment constitute important aspects of identity negotiation, imagination involves mental work on the self; alignment, on the other hand, involves the "coordination of [participants'] energies, actions, and processes" (Wenger, 1998, p. 174), thus is more action-oriented. In the TED Translation Project, the most important way for TED Translators to align their identities with broader enterprises is through cultural brokerage.

Cultural brokerage/mediation has been discussed in section 4.2.2.2 as a way for TED Translators to (re-)imagine their identities in such a way that they construct ties and connections beyond the TED platform. It involves a certain amount of work through imagination as discussed in the previous section, since participants continually work on their sense of self while bringing together their contribution to TED and their sense of self as a cultural mediator. Some may coordinate their actions and energies to align with the agendas of groups that act as cultural mediators in their perspectives outside the translator CoP. More specifically, certain TED Translators, as discussed in Chapter Three on the indigenous enterprise of TED Translator CoPs, align their identities with the broader enterprises of organizers of TEDx Talks who introduce ideas from their own cultures and languages to the global audience on the TED Platform. It often involves doing work beyond translation such as transcription or promotion of talks produced in a certain language or in a certain region. For example, LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub> has been active in assisting TEDx events through transcribing their talks and helping find sponsorship for their organization in some cases. Their commitment to TEDx Talks seems to have gone beyond the mere act of translation. When asked about whether they have a target audience in mind when translating TED Talks, they responded: “If I transcribe the TEDx Talks in French, I do so because I think of the organizers. This then allows for them to be translated into other languages.”

Having noticed that LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub> seems to have a specific interest in the TEDx Talks organized by third parties collaborating with TED, I asked them: “Why do you like TEDx Talks?”

LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub>: “This is my personal take, but I think if we only translate from English into other languages, it is the Anglo-Saxon point of view that gets to be transmitted, while the visions of other cultures or nations will not be made known. I like listening to talks produced in other countries simply because it opens things up and demonstrates other ways to see the world. Thus, it is interesting to watch TED Talks from other countries and to be able to translate other languages into English, of course, but also into French or other languages. [...] Each country has

a very different take on things and it is beneficial for the whole world to know. This is why I like it. I think it is important, but it is not the main business of this initiative. Thus, it is an initiative that we worked on and we asked people we knew to do it.”

The organization of TEDx Talk events to introduce locally produced ideas to the world reverses the process of introducing TED Talks produced in conferences/events based in North America to the world, and thus may be seen as efforts of intercultural mediation/communication/brokerage with an operating agenda of making the perspectives of cultural minorities more visible. Another example is in their efforts devoted to language combinations other than English for translating TED Talks: “Together with translators from other language communities, we work to translate into our own languages, in language combinations beyond English. Examples include Italian-French, Japanese-French, Portuguese-French”. They go beyond the joint enterprise of TED Talk Translators in this quote and position themselves in the enterprise of a broader community or group of people that try to make their own cultural perspectives and ideas visible by producing TEDx Talks that reflect their own cultural views for circulation on the TED platform. In this process, they align their sense of self, actions and efforts and the critical perspective on the TED Platform as an outlet for a single cultural perspective that they developed through participation in crowdsourced translation/immaterial labour. It follows that helping the diffusion of TED Talks produced in non-English languages through translation and transcription may become a way for TED Talk translators to engage in cultural brokerage.

Another example of this alignment comes from elicited data collected from LC/LS<sub>FR2</sub>. As LC/LS<sub>FR2</sub> repeatedly used the modifier “American” when addressing TED Talks in our interaction, I initiated a discussion to further clarify what this modifier means to them:

Researcher: “The word American, does it only describe the origin of TED Talks or the content of TED Talks?”

LC/LS<sub>FR2</sub>: “Certainly the latter. The American origin is not a problem but there is also a strong inclination towards the American themes and an American perspective. I became advocate of a certain number of TED Talks in French to help disseminate them. What interests me [about TED Talks] is really the content. I think certain contents are universal. On the contrary, I think that certain TED Talks are too American-centric and they don’t resonate with me. It is interesting as it is like a window on the American culture, but it does not really imply a global relevancy. It is not that I am not interested at all, like we can learn about the juridical system in the United States. This is really good, but this is not relevant to me directly. On the contrary, it makes sense to share good ideas from all around the world and to make one wonder: this may be useful for my country or my city. I think this is where TED demonstrates a universal appeal.”

LC/LS<sub>FR2</sub> also took a critical perspective on TED’ agenda in this excerpt by expressing an interest in universal values or ideas while TED, despite adopting a narrative on promoting an agenda of spreading great/important ideas, focuses on the promotion of contents with roots in and relevancy for the American culture/society. In their actions, LC/LS<sub>FR2</sub> had also been actively engaged in the organization of virtual activities and events that encourage translators to explore Talks produced in non-English languages, such as helping with the organization of transcription activities taking place virtually among French TED translators. Such coordination of efforts not only helped the development of an indigenous enterprise, as discussed in Chapter Three, but also aligns with the external group/community that tries to popularize locally produced contents on the TED Platform.

In both examples, the two French LC/LS took a critical stance on TED’s agenda and coordinate their efforts, actions and energies in alignment not with this agenda but with the agenda of the group that goes in the reverse direction of intercultural communication. This group was never clearly named except for ties with the organization of TEDx Talks but it appears to consist of people coordinating their actions and energies towards brokerage for their native cultures on TED’s international platform. When asked about whether they consider themselves part of the TED community, LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub> shared that they considered themselves of part of a

community that “does not want TED Talks to become empty words”, while the agenda of TED is “try to promote their talks and get clicks” with which they do not agree, thus disassociating themselves from TED’s agenda, and trying to work towards an indigenous enterprise for their practice.

#### 4.2.6 *Conclusion*

In this section, I first used examples from archival and elicited data to demonstrate in what ways participation in crowdsourced translation on the TED platform can be conceptualized as immaterial labour, and why it is useful to adopt the concept of immaterial labour as I apply a practice lens to crowdsourced translation. Then, I built on what has been argued in Chapter Three about how TED Translators should be seen as CoPs by further exploring the process of identity negotiation for TED Translators as they engage in their practice. Essentially, my goal is to show that an analysis through the CoP lens can complement the conceptualization of TED Talk translation as immaterial labour by revealing how engagement in immaterial labour can create a specific form of subjectivity for the participants. Translating TED Talks may be conceptualized as a form of immaterial labour because TED Talk translators do not expect to receive monetary rewards but find pleasure or meanings in co-producing cultural contents like TED Talks. Immaterial labour creates an opportunity for those conceding the labour to negotiate their identities through developing (or not developing) the competences sought after in the CoP during their trajectory of participation, and (re-)constructing a sense of self by bringing together their imagination of their position in the broader social system, their alignment of their practice with the bigger enterprises of an external group, and the reification of their identities through engagement and practice.

Using examples from TED, I have shown the ways in which participation in translation practice by CoP members gives rise to structures and systems as they affect the ways people position themselves in the social world and imagine their relations with others. Immaterial labour produces a “social relationship (a relationship of innovation, production and consumption)” (Lazzarato, 1996, p.137). This said, the creation of “social transactions” (Benkler, 2006) and value by immaterial labour is made possible through the emergence of CoPs among those involved in the labour as they create cultural contents. Moreover, applying a CoP perspective on the subjects of immaterial labour do not treat these subjects as passive. Work on the self and reflection on one’s position and actions within social systems constitutes an indispensable component of identity negotiation in the CoP Theory. Having looked at the moments where the TED Translators may negotiate their identities during their practice, I argue that involvement in immaterial labour does not necessarily stripe one of their critical perspectives on the agendas of the party which demands immaterial labour. As Wenger (1998) points out, CoPs are constantly handling and responding to their situations and this response becomes part of the negotiation process for the participants. In the case of TED, the response of certain participants to the agendas of the translation platform with which they do not agree is to align their practice and sense of self with the agendas and enterprises of broader groups/communities.

#### ***4.3 Immaterial Labour, the Platform Economy and TED Translation Project***

The previous section examines the points of convergence between immaterial labour and CoP, in the case of TED Translators. Moving from a more agent-centered, individual and insider lens to a focus on the broader context for TED Talk translator’s engagement in immaterial labour, this section will examine the position of the TED Translation Project in the platform

economy and the translation initiator TED as an external factor on translator's participation/immaterial labour. Later in this section, I will explain in what ways TED may leverage translators' immaterial labour to potentially generate economic value and how it acts its status as a restraining force on translators' participation, how the translators respond to this force and the consequences for their practice.

Given that different kinds of playbour sustain today's digital culture and economy, researchers on digital culture, industries and media have taken two polarized stances on the consequences for those involved in such labour, as discussed in Chapter Two. Researchers such as Terranova (2000, 2004) presents the organization of a modern, digital economy around immaterial labour as exploitative as it puts cultural labourers and workers in a more precarious position. However, others suggests that one must go beyond the logics of economic exchange to look at the impact of new forms of digital/immaterial labour. The logic of economic exchange cannot account for social transactions that widely take place on networked, digitalized platforms (Benkler, 2006). Moreover, Autonomist scholars such as Hardt and Negri (2001, 2004) suggests that the subjects of immaterial labour are not fully subsumed under the command of capitalism because of the creative subjectivities that engagement in the creation of cultural, informational contents bestow. In Translation Studies, researchers such as Piroth and Baker (2020) and Zwischenberger (2024, 2022) have argued for a critical lens on the unpaid labour in online translation that may take on the name of 'voluntary'. More specifically, the role of immaterial labour in helping sustain a platform economy that may force translators into precarious, less secure and poorly paid positions needs to be critically examined, and we need to ask the question about who benefits, especially economically, from the unpaid labour of those doing crowdsourced translation (Piróth & Baker, 2020). In the previous Chapter and the previous

section in this chapter, I have looked at the ways in which participation in the TED Translation Project provides immaterial/non-monetary benefits to the TED Translators, as well as the opportunities it creates for them to reposition themselves in the society, such as developing new ties and negotiating their identities through their practice of translation. Now, it is important to examine in what ways TED as a platform may benefit from the unpaid work of TED Translators.

Thus, an important question about the TED initiative is whether TED benefits financially from the free translation labour from TED Translators. In the “How TED works” section on TED.com, TED describes itself as profit-generating through various ways such as attendance fees to TED Conferences, sponsorships, foundation support, licensing fees and sales of cultural products like books, and states that the revenues are spent on maintaining the digital platform like web development and video editing and support for community initiatives like TEDx events (TED, n.d.). As per U.S. government regulations, as a corporation registered as non-profit and charitable, TED is required to publish its tax documents every three years for public inspection. On the website of Internal Revenue Service of the US government, using the search tool for US charitable organizations named “Tax Exempt Organization Search”, I was able to retrieve the tax files of TED Foundation Inc. which are required to be made public for it to maintain its charitable status. The most recent tax forms available for TED Foundation are for the year of 2022. TED does not specify the revenue or income made through the TED Translation Project in these forms. Nor does TED provide further information on where such information can be found specifically on whether or not revenue/income for the corporation is generated through translation-related activities and how the money is spent, including the tax forms made public for public inspection and its official information outlet TED.com<sup>11</sup>. As the products of a “shadow

---

<sup>11</sup> In response to Question 13 in the form 990-PF “Return of Private Foundation”: “Did the foundation comply with the public inspection requirements for its annual returns and exemption application?”, TED provides its website

labour force”, the actual contribution of people participating in crowdsourcing has always been difficult to quantify and monetize (Howe, 2008). The business operation of the TED Foundation as a whole is beyond the scope of this research, since this research is mostly concerned with the relations between TED and its translators. Thus, I will not go into details on the breakdown of revenues, sponsorships, investments and expenses of the TED Foundation as shown in the above publicly available documents. However, it is worth noting that TED does not provide any statistical breakdown of its budget on the platforms facing viewers and translators of TED Talks, such as TED.com. While its tax documents are accessible to the public, these documents are lengthy and not presented in a language that is accessible to the general public; further they can only be reached through a target search on the IRS website instead of, for example, being linked on TED.com. Thus, TED does not show the intention of presenting quantifiers of its business operation to the “prosumers” of its cultural products in a transparent way.

Although the translation initiative is missing in TED’s breakdown of its annual revenues and expenses, the translations produced by unpaid TED Translators may be capitalized and generate income for TED. Apart from the fact that these translations help attract more attention and traffic to TED’s platform across the globe, TED launched a partnership with the enterprise “SYSTRAN Translate” in 2020. The objective of this partnership is to develop machine-translation tools for commercial sale that target specialized translation while leveraging the multilingual corpora produced by TED Translators. In SYSTRAN’s own description of the partnership, they are leveraging models owned by TED that target specialized domains like finance, health, science, education etc. (SYSTRAN, 2023). Since September 2020, TED has

---

address: “TED.com”. However, while TED.com has generic information on the fact that revenues made from TED Conferences, related partnerships, and sponsorships are spent on the operation of the corporation and the maintenance of the platform, it does not specify how much expenses and/or revenues exist for the translation project.

partnered with SYSTRAN, a for-profit enterprise of AI-based machine translation technologies, allowing the company to use its multilingual database to help the latter develop a neural machine translation solution to specialized translation. As one of the oldest companies that provide machine-powered translation solutions for businesses, SYSTRAN not only provides machine translation solutions on its own but also partners with computer-assisted translation tool providers like memoQ by powering the translation tool with its machine translation engine (“What is SYSTRAN?” n.d.):

“SYSTRAN is TED's first-ever authorized partner in bringing together TED content and machine learning to develop a commercial product,” said Alex Hofmann, Director, Global Distribution & Licensing at TED. “The fact that our inaugural collaboration in the AI space is focused on neural machine translation models built from translations of TED Talks in multiple languages feels natural and are now available on a licensed basis to help enterprises and organizations meet their most sophisticated translation needs.” (SYSTRAN, 2020)

Thus, the translation products produced by TED Translators are owned by TED instead of the translators, who are the subjects of the labour. Moreover, TED never publicly announced this partnership to its translator communities, and therefore most TED Translators are unaware of its existence. When asked about whether they knew about this product, among my interview participants in follow-ups of the interview, only the French LC/LS interviewed were aware of this partnership, while other either did not provide information/comment or answered that they were not aware. The two LC/LS commented that this information had been shared with them by another LC/LS who was offended by TED's use of the translation data that they produced for commercial use and without their consent and acknowledgement. However, both of them seem to have reconciled this issue. LC/LS<sub>FR2</sub> shared that a partnership like this was not an issue to them because their goal is to contribute to the general good by making use of the TED Platform, and such partnerships sustain the operation of the platform. Thus, they consented to give out their labour and labour products by participating in the TED Translation Project. LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub>

shared that although they did find such partnerships offensive, the breach and leverage of personal data seemed to be inevitable to them in today's platform economy and not restricted to TED, but other large platforms such as Uber. Moreover, LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub> recalled reading an article in the agreement they accepted to join TED that all translators renounce copyright to their work which becomes the property of the TED platform.

The TED Translators who responded to my inquiry provided polarized answers on this issue—some of them were unhappy with the fact that while they worked on TED Translations thinking of the common good, the results of their labour were leveraged by TED for commercial ends; others did not care about how their translations were being used. However, they all mentioned that they would like more transparency from TED about how their translations are actually being used.

The lack of transparency from TED also extends to other aspects of the Translation Project. For example, the two LC/LS interviewed shared that there has been a general lack of clarity and transparency on how major decisions about the operation of the translation project were made, especially in regard to the transition to a new subtitling platform. More specifically, the transition of the platform involved major restructuring of the translation workflow, which limits the role of LC/LS by removing their approval as a necessary step for the publication of subtitles. Moreover, technology-wise, the TED Translators who participated in my research as well as others who did not participate in the interview but consented to give their opinion on the platform for my research did not consider the transition to the platform as a major upgrade for them as the users. On the contrary, many preferred the old platform which is the one they were more used to. About switching partner platforms and changing the translation workflow, TED only consulted the LC/LS instead of the general translator communities. LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub>, for example, shared that they

received an online survey to collect their opinions on the upcoming changes, but again, there was a lack of transparency on how their opinions were integrated into the new changes. LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub> shared that they voted against streamlining the translation workflow and limiting the role of the LC/LS, but TED proceeded to make the changes without providing further information. While LC/LS<sub>FR2</sub> did not directly share what they voted for on this subject, in written communications with me following the interview, they shared that they “felt that TED had already made the decisions before they consulted the translators about changes to the translation project”. Thus, it seems that for both LC/LS, there was a lack of transparency in the decision-making processes at TED’s end and in regard to their perspectives on how the TED Translation Project should function. Of course, since only two LC/LS participated in my interview, it is hard for me to generalize LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub> and 2’s perspective to all other LC/LS, even in this particular language community.

Based on the feedback that I was able to obtain from TED Translators, TED seems to be the party with real decision-making power when it comes to the translation project, and translators neither own their translations nor have control over the workflow. In TED’s clarifications on different roles within the translator communities, the senior translators such as the LC/LS are expected to act as a mediator between TED and the translators by collecting and transferring translator feedback to TED, for example, during the TED Translator Summits, which involve off-line meetings for TED and a select group of “star” translators. However, as the elicited data collected in this study shows, there is always a lack of clarity and transparency on how their opinions are actually integrated into the design and updates of the crowdsourcing platform, not to mention that only a small portion of the translators’ opinions are sought.

As emphasized throughout this dissertation, immaterial labour largely involves social transactions, and thus a framework that focuses exclusively on economic transactions and labour relation like orthodox Marxism cannot account for how this plays out in cultural cocreation on digital platforms. In certain cases, payments could de-motivate rather than motivate participation in co-creative, crowdsourcing activities such as Wikipedia (Scholz, 2016). This is not because participants are “Samaritans who magically float in the upper echelon of Maslow’s pyramid of needs” (Scholz, 2016, p. 89) but because non-monetary remuneration, such as peer acknowledgement, matters more to them, and labour in this case involves a social instead of market transaction (Benkler, 2007, p. 96). This is not surprising since applying a CoP lens to TED Translators has shown that such social transactions are central to their practice and learning, and this process sheds light on how immaterial labour can be pervasive and easily leveraged by corporations in the digital economy. The post-Fordist age also marks a reconstruction of the subject of labour due to the rising forms of immaterial labour—it changes from one that fulfils work tasks within the factory walls to a working human-self who is engaged in self-fulfilling activity (Harding, 2013). The development this form of “post-industrial productive subjectivity” can fulfill the potential of all members of a society to be a productive subject for the post-Fordist economy by exploiting their labour power outside the traditional workplace (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 136). Lazzarato (1996) suggests that immaterial labour involves the combination of various skills including the intellectual and/or creative skills, the manual skills and the entrepreneurial skills required for the development and management of relations/relations, and it involves a production cycle that depends largely on and dissolves into the network once it is over. In the TED Translation Project, the translators combine a variety of translation, cultural and social skills to complete their tasks for TED, which occurs ‘naturally’

because of the social learning processes as the CoP theory shows. More specifically, as TED Translators begin to form their CoPs as they engage each other in their translation practices, they are constantly making sense of their work, trying to figure out how to become better at what they do and/or what constitutes recognized competence for their communities, and trying to manage social relations amongst them, such as the relations of mentorship between senior and new TED Translators. Their labour depends on and feeds back into the networked platform provided by TED, as a large part of the network/community maintenance work depend on the translators themselves—TED provides technical support for the platform, as discussed in Chapter Three, but the work of maintaining social relations among translators, facilitating the translator communities etc. depend completely on active TED Translators assigned such responsibilities. Eventually, the results/products of their labour power goes to TED, the owner of their translation platform.

The above discussions on the relation between TED Translators and the initiating party TED demonstrate that the ownership of the translation platform and the translation products and whether or not unpaid translation products can generate profits for the owner are also important to consider when evaluating the impact of immaterial labour on the translators involved, the practice of translation and the reality of intercultural communication. In an attempt to revisit the concept of user-generated content on digital platforms, Zwischenberger (2022) argues that only contents that are truly created by non-professionals and not for commercial use should be considered as ‘user-generated content’. While TED claims that its activities are charitable in respect to supporting the growth and spread of great ideas and knowledge, an analysis of its annual tax breakdown and observations of its intent by translators who have worked with them for a long time demonstrates that it invests most of its budget and revenues into investing itself—

TED as a platform for organizing conferences and events and diffusing the results of those conferences in a centralized rather than de-centralized way. Although the model it developed has inspired grassroots and community-based initiatives to copy this model in delivering, for example, TEDx Talks, such initiatives make up a much smaller part of TED's annual expenses and do not appear to be the focus of TED's agenda. Thus, the concept of 'charitable' activities become questionable since most of the revenues made and funds available are spent on TED itself instead of going elsewhere.

LC/LSFR1 has commented during the interview that from their perspective, they don't believe TED to be interested or invested in the translation and dissemination of TEDx Talks, although this is what they consider the most meaningful part of their translation activities. Examining the quantifiers that describe TED's expenses on its charitable activities in Part VIII-A of the Form 990-PF for the year of 2021, I found the breakdown to be the following: expenses on the "officially organized" TED conferences are 15,292,906 USD, expenses on the Audacious Project, is described as a fundraising project to connect external sponsors and donors with previously selected great ideas or projects, are 8,449,987 USD. Expenses on the TED-ED project, which helps the development of animated short videos for general and edge-cutting knowledge dissemination under the brand name TED, cost 7,04,418. Expenses on TEDx Talks, which is described as "the largest grassroots organization in the world" in the form 990-PF, cost 2,652,598 USD, the least of all four charitable activities listed here. Moreover, the organization of the 'official' TED conferences costs the largest amount of TED's budget for expenses, which is approximately 7 times as the expenses on the support to TEDx events. This shows that financially, TED is disproportionately invested in the planning and organization of the TED conferences based in North America which produce TED Talks.

In respect to the question on ownership, those who joined the TED Translation Project as volunteers do not own any assets of the TED Platform, including what has been created through their own activities. They thus have little decision-making power over which direction the TED Translation Project goes and what will be made out of their activities. The initiating party—TED.com—determines what subtitling platform is to be used and thus the digital environment in which participants create subtitles. This is in sharp contrast to the initiatives described in studies by Yu (2019), Xie (2021) etc. where translators own their initiatives and translation assets. On the contrary, TED Translators seem to occupy a marginal position, while many of their goals and interests do not align with those of TED, as discussed throughout Chapter Four.

Translators' peripheral position in the translation production system is not exclusive to crowdsourcing and can also happen in the translation industry. For example, Abdallah (2011) examines novice translators accepting exploitative conditions for their employment by large, powerful translation companies and has commented on how the altruistic ethics of professional translators can force them into a passive position in production networks where translation companies and businesses become the more powerful actors (p.184). More specifically, examining audiovisual translation production networks, Abdallah (2011) argues that the different kinds of actors involved, including translators, translation companies and clients, all pursue different standards for translation quality. Thus, the actors' interests regarding translation quality are not aligned. Interestingly, for the novice translators who have less power in this network, the more they reinforce their professional ethics for producing quality translations, the more they are blamed by other actors for quality issues because of their marginal status in the network (p.185-186). Thus, translators' dedication to quality assurance may put them at a disadvantage if they are not able to persuade other actors to pursue the same quality.

Going back to the case of TED Talk Translators, I have shown in my earlier discussion of their community dynamics that there is also a lack of consensus over the standards for quality translation and competent membership. On translation/subtitling problems that go beyond the rudimentary standards set up by TED, TED reviewers may apply their individual standards and there is no mechanism for translators to collectively discuss and negotiate rules for translation. Translators who manage to develop closer ties and connections with their peers may negotiate the standards with their connections, but there is barely any opportunity for them to do so as a group, and the results of their negotiation are thus limited to their own circle. As the French language coordinators have said, they are unsure of whether or how the linguistic corpora they compiled are consulted or used by people in their translator community. In other words, it is challenging for them to push forward their understandings of translation quality within their translator community, let alone in TED as a whole. As the researcher, I did not examine and thus will not comment on the validity of the translation rules that they pursue, and I would like to reiterate that the senior Translators that I am referring to here do not have an expert background in translation training. Thus, their understanding of translation quality is not necessarily up to standard for seasoned translation practitioners or instructors. However, the issue of translation quality and, consequently, competent membership of the CoP, reveals the peripheral status of TED Translators in the TED ecosystem. This further shows the importance of highlighting and examining the power relations between different actors involved in translation practices, both paid (as Abdallah's study suggests) and unpaid.

According to Wenger (2010), the CoP theory has received criticism in regard to the extent to which it can account for relations of power within CoPs. However, Wenger (2010) proposes that power relations can be effectively examined by looking at governance, accountability, and

the CoP members' trajectory of identity. Accountability within TED Translator CoP has been analyzed in Chapter Three as part of the mutual engagement of TED Translators. However, in the Section 4.4, I will further discuss governance and negotiability in TED Translator CoPs in terms of how TED Translators make sense of their work and positions in TED while paying attention to their lack of ownership of the platforms on which they “work” and how this can affect the TED Translator CoPs.

#### ***4.4 The Translators' Reaction to the Extractive Activities of the Online Subtitling Platform TED***

My last research question begins by asking what constraints may affect TED Translators' practice, moving on to calls for a further examination of the relations between TED and TED Translators—the two most important actors involved in the practice of crowdsourced translation in the TED ecosystem. In Chapter Three, I explored how TED Translators' translation and community-building processes can be explored by the CoP Theory and, the first two sections in this chapter sought to demonstrate the relevancy of immaterial labour as a theoretical concept to my research. Conceptualizing crowdsourced translation practices as immaterial labour, I used examples from other studies applying the CoP Theory to virtual translator communities to show how TED Translators' practice is different from theirs. In my view, immaterial labour carries the legacy of Autonomist Marxism in that it looks closely at the relations between the labourers and those who extract the labour. Thus, labelling crowdsourced translation as immaterial labour, I focus on the relation between the translating actors (TED Translators) and non-translating actor (TED) in co-shaping the translation practice. Whereas in the studies that used other labels (Xie, Yu etc.), there does not exist a non-translating actor with a major influence on the translators'

practices. In this section, I will further explore TED Translators' reaction to TED's influence on their activities.

According to Wenger (1997; 2010), CoP members' engagement in practices are always shaped by external forces and relations, but what exactly constitutes the "external forces" on the translator CoPs. In studies of online translation practices mobilizing the CoP theory, the external influence on translators' activities has been interpreted in different ways. For example, In Xie's (2021) research, translators' activities are affected by external actors like the company that produces and owns the copyright of the contents that they translate/subtitle. In Yu (2022)'s research, external situations such as the local government's attitude towards the circulation of information through citizen media outlets has a significant influence on the operation of self-solicited translation platforms. In my study, TED is the most significant external influence that affects TED Translators' activities. Since TED representatives were not included in my data collection, I will examine this influence mainly through TED Translators' reaction to TED activities that influence their translation processes.

Simply put, TED Translators need to respond to TED's lack of presence in the quality assurance of translations and the facilitation of translator groups by further strengthening their joint enterprise towards what they see as important to their communities. Throughout this dissertation, I have discussed various technological and organizational constraints that TED Translators need to respond to in their practice. More specifically, TED Translators cannot choose what subtitling tools to work with but need to settle with the tools that TED chooses, unlike self-organized fan subtitlers that develop and work towards their own agenda. Further, TED can make changes to the organizational structure of the translator communities without meaningful consultation with the translators. In this section, to further explore the constraints

that TED Translators need to respond to in their practice and in what ways they may respond, I will apply the concept of negotiability in CoP theory as an entry point to the power relations around which TED Translator CoPs are structured, and discuss how this can alert us to the unwanted consequences of immaterial labour.

#### *4.4.1 Lack of negotiability: one example of how TED Translators' community-building processes can be influenced by the external actor TED*

Wenger defines negotiability within a CoP as “the ability, facility and legitimacy to contribute to, take responsibility for, and shape the meanings that matter” (Wenger, 1998, p. 197). More importantly, negotiability is affected by to the extent to which we own the meanings we produced through practice or “the degree to which we can make use of affect, control, modify, or in general, assert as ours the meanings that we negotiate” (Wenger, 1998, p. 200). In the case of TED Talk Translation, what may be most useful would be the concept of “negotiability of the repertoire” (1998, p.136/153), which constitutes one of the components of a competent membership. Thus, I will examine to what extent the shared repertoire of TED Talk translators can be negotiated and owned by them.

As discussed in Chapter Three, TED Translators have accumulated a shared repertoire of information and tools designated to facilitate translation and the development of competence for CoP members. Different kinds of repertoire have been developed as a result of negotiation among TED Translators involving the boundaries of competent membership (i.e., who should be allowed to participate in the modification of shared resources for translators). As shown in the discussion among French TED Translators in Chapter Three on the creation of collaborative Excel files to facilitate translations, edition permissions to Wiki portals are restricted to the

LC/LS as determined by TED, and thus TED Translators have created among themselves a repertoire which they see as more inclusive and collaborative, but not one that everyone within their community can modify since the right to modification should be restricted to the ‘competent’ members only. As a result, the TED Wiki portals which are developed mainly by LC/LS and present both the TED guidelines for translation and any supplementary information, resources and tools that members of specific translator CoPs have accumulated are developed as shared repertoire for the TED Translators. The repertoire developed by TED Translators outside of TED Wiki Portals is the result of initiatives of a small group of translators to coordinate work for themselves. For example, only 4-5 French translators’ names appeared in the Excel Tracker to keep track of each member’s contribution in real time, and thus the negotiation of the independently developed tools and resources in the repertoire does not seem to involve the vast majority of French TED Translators. The TED Wiki Portals are relevant for the larger group of all TED Translators since they include translation guidelines to comply with, as confirmed by the fact that all of my interview participants recognize them as a resource to refer to in their practice. However, the TED Wiki Portals have recently been made invisible to the translators as TED is in the process of integrating the information on the Wiki Portals into the new subtitling platform Captionhub. In the generic TED Facebook Group, the following conversation occurred among TED Translators in respect to the inability to access the portals:

Translator 1: Hi, I cannot access the URL starting from the below (to the TED Wiki Portal). Is there any problem?

Translator 2: They announced yesterday they took the wiki down, and will be integrating it into the Captionhub resource page. I already miss the Wiki (Emoji with a sad face).

Here’s the link to the Captionhub Resource Center. The info from the Wiki isn’t in there yet [link].

Translator 3: Hi! I just wanted to add that if anyone needs a WIKI page whichever language, you can make a request through the following link. Have a great day, everyone!

Translator 2: Here’s a temporary workaround using web.archive.org:  
English Style Guide [link]

How to Tackle a Transcript [link]  
How to break lines [link]  
How to compress subtitles [link]

Although a translator in the above interaction shared that the Wiki portals can be requested by filling out a Google Form, I have submitted a request using the form but received no response to date. The other method suggested by a different translator, i.e., using the web caption tool to retrieve web archives, worked to help retrieve Wiki Portals. Thus, before the integration of the data is completed, TED Translators must rely on third-party tools to access the part of their shared repertoire that defines competent membership. Also, the confusion of TED Translators on the inaccessibility of the portals shows that TED did not meet the responsibility to inform and provide clear information to the whole translator community about revoking the portals. The way TED treats the resources compiled and accumulated by translators is similar to the way TED treats the translation data produced by translators. As discussed in Section 4.3, the TED translators do not own their translation assets. This lack of ownership, together with a lack of transparency and communication from TED on how the data is used, affects the negotiability of the shared repertoire. It is hard to argue that the TED Translators can ever fully own the meanings they produce in practice given that external constraints exist in the platform on which they rely for the practice.

#### *4.4.2 TED Translators' reactions to the organizational context of their activities*

TED Translators may respond to constraints coming from TED differently. As discussions of different translators' attitudes to TED's leverage of translation corpora and changes to the Translation Project show, some translators may take the loss of control over their practice and the products of their practice as the exchange for enjoying the convenience of using the free

platform and services. However, as the researcher's consultation with the translators reveal, translators may also react negatively and senior translators such as the LC/LS have left the TED Translation Project due to the initiative not evolving in the way that they wanted. For instance, when I reached out to LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub> to get more context on the development of glossaries shared in their translator Facebook Group, they responded that the LC/LS who took the initiative in the development of some of these documents have left TED because "the development of TED is not in alignment with their expectations". LC/LS<sub>FR2</sub> also shared in follow-up communications after the interview that they were aware that core members of their translator community had left because they were upset about the current state of the translation project. Moreover, in follow-up communications with the researcher, LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub> shared that even though they did not completely leave TED, they are currently a lot less active in regard to their quality assurance and coordination roles in TED.

Researcher: "I am under the impression that, after the migration to the new platform, there are now much less activities in the translator community (more specifically, in the Facebook Group)."

LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub>: "Yes, indeed. The dynamism has been completely interrupted. The role of LC, who facilitates the communities, now exists only as a title. Also, it seems that TED is not interested in facilitating the communities at all. This is really sad."

Researcher: "Also, my other interview participant has told me that they received lots of requests looking for reviewers for their translations, and they think there is currently fewer active LC."

LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub>: "Personally, I only review the translations of (1) the good translators I know or (2) the people who reach out to me and whose translation is good at first sight. Why? Because the role of LC has disappeared and thus there is no training for the translators. Thus, if translators produce mediocre work and I review and make a lot of corrections to it, and then these translators will automatically become reviewers once they have 10 translations published, what is going to happen? There will be incompetent reviewers who approve the texts that are not up to standard. [...] I do not want this and thus I do not contribute."

I did not get a chance to talk to those LC/LS who left TED because they were unhappy with the evolution of the translation project, and thus I am basing their reasons for leaving on the

information collected from those who participated in my study. The information shared by LC/LS is useful in unravelling why certain experienced members of the TED translator CoP may feel alienated from TED and lose the motivation to be active members. This happened as TED showed a lack of interest or engagement in fostering the translator CoPs by staking stock of translators' community-building processes. For example, French TED Translators developed an indigenous enterprise and defined their own regime of competence as they mutually engage in translation and develop their own shared repertoire. However, TED's guidelines on how to translate, which is publicly available, do not reflect translators' regime of competence. Thus, it is unclear whether, if at all, TED has tried to integrate any standards developed by translators to align the translation project with the lived experiences and practices of translators. Thus, the new changes made to the review procedure for TED Talks are viewed negatively by core members of the CoP such as LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub> because they are not aligned with the evolvement of their CoP. Again, for my interview participants, TED has not done enough work, if at all, to familiarize itself with the management of each translator CoP by the translators themselves, and thus its conception and adjustment of the translation project goes against the ideas of these CoP members.

Based on the examples above, it is clear that TED Translators can hold critical views of the TED Translation Project, especially of how they are treated by TED, while engaging in their translation practice. They are also aware and critical of the extractivism that TED demonstrates in the way it leverages the fruits of translators' labour. The more TED Translators engage in community moderation and facilitation beyond mere translation, the more they are likely to be critical of their relationship with TED. This relationship is comprised of how much (or little) prestige they possess in the TED ecosystem for their contribution and how they should be included in the development of the Translation Project as a whole. Thus, participation in

extractivist crowdsourcing projects like that of TED does not mean the absence of a critical awareness on one's positioning. This critical awareness also plays a role in the identity negotiation of TED Translators and affects their self-positioning in the TED ecosystem. As discussed in this section, senior TED Translators' critical reactions to how they are treated by TED include taking on less responsibilities (e.g. being more selective about whose translations to review) and ceasing to participate in the crowdsourcing initiative. Due to the small sample interrogated in this study, it is unclear to what extent such observations can be generalized to all TED Translator CoPs and in what other ways TED Translators react to TED as an external force. However, the decrease in translators' activities in their online forums for community building rather than accelerating the publication of their translations, which accounts largely for my challenge to collect immersive data, shows that there is a shift in the dynamics of the translator CoP after the recent developments in the TED Project. Even though a fairly small number of senior translators openly shared their frustration with TED, their reactions help me contextualize the silence and lack of engagement of TED Translators that I notice from the start of my study. Thus, it is hard to say that TED has taken any action to successfully strengthen the development of translator CoPs, even though the changes that it recently implemented may bring up the speed of publishing translations.

#### ***4.5 Dysfunctional CoPs? Challenges for Translator CoPs engaging in Immaterial Labour***

In the previous section, I commented on how TED Translators may react critically and negatively to the influence of TED on their activities. In this section, I will further discuss how the external forces coming from TED affect the status of their CoPs. Throughout Chapters Three and Four, I have given many examples of how TED Translators benefit from a socially situated

learning structure and demonstrate a community-building process as they seek to strengthen connections and ties among themselves, which forms the basis for their learning structure. However, I also showed examples of how TED Translators' learning structure, activities and experiences differ from those of non-professional translators in self-solicited initiatives, such as in Yu's (2019; 2022) and Xie's (2021) studies. This comparison reveals that TED Translators' learning structure offers them few opportunities to negotiate their translations with a wider range of translation actors since the translation workflow is quite streamlined. Moreover, there is a lack of consensus on how to translate across those who can review other translators' work, and no measure seems to have been taken to encourage different reviewers or LC/LS to negotiate such standards with each other and with the translator communities. As the initiating party, TED could implement a structure which creates more opportunities for translators to negotiate translation problems and co-define translation standards. However, the translation process that TED currently has in place is one that seems to downplay negotiation and prioritize time efficiency. Given TED's overwhelming influence on the structure of TED Translator communities, as well as the clearly negative reactions coming from some seasoned TED Translators, here comes the question whether TED Translator CoPs are dysfunctional.

Wenger et al. (2002) describe how CoPs can be dysfunctional. They argue that there are mainly three kinds of situations where CoPs malfunction: 1) the members of the CoP fail to show sufficient interest or engagement in their communal practice; 2) certain qualities of the CoP are pushed out of balance so that what are normally considered as strengths of CoPs become barriers to knowledge production; 3) the organization where the CoP develops becomes a barrier to its development. In my study, the third situation applies best to the TED Translator CoPs. The discussions of TED's structure throughout Chapters Three and Four have shown that many

problems present for TED Translators' CoPs are attributable to the relations between TED and its translators, which I argue would need more regulation to fully address the needs of translators. Notably, one main consequence of the unregulated relations between TED and its translators is the lack of negotiability (or, a lack of opportunities to negotiate and co-define their practice) inherent in the TED ecosystem.

This lack of negotiability is caused by several factors—apart from TED's lack of transparency and meaningful conversations with translators in regard to the evolution of the translation initiative and TED Translators' lack of ownership of the contents that they create through practice, the program of the TED Translation Project does not seem to be built to encourage exchanges and negotiations among translators. As discussed in Chapter Three in respect to the functionality of the subtitling platform, the platforms that TED has partnered with do not create a public space for translators to openly discuss their questions and concerns, unlike self-organized translation initiatives involving fans of popular culture icons and/or people who translate to push a collective agenda (e.g. [Li, 2015, 2019](#); [Xie, 2021](#)). Not only is a feature of public discussion missing from the built-in functionalities of the subtitling platforms, but it is missing in the structure around which TED Translation Project is organized. More specifically, the TED Translation Project is built around a model that aims to boost productivity, i.e., the volume of subtitles produced. Even though TED Translators have found their own space for public discussions to compensate for the lack of communication features in the subtitling platforms, e.g. the Facebook Groups, most of the interactions taking place in such space also aim to speed up the publication of translated subtitles for individual translators, as the content analysis of posts in Chapter Three shows. Such public space may be leveraged by individual groups/CoPs of translators to push for agendas that go beyond the boosting of productivity, as

discussions of the archival data collected from the French translator CoPs demonstrate, but it depends largely on the level of engagement of the specific translator group/individuals involved. Thus, this results in different communication/interaction patterns in the two different translator groups. On a crowdsourcing platform like TED that largely depends on the initiator not interfering except to push forward their corporate agenda, most people participating in the practice of the TED Translator CoPs may remain at the periphery of practice and not develop the competence required for full membership, because of a lack of negotiability or the space for meaningful interactions for TED Translators to negotiate their identities.

The transition of the platforms has also been marked by a decrease in negotiability as fewer people are now required to be involved in the translation workflow. Among all the TED Translators who participated in my interview, Reviewer<sub>FR3</sub> shared information they had on the reasons for TED to migrate platforms. When attending the in-person TED Summits, they learnt from the staff of TED that TED dropped their previous partner platform because they were not able to make the changes they wanted with the platform. However, the changes in the working environment of TED Translators resulting from the migration do not seem to work to the advantage of translators. None of the TED Translators who participated in my interview considered the transition an upgrade to their working environment. The LC/LS and everyday translators described the migration as a force that interrupted the activities of translators and the facilitation of translator communities. According to LC/LS<sub>FR2</sub>, the problem also comes from TED's lack of transparency and communication on the status of the migration, which could have mitigated the negative effects on translators' practice. LC<sub>FR1</sub> has also made very negative comments on this change in our communications because it has led to incompetent people being granted reviewing rights after they publish ten sets of subtitles. This drastic change shows TED's

need to maximize productivity in translator groups due to various negative impacts of the prolonged transition including decreased sociality in translator groups, loss of talent due to people not returning etc. TED's lack of interest in involving members of the translator CoPs in critical decision-making processes regarding the translation project has caused negative impacts on the translator CoPs, resulting in alienation of members, and more recently it seems to have further distanced from insider perspectives of the CoP members when prioritizing its own interests in speeding up production of subtitles for more visibility. Moreover, the breakdown of TED's annual expenses presented in Section 4.3 supports the observation of certain senior TED Translators that TED shows far less interest and is much less invested in the patronage of the third-party, grassroots events of TEDx Talks which some of the most active and engaged TED Translators consider important to their practice. This shows that the enterprise of TED and the joint, indigenous enterprise of TED Translators diverge as translators construct their identities as cultural brokers. Although TED is not considered a part of the Translator CoP, it remains an important actor in TED Translators' translation practice. When the actors involved pursue different goals or interests, the basis that holds the CoP together begins to break down, causing the CoP to become dysfunctional.

### ***Conclusion***

In this chapter, I showed that TED Translators can obtain various benefits from their participation in TED that carry social instead of economic value. Moreover, both immaterial labour and CoP emphasizes the opportunities for learning and acquiring competences through labour activities. The subject of immaterial labour is a learner that needs to acquire certain communication, problem-solving and intellectual skills to become an autonomous labourer in

today's cooperative networks. The CoP Theory focuses on how social learning at the individual level can give rise to larger structures and systems. The learning process is also the identification process in the CoP framework. The regime of competence and the three modes of identification that feed into TED Translators' sense of belonging to the TED Translator community can thus explain why people may be attracted to immaterial. Such an approach integrates the perspectives of the subjects of immaterial labour, thus not silencing them by applying a macro sociological lens. Such an agent-centered lens of analysis will contribute more meaningful insights to research on translation crowdsourcing by simply condensing corporate practices as exploitative.

Wenger (1997; 2010) cautions against idealizing CoPs as inherently harmonious. Indeed, CoPs are far from being free of conflict/dissidence and can become dysfunctional when there are flaws in their structure (Wenger et al. 2002). Since CoPs are constituted of complex connections and relations between the different kinds of actors involved in the practice, this chapter aims to understand the relation between institutional/corporate actors and individual agents involved in crowdsourced translation. Moreover, the adoption of the term 'immaterial labour' implies that we are looking at a relationship where labour is being extracted by one party from another, and the conditions and consequences of this extraction are our focus. Individual actors engage in practice under the conditions and constraints of networked platforms provided and maintained by the corporate actor TED to pursue their individual and collective goals. Findings of this research point to a general lack of transparency on the TED translation project, including information on how much revenue it may generate for the TED Foundation as a whole and how important decisions about the translation project are made. This lack of transparency has a major negative influence on both individual translators' motivation and their involvement in the translation initiative and the dynamics of translator CoPs on general. Being involved in the immaterial

labour of translating TED Talks, the TED Translators are offered an opportunity to gain a form of productive, co-creative subjectivity as they form communities of practice. They try to develop new skills as they mutually engage in translating TED Talks and this experience allows them to re-imagine their positions in the broader social context.

However, being involved in this labour also entails surrendering control over a major part of their activities and what their activities can create, because of their over-reliance on the TED platform. The corporate actor TED, or the organizational context within which TED Translator CoPs are contained, implements a structure where opportunities for TED Translators to negotiate and co-define their joint enterprise are limited. In reaction to TED's presence or non-presence in different aspects of their community management, some of the core members of the CoPs may withdraw from taking on more responsibilities or from the Translation Project. Thus, a CoP that lacks negotiability will become unhealthy and the opportunities for CoP members to engage in continuous learning will be limited.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

### *Introduction*

The scholarly debates around crowdsourced translation date back to the time when Web 2.0 technologies were just beginning to emerge, and such debates and conversations in respect to the implications of digitally mediated translation practices for translation as a practice and a profession still continue today. For example, Massidda (2015) condemns participatory translation practices such as crowdsourcing and fansubbing as essentially unethical and exploitative. Conversely, Dwyer (2017) argues that initiatives such as TED Translation Project that pursue a not-for-profit agenda can help address gaps in accessibility and represent an irreversible trend for the future. These debates reveal the two-sidedness of online collaborative and crowdsourced translation practices: on the one hand, the increasing involvement of amateurs and/or professionals in translation practices beyond the paid translation industry and most substantially on networked platforms that allow for a flexible participation anytime and anywhere may cause the translation profession to become more precarious for translators working in a professional context; on the other hand, such changes constitute only a fraction of the larger changes in people's relations with communication and networking technologies and how people consume and mediate information, which may pose risks but may also create new opportunities for both material and cultural/immaterial production. Thus, it is more productive for researchers in translation studies to examine such practices while adopting an interdisciplinary approach to engage with analytical frameworks and models that have been used to study a wider range of phenomena on digitalization. This study hopes to contribute to this ongoing conversation on what appears to be an irreversible trend for the future because of the affordances of new technologies and people's growing desire to participate in information mediation and self-

expression. Thus, it borrows from existing work on the social implications of our transition towards a more digitalized economy and conceptualizes crowdsourced translation as immaterial labour. Also, inspired by existing research on self-solicited online collaborative translation initiatives that theorize them as CoPs, this study applies an agent-centered lens to communities of TED Talk Translators and examines how their involvement in immaterial labour can create opportunities for them to form the learning communities called CoPs.

Crowdsourced translation as immaterial labour on online media outlets has implications for a) how media content is produced, mediated and circulated (Perez-González, 2012) and b) public perceptions of translation as a professionalized practice (Zwischenberger, 2022). In the age of technology-mediated communication and the economy of attention, it is important for Translation Studies to come up with constructive ways of understanding large digitally-mediated platforms where immaterial labour can be extracted from any web-users with a desire to create and mediate contents through translation. The Autonomist school emphasizes that when people mediate and give meanings to their experience of conceding immaterial labour, they develop a form of subjectivity that makes it possible for them to resist the pervasive capitalist command (Gill & Pratt, 2008). Focusing on the experience and perspective of the “labourers”, the CoP Theory is a good model for exploring how TED Translators mediate and make sense of their experience with immaterial labour on the TED Platform. The state of the TED Translator CoPs, including to what extent their development is restricted by external forces, can also help answer the question to what extent the subjects of immaterial labour can resist the ‘pervasive command’ of digital capitalism. Thus, the research findings can contribute insights on new translation practices and changes in how translation is organized, with special attention to the relation

between the individual translators and the translation platforms. Moreover, the research findings can be applied to a wide range of social phenomena in respect to cultural work.

### ***5.1 Findings***

This section summarizes my main research findings according to the three research subquestions and the overarching research question.

**Research question 1: Given the examples from existing studies using the CoP theory to uncover the significance of digitally mediated translation practice for translator's learning and identity etc., in what ways can the CoP theory and its concept of socially situated learning be used to understand TED Translators' translation practice?**

The cooperation, collaboration, and community-building processes among TED Translators can thus contribute useful insights to practice-oriented research on translation. While practice-oriented research is a large umbrella, the CoP Theory provides a more targeted explanation for the development of translation practice in my case study. More specifically, the findings of this research demonstrate that socially situated learning is a core process in the development of crowdsourced translation practice in the TED phenomenon. However, my findings also show key differences between the learning and community-building processes for TED Translators and those for self-solicited translator communities in existing studies that have mobilized the CoP Theory. Thus, my work contributes new insights to how Translation Studies could mobilize the CoP framework to study translators as learning communities.

TED Translators examined in my study demonstrate the core features of CoPs. TED Translators are a heterogeneous group of people who share the same interest in translating TED Talks. As they participate in the shared practice of translation, they hone their translation skills by engaging in social interactions with their peers. More specifically, this process is explained in Chapter Three with examples of the mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire of TED Talk Translators. This learning/community-building process not only involves the intellectual work of translating and learning to translate but also prompts them to integrate their personal trajectories and ideas into their collective goals. More specifically, my discussion of the “three modes of belonging” for TED Translators—engagement, imagination and alignment—has demonstrated the cognitive processes whereby translators make sense of their work and negotiate their identities. Thus, in accordance with the CoP Theory, individual minds are ‘rebuilt’ throughout this process as translators negotiate their individual identities with the collective identity of the TED Talk Translator, and their learning processes also give rise to structures as a certain number of the translators stay more active and take on facilitation roles. The trajectories of TED Talk Translators in their communities and their collaboration processes show the importance of practice-based, socially situated learning to the future development of Translation Studies. This is especially relevant in our days where technological developments create new opportunities for staying socially connected and retrieving learning materials anytime, anywhere.

However, the ubiquity of communication technologies also bring new challenges for researchers interested the wider social implications of digitally mediated translation. The challenge comes from the need to further consider the influence of corporate and institutional actors who own, maintain and control the technological infrastructure for communication. Throughout this study, based on my own experience, I have given examples of challenges that a

researcher encounters when trying to engage representatives from the corporation. Compared to the translators doing volunteer work, corporate representatives are far more closed off when it comes to conversations with academic researchers, which may be caused by corporate policy etc.. Thus, it can be challenging for researchers to gain insights into the reasons behind the strategic decision-making processes in the corporation that affect the crowdsourcing initiative. Moreover, the closed aspect, the lack of transparency and the one-wayness of TED also affects the practice of the TED Translators. Again, this paper has given examples of translators being frustrated at how they are treated by TED. The translators' learning process is also negatively affected by TED's corporate strategies. More specifically, the translators work together on a crowdsourcing platform where the technologies they deploy and the structure of their workflow are mostly determined by TED rather than themselves. Their engagement seems to offer them far fewer opportunities to collectively negotiate their practice, due to the scarcity of open discussion of translation and community-building problems in their shared online space. By comparing the learning structure and experience of TED Translators to the findings of netnographic research on the CoPs of translators who self-organize and run their own communities, I showed that the corporate approach taken by TED offers fewer learning opportunities for TED Translators than the self-solicited translator communities do. This shows the necessity to take a nuanced approach when applying the CoP Theory to the study of crowdsourcing communities.

**Research question 2: Why is the concept of immaterial labour relevant for studies of crowdsourced translation like the TED phenomenon? Looking at crowdsourced translation from a practice-centered perspective, how can immaterial labour as a working concept**

**contribute to the theoretical understanding of translation, with a focus on the translators' lived practices, e.g. by mobilizing the CoP theory?**

Following the previous section, the strong presence of a corporate actor in the learning and community-building processes of TED Translators shows why it is important to integrate a sociological concept such as that of immaterial labour into the CoP framework applied in this study.

In this study, I operationalized the concept “immaterial labour” from Autonomist Marxism to uncover the reasons behind TED Translators' continuous engagement in the TED project. Immaterial labour provides some explanations for TED Translators' continuous engagement in the translation practice despite the small amount of prestige or rewards that they receive from TED. In other words, TED Translators exchange their labour for translation practice, development of new skills/knowledge, and expansion of networks as part of the wider immaterial labour phenomenon. Although the TED crowdsourcing initiative creates opportunities for translators to take home new knowledge, skills and experiences with them, as explained above, it is also based on a structure that puts them in an unfavorable position. The Autonomist theorists have problematized the extraction and exploitation of people's free labour in cases such as TED. In addition to those arguments, my research findings demonstrate how the extractivist activities of the corporation TED can be detrimental to the development of learning communities of TED Translators, and thus eventually to the success of the TED Translation Project itself. More specifically, as TED Translator CoPs develop, those demonstrating a greater initiative and becoming core members will engage in tasks and activities that go beyond only the translation task to include organization, facilitation, coordination and communication activities. Going back

to the concept of immaterial labour, this development aligns with the Autonomist argument that the subject of immaterial labour needs to develop a wide range of creative, cerebral and communicative skills to work on the cooperative networks. However, it seems that the limited learning structure of the TED Translation Platform cannot meet the translators' needs for skill development, and there is no effort from TED to acknowledge the various roles/positions derived from the translators' practice either. Thus, the greatest weakness of the translators' learning structure on the TED platform is that TED appears to be the most influential actor on the platform while it is not an actual part of the CoP, i.e. it does not directly participate in the translation practice. The goals and enterprise of TED Translators may thus gradually shift away from those of TED. While TED Translators see their lived experience of engaging in the translation practice as their most important takeaway from their participation in the TED project, TED implements a structure that prioritizes quantity and efficiency.

Moreover, I would like to stress that even though I aim to operationalize the concept of immaterial labour, my findings do not negate the materiality of translation practices. On the contrary, the material aspects of TED Translators crowdsourcing practice has various implications for their learning structure and the development of their practice. The material aspects of TED Translators' practice may be understood as 1) the production relations that foreground the practice of TED Translators and 2) the impact of the technological environment where TED Translators work and its limitations. The fact that TED Translators who participated in my study tend to communicate with their peers on external networking platforms suggest that the communicative functionality of the subtitling platform is somehow lacking. Thus, there seems to be a contradiction inherent to the TED ecosystem: while the learning structure for TED Translators is one of interactive learning, there is a lack of interactivity in the platform's current

state. Thus, when the immaterial labour of amateur translators is being extracted by corporations, the diverging end goals of the translators and the corporations means that the CoPs emerging from the translation practice are less functional than those in self-solicited translation initiatives. Thus, using the term immaterial labour instead of free labour, affective labour etc. shifts attention from smaller structures (i.e. malfunctioning CoPs) to a wider phenomenon (the effect of production relations on translators' self-organization).

**Research question 3: Does TED act as an external force that produces constraints on TED Translators' activities, and how? Based on the answer to the previous question, what insights can we gain into the relation between crowdsourcing translators in the TED ecosystem and TED, the one that solicits the translation?**

TED exerts a strong influence on what information that the translators receive about the crowdsourcing initiative, what tools are used for translation, and what roles exist within the translator communities. As explained in the previous section, TED has introduced an ecosystem to its translation initiative where little attention is diverted to addressing translators' actual needs and goals, and most attention is paid to advancing TED's own agenda. Consequently, an interactive learning structure is somehow lacking for TED Translators compared to that available in self-solicited collaborative translation initiatives. In the TED ecosystem, the opportunities for TED Translators to co-define their enterprise and practice are limited. How TED Translators make sense of this situation varies according to their roles/positions within their community and their personal goals for participating in the TED project.

In Chapter Four, I have given examples of TED Translators' critical perspectives on their relations with TED. Translators who interpret their relation with TED more negatively are those who move to the core position of the translator CoP. The richer and more multifaceted their roles within TED become, the more they become critical of TED's lack of dedication to work on problems that only translators and those directly involved in the translator process encounter. The more engaged TED Translators continuously co-define their joint enterprise and what matters most to their practice as they translate and build their communities. They seek to define their regime of competence, which allows them to differentiate their 'skills community' from everything else. However, while TED controls what subtitling options are available to them and what each role the translators might take entails. While TED does not manage any of the translator communities, it gives a structure to all of them. TED being both "present and non-present" in different translation and community-building processes causes frustration for translators playing quality assurance and moderation roles. In response, they have pulled away partially or completely from their roles and responsibilities within their CoPs. As long as the diverging purposes and priorities of the corporation that initiates crowdsourcing and those participating in crowdsourcing are not reconciled, the learning structure of the emerging CoP will be limited because roles, identities, meanings and practices are not fully negotiated.

## ***5.2 Originality of the current study***

In this section, I will address how my research on TED Talk Translators can contribute new insights to Translation Studies, with both theoretical and social implications.

### ***5.2.1 Theoretical and social implications for Translation Studies and beyond***

Theoretically, this research incorporates the Autonomist notion of immaterial labour into the CoP Theory to study translator communities in translation crowdsourcing. Recently, the CoP theory has received considerable attention in agent-oriented and sociological research in translation studies. The concept of immaterial labour from Autonomist Marxism has been widely discussed in research on the social and economic implications of the changing modes and relations of production as we move into digitalization. However, immaterial labour and the autonomist thinking about the restructuring of labour relations have received less attention from translation studies scholars, except for those doing research on the intersections of translation and digital studies. Again, while immaterial labour can be seen as an umbrella term applied in various types of work on cultural production in the digital economy, the combination of immaterial labour with the CoP Theory will help us focus on the relation between crowdsourcing translators and the corporate actors that extract their free labour. This study shows that an alliance of the two theoretical frameworks—Autonomism and the CoP Theory—can contribute useful insights to better understanding the relations between individual and corporate actors in the digital economy.

This study of CoPs of TED Translators as examined through the lens of immaterial labour and CoP also further complicates the question of exploitation in crowdsourcing with the advent of informational capitalism. For many who participate in crowdsourcing, receiving certain kinds of benefits/free services in return for their commitment seem to suffice to reject claims about crowdsourcing initiatives being exploitative. More importantly, benchmarks for defining proper remuneration for such economically productive activities become harder to define since people seem to desire more and more ‘immaterial’ forms of reward, such as access to information, learning, free usage of digital platforms, networking opportunities, or more general feelings of

giving, belonging and self-actualization. Thus, the boundaries of exploitation become blurry as well. While exploitation is traditionally understood as the unfair re-distribution of monetary gains to the subjects of labour that contribute to such gains, economic rewards are certainly no longer the major incentive for people to engage in productive activities in peer-to-peer structures. Thus, when researchers in Translation Studies examine the negative effects of possible exploitation of free translation labour on third-party platforms such as TED, they need to account for both social and economic transactions that occur on these platforms. This calls for an interdisciplinary approach for Translation Studies to engage in more constructive conversations on crowdsourced translation. For example, what this research found about TED demonstrates intersections of Translation Studies with the study of the law, especially the dire need for labour and business law to be updated to reflect the newest developments in informational technologies that affect social life. The TED Translators are producing value (social value for themselves and economic value for the platform owner) as they engage in translation, but they are positioned as the consumer of online contents instead of the producer and/or labourer in the TED system. In the digital economy, certain “legal grey zones” have emerged on the Internet in respect to the protection of cultural and information workers’ rights (Scholz, 2016). As people show more and more desire for expression and (co-)creation while leveraging information technologies to this end, we may need to revisit the legal regulations on labour relations to reflect the aforementioned developments associated with the participatory culture. The rights of ‘prosumers’ to the results of their activities and their data, as well as their rights to be kept informed of how their data are used, need not only scholarly but also juridical attention.

The relation between TED and TED Translators is an example of the general relations between platform and individual contributors in participatory culture: the TED Translation

Project provides and maintains a platform for individual contributors to participate in the mediation of meanings and circulation of information—not only the translated TED Talks but also links to resources and connections that contribute to participants’ sense of self or identity—and it provides structures for organizing workshops and activities such as transcribeathons and reviewathons to strengthen ties between members of a translator community. The activities of TED show their interest in using the translation of TED Talks to increase their overall visibility while the TED Translators are essentially attracted to join the initiative by the social value that TED Talk translations create. When the goals and agendas of TED and the TED Translators diverge, the Translators CoPs tend to suffer since the translator communities and networks rely on the platforms maintained by corporations to pursue their own agendas. As interviews with LC/LSs from the French translator community revealed, TED as a platform does not demonstrate willingness or interest in taking part in the actual management of the translator communities or the resolution of specific translation/motivation problems facing translators that requires knowledge of the specific language community. Regimes of competence are established within a CoP from practice as part of the learning history. But TED does not show initiatives in understanding what regimes of competence have emerged within communities of practice amid TED Translators.

In Sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 in Chapter One, I touched on the ways to categorize and conceptualize different digital translation practices based on how they are organized. Looking at how TED Translation may be considered as immaterial labour and how TED Translators respond to the initiating party as an external force, we see how the TED Translation Project functions as a vertically structured crowdsourced translation initiative and the effects on the translators using this platform. Some translators who participated in my interview, such as LC/LS<sub>FR1</sub>, noted the

quality of TED Talks going down with time, but still see the potential of TED as a platform for engaging/mobilizing people to participate in the circulation of information that is of educational value, sometimes in order to forward their own agendas (e.g. encouraging translation flows from their own native languages into English and other languages). Web users may consent to giving up ownership of their data in exchange for free services, pleasure or other things that they desire from networked platforms (Andrejevic, 2012). Thus, it seems true that the modern platform economy is built equally around economic and social transactions, and the ‘immaterial’ returns that people receive from participating in the work that sustains digital platforms are as important as the material returns. The consequence, as for the TED Translation Project, may be that individual initiatives and goals to find/create a meaningful space for co-creation and/or intercultural communication may be easily leveraged by the corporations and/or institutions which provide and maintain the platforms and which have much more decision-making power than individual actors on the platforms. In fandom and Internet studies, a question that is repeatedly asked is whether the segregation of a multitude of people in the digital space primarily for goals like recreation, expression, connection and cocreation can give rise to more meaningful space for intervening in ideological and social problems (e.g. see Jenkins, 2014 and Chouliaraki, 2010). Analyzing TED Talk Translators as CoPs reveals that when people congregate on the platform for TED Talk translation, communities of practice emerge out of people’s desire to become better at what they do, strengthen connections among themselves and position themselves as cultural mediators, which may incentivize them to pursue a ‘bigger’ agenda such as producing contents originating in ‘minority languages’<sup>12</sup> and making that more

---

<sup>12</sup> The definition of what constitutes a ‘minority language’ may be controversial. However, provided that the agenda of the TED Platform is primarily to spread the English talks produced during TED Conference across different linguistic borders so that the corporation TED can gain more visibility around the globe, minority

visible on TED.com. However, because the content creators—TED Translators—do not actually own the contents they produce or the TED Platform and cannot control what happens to the initiative, any enterprise and/or initiative that diverges from that of TED is indeed vulnerable to disruption.

Researchers on immaterial labour suggest that engagement in co-creative work can help construct new forms of subjectivity that may be liberating for those conceding the labour (e.g. Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2009). In TED Talk translation, involvement in the practice of translation can indeed bring benefits to TED Talk translators that are not available outside of this platform. For example, the translators can negotiate/re-construct their identities or their position within the social system through developing new competences, becoming a part of the cooperative network of TED Talk translation, or even pursuing their personal agendas of cultural brokerage. They may, knowingly or unknowingly, surrender their rights to owning the products of their creative activities in exchange for such conveniences. However, what lies behind this mechanism is an interactive learning structure emerging from translators' constant negotiation of their practice, roles and identities. When the negotiability of the translators' practice (the extent to which they own the meanings they produce) is weak because of corporate extractivism, the translators' engagement in the initiative will be affected because they cannot see themselves fully as part of an initiative where they cannot fully negotiate and thus own the meanings produced. The learning structure will then be affected by the resulting low level of engagement and activeness among translators.

### ***5.3 Limitations and future research***

---

languages in this context can be understood as any non-English language for producing TEDx Talks that receives far less attention and support from TED.

This research is an exploratory study examining the translation practice of TED Translators. While it has contributed new insights to how we understand crowdsourced translation as summarized above, it also has limitations. Most limitations are related to the (un-)availability of data that can deepen our understanding of TED. First and foremost, this research began right before TED transferred its translation data and activities to a new platform, a transition that has profoundly limited the kinds of data available. While captions of saved translation drafts were accessible to any registered TED Translator on the old platform, the intermittent drafts that can reveal how translations take shape and the different translation choices made by people involved are now inaccessible to anyone but the translator and the reviewer. Thus, while the LC/LS and the reviewers' understanding of translation norms in TED have been discussed in this dissertation, it was not possible to compare their narratives with the intermittent translations they and others produced to find out how exactly the translations were revised during the review process. Moreover, the transition itself was also a major interruption to the activities of TED Translators, since they could not translate or transcribe TED Talks during the migration of platforms. After the launch of the new platforms and the resumption of translation activities, such impact still continues because digitally mediated translation practice are naturally fluid, flexible and prone to interruption. There is no obligation for TED Talk Translators to continue to 'volunteer' for TED and any interruption to their flows and activities can take a long time and lots of efforts to fix, as confirmed by my LC/LS interview participants. Thus, such interruption has led to less archival data being produced and available to the researcher. For example, the collective activities organized by French TED translators to moderate their community that took place before the migration and were interrupted by the migration never resumed.

Moreover, the number of TED Translators from whom elicited data were obtained is very small compared to the total number of people translating for TED. While this research aims to conduct a qualitative analysis of TED Translators' practice and thus did not seek to collect quantitatively significant data about TED Translators, the findings and conclusions of this research are still limited to the TED Translators who were observed and interrogated, i.e., those who are (or once were) very active in TED.

Cámara (2015) has conducted a quantitative survey on TED Translators on their backgrounds and motivations, and thus contributed statistically significant data on TED Talk translators' motivations, such as wanting to improve their language skills and to find a community. However, this research points to more directions that could be explored by a larger scale, quantitative study on TED Translators.

Another major limitation of this research is the lack of information from those with an insider perspective of the corporate actor TED. While the researcher has attempted to obtain information from the TED staff who plays a part in the Translation Project, no response was received from TED employees. To make up for this limitation, I tried to leverage as much as possible information about TED that are available online to the public. However, there are still many gaps in the data in respect to the critical decision-making processes behind the TED Translation Project, such as why TED migrated to a different platform, what the testing process of the new platform was like, why TED tailors the subtitling platform to include certain functionalities and exclude others, whether, how and to what extent TED incorporates feedback coming from translators in building the translation program etc. In crowdsourcing translation research, it has always been challenging to collect data from the corporate actor, and the information collected might not always be new, meaningful or interesting to the researcher

(Piróth & Baker, 2020). Indeed, the relationship between academic researchers and business/corporate actors that often complicates access to information remains a challenge to future researchers.

The discussion of limitations of the current research has already shed light on possible directions for future research on TED and other crowdsourced translation initiatives. Future research on vertically structured crowdsourced translation initiatives may need to come up with creative and constructive ways to engage the initiating party in the research.

Moreover, TED Translators' learning now completely depend on the translator communities themselves, and not all of those assigned the responsibility of quality control are necessarily competent or care about this work. Thus, future research could explore the possible collaboration between initiatives like TED and education programs to train translators to support the learning processes for TED Translators. As discussed in Chapter One, Piróth and Baker (2020) compared two different translation platforms, Translators without Borders (TWB) as a crowdsourced translation platform and Solidarités International as an NGO that implements a paid internship to help novice translators integrate into the job market. The authors describe the TWB as an "asset-centered, platform-based, top-down model" that adopts a corporate approach to soliciting crowdsourced translation (Piróth & Baker, 2020, p. 6). Conversely, they consider that Solidarité International creates a horizontally structured, collaborative model and the translators participating in this initiative mutually benefit from the internship program. Thus, to foster more sustainable and mutually beneficial relations between people who voluntarily participate in crowdsourced translation programs and the organizations/platforms soliciting the translation, it is important for volunteer-based translation platforms to avoid a vertical corporate structure

Research has, in fact, shown that the TED Translation Project could potentially provide a good model of using situated learning to train translators (Cámara & Comas-Quinn, 2016).

Because of TED's lack of interest in fostering the emerging self-solicited translator CoPs and because it leverages the data produced by TED Translators to develop commercial machine translation tools, it seems that instead of investing in training better human translators, the TED Platform is more and more geared towards using data produced through human activities to train machine tools. In the TED project, people join for the sake of experience, practice, and the pleasure of intellectual labour. How machine and AI tools can play into this process of situated, experience-based learning is worth investigating for future research. The integration of machine tools and AI tools, in translators' situated learning as CoPs in a project such as TED is a possible direction for future research to explore. Nonetheless, within the scope of this research, TED's strategy to develop partnerships that train machine translation tools using the translation corpora produced by TED Translators without their knowledge or consent seems to have a negative impact on the TED Translators' incentives and engagement. TED's corporate approach that treats data produced by translators as its own assets calls for more attention and research on how user-generated content should be properly and ethically used. This implies possibilities of research in regard to the ethics and legal regulations of crowdsourced and other kinds of 'participatory' translation practice in order to set boundaries for the activities of the corporate actors.

The loss of control of content produced through online activities for the pleasure and/or convenience of using free online platforms, technologies and service is a question that faces all Internet users and does not have an easy answer. This study on TED shows that developments in information technologies and people's habits of using these technologies can amplify rather than

minimize the unequal power relations between individuals and the institutional/corporate actors that own and manage the information networks. Translation researchers and practitioners will continue to face challenges of old boundaries being blurred (such as the one between professional translation and translation as leisure) and new boundaries needing to be created (such as those associated with immaterial and voluntary labour).

The extractivist nature of the TED Platform seems to cause the ‘human’ part of translators’ practice to be more and more overlooked in the strategic developments of the TED Translation Project to further boost productivity/volumes of translation, but what will be left for TED, a translation and learning platform that relies on the voluntary work of people who benefit from their immersion in social interactions and networks there, when this part is gone?

## Works Cited

- Andrejevic, M. (2012). Estranged Free Labour. In T. Scholz (Ed.), *Digital Labour: The Internet as Playground and Factory* (pp. 149–164). Routledge.
- Banks, J., & Deuze, M. (2009). Co-creative labour. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 12(5), 419–431. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877909337862>
- Bold, B. (2011). The Power of Fan Communities: An Overview of Fansubbing in Brazil. *TRADUÇÃO EM REVISTA*, 2011(11). <https://doi.org/10.17771/PUCRio.TradRev.18881>
- Bourassa, G. N., & Slater, G. B. (2022). The biopolitical turn in educational theory: Autonomist Marxism and revolutionary subjectivity in Empire. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 54(7), 964–973. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1803833>
- Bowring, F. (2004). From the Mass Worker to the Multitude. *Capital & Class*, 83(83), 101–132.
- Brabham, D. (2013). *Crowdsourcing*. MIT Press.
- Buzelin, H. (2005). Unexpected Allies: How Latour’s Network Theory Could Complement Bourdieusian Analysis in Translation Studies. *The Translator*, 11(2), 193–218.
- Buzelin, H. (2007). Translations “in the making.” In M. Wolf & A. Fukari (Eds.), *Benjamins Translation Library* (Vol. 74, pp. 135–169). John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.74.11buz>
- Cadwell, P., Federici, F. M., & O’Brien, S. (2022). Communities of practice and translation: An introduction. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 37, 2–12.
- Cámara de la Fuente and Comas-Quinn—2016—5. Situated Learning in Open Communities The TED .pdf.* (n.d.).

- Cámara, L. (2015). Motivation to collaboration in TED Open Translation Project. *International Journal of Web Based Communities*, 11(2), 210.  
<https://doi.org/10.1504/IJWBC.2015.068542>
- Cámara, L., & Comas-Quinn, A. (2016). 5. Situated Learning in Open Communities: The TED Open Translation Project. In P. Blessinger & T. Bliss (Eds.), *Open Education: International Perspectives in Higher Education* (pp. 93–114). Open Book Publishers.  
<https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0103.05>
- Cronin, M. (2010). The Translation Crowd. *Tradumàtica: Tecnologies de La Traducció*, 8, 1.  
<https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/tradumatica.100>
- Davier, L. (2022). Risk management within a community of journalists in francophone Canada. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 37, 36–54.
- Denskus, T., & Esser, D. E. (2015). TED Talks on International Development: Trans-Hegemonic Promise and Ritualistic Constraints: TED Talks on International Development. *Communication Theory*, 25(2), 166–187. <https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12066>
- Desjardins, R. (2017). *Translation and Social Media: In Theory, in Training and in Professional Practice*. Palgrave Macmillan UK. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52255-9>
- Deuze, M. (2006). Participation, Remediation, Bricolage: Considering Principal Components of a Digital Culture. *The Information Society*, 22(2), 63–75.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01972240600567170>
- Díaz Cintas, J. (2015). Technological strides in subtitling. In C. Sin-Wai (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Technology* (pp. 632–643). Routledge.

- Díaz Cintas, J., & Massidda, S. (2019). Technological advances in audiovisual translation. In M. O'Hagan (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Technology* (1st ed., pp. 255–270). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315311258-15>
- Díaz Cintas, J., & Sánchez, P. M. (2006). Fansubs: Audiovisual Translation in an Amateur Environment. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 1(6), 37–52.
- Dombek, M. (2014). *A Study into the Motivations of Internet Users Contributing to Translation Crowdsourcing: The Case of Polish Facebook User-Translators* [PhD]. Dublin City University.
- Dwyer, T. (2017). Streaming, Subbing, Sharing: Viki Global TV. In *Speaking in Subtitles: Revaluating Screen Translation* (pp. 164–185). University of Edinburgh Press.
- Dyer-Witheford, N., & de Peuter, G. (2009). *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Eagleton, T. (1989). Base and superstructure in Raymond Williams. In T. Eagleton (Ed.), *Raymond Williams: Critical perspectives*. Polity Press.
- Estellés-Arolas, E., & González-Ladrón-de-Guevara, F. (2012). Towards an integrated crowdsourcing definition. *Journal of Information Science*, 38(2), 189–200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551512437638>
- Flynn, P. (2010). Ethnographic Approaches. In Y. Gambier & L. Van Doorslaer (Eds.), *Handbook of Translation Studies* (Vol. 1, pp. 116–119). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Forde, S., Cadwell, P., & Sasamoto, R. (2022). Navigating agency and professionalism in translation and interpreting: A community of practice of coordinators for international relations in Japan. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 37, 160–181.

- Fuchs, C. (2008). *Internet and society: Social Theory in the Information Age*. Routledge.
- Fuchs, C. (2010). Social Software and Web 2.0: Their Sociological Foundations and Implications. In S. Murugesan (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Web 2.0, 3.0, and X.0* (pp. 763–789). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-60566-384-5.ch044>
- Fuchs, C. (2014). *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*. SAGES Publications Ltd.
- Fuchs, C. (2015). *Culture and economy in the age of social media*. Routledge.
- Gill, R., & Pratt, A. (2008). Precarity and Cultural Work in the Social Factory?: Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25(7–8), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276408097794>
- Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). *Applied Thematic Analysis*. Sage.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (3rd ed). Routledge.
- Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (1994). *Labour of Dionysys: Critique of the State-Form*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2001). *Empire*. Harvard University Press.
- Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2004). *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. The Penguin Press.
- Hasebe, Y. (2015). Design and Implementation of an Online Corpus of Presentation Transcripts of TED Talks. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 198, 174–182. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.434>
- Hebenstreit, G. (2019). Coming to terms with social translation: A terminological approach. *Translation Studies*, 12(2), 139–155. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2019.1681290>

- Heilbron, J., & Sapiro, G. (2007). Outline for a sociology of translation: Current issues and future prospects. In M. Wolf & A. Fukari (Eds.), *Benjamins Translation Library* (Vol. 74, pp. 93–107). John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.74.07hei>
- Heller, N. (2012, July 9). Listen and Learn. *The New Yorker*.  
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/07/09/listen-and-learn>
- Howe, J. (2006). The Rise of Crowdsourcing. *Wired*. <https://www.wired.com/2006/06/crowds/>
- Howe, J. (2008). *Crowdsourcing: Why the Power of the Crowd Is Driving the Future of Business*. Crown Business.
- Huang, B., Cadwell, P., & Sasamoto, R. (2023). Challenging ethical issues of online ethnography: Reflections from researching in an online translator community. *The Translator*, 29(2), 157–174. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2023.2188700>
- Hyde, A. (2011). *Open Translation Tools (Floss Manual)*.  
[https://translationjournal.net/images/e-Books/PDF\\_Files/Open%20Translation%20Tools.pdf](https://translationjournal.net/images/e-Books/PDF_Files/Open%20Translation%20Tools.pdf)
- Jenkins, H. (2006a). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York University Press.
- Jenkins, H. (2006b). *Fans, Bloggers and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*. New York University Press.
- Jenkins, H. (2014). Rethinking ‘Rethinking Convergence/Culture.’ *Cultural Studies*, 28(2), 267–297. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2013.801579>
- Jiménez-Crespo, M. A. (2017). *Crowdsourcing and Online Collaborative Translations: Expanding the limits of Translation Studies* (Vol. 131). John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.131>

- Jiménez-Crespo, M. A. (2019). Technology and non-professional translation. In M. O'Hagan (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Technology* (1st ed., pp. 239–254). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315311258-14>
- Jones, H. (2019). Wikipedia as a translation zone: A heterotopic analysis of the online encyclopedia and its collaborative volunteer translator community. *Target*, 31(1), 77–97. <https://doi.org/10.1075/target.18062.jon>
- Jurgenson, N. (2012, February 15). Against TED. *The New Inquiry*. <https://thenewinquiry.com/against-ted/>
- Kelly, N., Ray, R., & DePalma, D. A. (2011). From Crawling to Sprinting: Community Translation goes Mainstream. *Linguistica Antverpiensia*, 10, 75–94.
- Kozinets, R. V. (2015). *Netnography: Redefined* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Kozinets, R. V. (2020). *Netnography: The Essential Guide to Qualitative Social Media Research* (3rd ed.). SAGES Publications Ltd.
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-network Theory*. Oxford University Press.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lazzarato, M. (1996). Immaterial Labor. In P. Virno & M. Hardt (Eds.), *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics* (pp. 133–148). University of Minnesota Press.
- Li, D. (2015). *Amateur Translation and the Development of a Participatory Culture in China-A Netnographic Study of The Last Fantasy Fansubbing Group*. The University of Manchester.

- Li, D. (2017). A Netnographic Approach to Amateur Subtitling Networks. In D. Orrego-Carmona & Y. Lee (Eds.), *Non-Professional Subtitling* (pp. 37–62). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Li, D. (2019). A complexity perspective on amateur translation networks. *Perspectives*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2019.1609532>
- Littau, K. (2011). First steps towards a media history of translation. *Translation Studies*, 4(3), 261–281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2011.589651>
- Littau, K. (2016). Translation and the materialities of communication. *Translation Studies*, 9(1), 82–96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2015.1063449>
- Liu, C.-Y., & Chen, H. H.-J. (2019). Academic Spoken Vocabulary in TED Talks: Implications for Academic Listening. *English Teaching & Learning*, 43(4), 353–368. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42321-019-00033-2>
- Ludewig, J. (2017). TED Talks as an Emergent Genre. *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 19(1). <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2946>
- Marco, J. (2016). On the margins of the profession: The work placement as a site for the literary translator trainee’s legitimate peripheral participation. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, 10(1), 29–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1750399X.2016.1154341>
- Marin-Lacarta, M., & Yu, C. (2023). Ethnographic research in translation and interpreting studies. *The Translator*, 29(2), 147–156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2023.2233291>
- Martínez García, A. B. (2018). TED Talks as Life Writing: Online and Offline Activism. *Life Writing*, 15(4), 487–503. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14484528.2017.1405317>
- Massidda, S. (2015). *Audiovisual translation in the digital age: The Italian fansubbing phenomenon*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Mattiello, E. (2017). The Popularisation of Science via TED Talks. *International Journal of Language Studies*, 11(4), 77–106.
- McDonough Dolmaya, J. (2007). How Do Language Professionals Organize Themselves? An Overview of Translation Networks. *Meta*, 52(4), 793–815.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/017697ar>
- McDonough Dolmaya, J. (2011). The ethics of crowdsourcing.pdf. *Linguistica Antverpiensia*, 10, 97–111.
- McDonough Dolmaya, J. (2012). Analyzing the Crowdsourcing Model and Its Impact on Public Perceptions of Translation. *The Translator*, 18(2), 167–191.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2012.10799507>
- McDonough Dolmaya, J. (2015). Revision history: Translation trends in Wikipedia. *Translation Studies*, 8(1), 16–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2014.943279>
- McDonough Dolmaya, J. (2017). Expanding the sum of all human knowledge: Wikipedia, translation and linguistic justice. *The Translator*, 23(2), 143–157.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2017.1321519>
- McDonough Dolmaya, J. (2019). Crowdsourced Translation. In M. Baker & S. Gabriela (Eds.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (3rd ed., pp. 124–129). Routledge.
- McDonough Dolmaya, J. (2020). Recent developments in non-professional translation and interpreting research. *Translation and Interpreting Studies*, 15(1), 153–159.  
<https://doi.org/10.1075/tis.20002.mcd>
- McDonough Dolmaya, J., & Sánchez, M. del M. (2019). Characterizing online social translation. *Translation Studies*, 12(2), 129–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2019.1697736>

- McDonough Dolmaya, J., & Sánchez Ramos, M. del M. (2019). Characterizing online social translation. *Translation Studies*, 12(2), 129–138.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2019.1697736>
- Morozov, E. (2012, August 2). The Naked and the TED. *The New Republic*.  
<https://newrepublic.com/article/105703/the-naked-and-the-ted-khanna>
- Nguyen, N. (2022). Scoping out emerging communities of practice of translation in development work in Vietnam: Empirical evidence from the perspective of Translation Studies. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 37, 118–138.
- O'Brien, S., & Saldanha, G. (2014). *Research Methodologies in Translation Studies*. Routledge.
- O'Hagan, M. (2009). Evolution of User-generated Translation: Fansubs, Translation Hacking and Crowdsourcing. *The Journal of Internationalization and Localization*, 1, 94–121.  
<https://doi.org/10.1075/jial.1.04hag>
- O'Hagan, M. (2011). Community translation: Translation as a social activity and its possible consequences in the advent of Web 2.0 and beyond. *Linguistica Antverpiensia*, 10, 1–10.
- O'Hagan, M. (2012). From Fan Translation to Crowdsourcing: Consequences of Web 2.0 User Empowerment in Audiovisual Translation. In A. Remael, P. Orero, & M. Carroll (Eds.), *Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility at the Crossroads: Media for All 3*. Brill | Rodopi. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789401207812>
- O'Hagan, M. (2016). *Massively Open Translation: Unpacking the Relationship Between Technology and Translation in the 21st Century*. 18.
- O'Hagan, M. (2017). Deconstructing translation crowdsourcing with the case of a Facebook initiative: A translation network of engineered autonomy and trust? In D. Kenny (Ed.), *Human Issues in Translation Technology* (pp. 25–44). Routledge.

- Olohan, M. (2014). Why do you translate? Motivation to volunteer and TED translation. *Translation Studies*, 7(1), 17–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2013.781952>
- Olohan, M. (2019). Sociological approaches to translation technology. In M. O’Hagan (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Technology* (1st ed., pp. 384–397). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315311258-23>
- Olohan, M. (2021). *Translation and Practice Theory*. Routledge.
- Orrego-Carmona, D. (2018). New audiences, international distribution, and translation. In E. D. Giovanni & Y. Gambier (Eds.), *Reception Studies and Audiovisual Translation* (pp. 321–342). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Orrego-Carmona, D. (2019). A holistic approach to non-professional subtitling from a functional quality perspective. *Translation Studies*, 12(2), 196–212. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2019.1686414>
- Orrego-Carmona, D., & Lee, Y. (Eds.). (2017). *Non-Professional Subtitling*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Pearce, G., Thøgersen-Ntoumani, C., & Duda, J. L. (2014). The development of synchronous text-based instant messaging as an online interviewing tool. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 17(6), 677–692. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2013.827819>
- Perez-González, L. (2012). Amateur subtitling and the pragmatics of spectatorial subjectivity. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 12(4), 335–352.
- Pérez-González, L. (2012). Amateur subtitling as immaterial labour in digital media culture: An emerging paradigm of civic engagement. *Convergence: The International Journal of*

- Research into New Media Technologies*, 19(2), 157–175.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856512466381>
- Pérez-González, L. (2013). Co-creational subtitling in the digital media: Transformative and authorial practices. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 16(1), 3–21.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877912459145>
- Pérez-González, L. (2014). *Audiovisual translation: Theories, methods and issues*. Routledge.
- Pérez-Gonzalez, L. (2014). Translation and New(s) Media: Participatory Subtitling Practices in Networked Mediascapes. In J. House (Ed.), *Language, Discourse and Social Psychology* (pp. 200–221). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pérez-González, L. (2017). Investigating Digitally Born Amateur Subtitling Agencies in the Context of Popular Culture. In D. Orrego-Carmona & L. Yvonne (Eds.), *Non-professional Subtitling* (pp. 15–36). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Pérez-González, L., & Susam-Seraeva, Ş. (2012). Non-professionals Translating and Interpreting. *The Translator*, 18(2), 149–165.
- Piróth, A., & Baker, M. (2020). The Ethics of Volunteerism in Translation: Translator without Borders and the Platform Economy. *Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Translation*, 1–30.
- Pym, A. (2011). Translation Research Terms: A Tentative Glossary for Moments of Perplexity and Dispute. In A. Pym (Ed.), *Translation Projects 3*. Intercultural Studies Group.
- Radicioni, M., & Rosendo Ruiz, L. (2022). Learning dynamics between cultural mediators in humanitarian healthcare: A case study. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 37, 139–159.

- Ruiz Rosendo, L. (2022). Interpreting for the military: Creating communities of practice. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 37, 16–34.
- Salmon, F. (2012, August 3). Jonah Lehrer, TED, and the narrative dark arts. *Reuters Blog*.  
<http://blogs.reuters.com/felix-salmon/2012/08/03/jonah-lehrer-ted-and-the-narrative-dark-arts/>
- Sapiro, G. (2014). The Sociology of Translation: A New Research Domain. In S. Bermann & C. Porter (Eds.), *A Companion to Translation Studies* (pp. 82–94). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118613504.ch6>
- Scholz, T. (2016). *Overworked and Underpaid: How Workers Are Disrupting the Digital Economy*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Scotto di Carlo, G. (2014a). Figurative Language in Science Popularisation: Similes as an Explanatory Strategy in TED Talks. *3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 20(3), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.17576/3L-2014-2003-01>
- Scotto di Carlo, G. (2014b). New trends in knowledge dissemination: TED Talks. *Acta Scientiarum. Language and Culture*, 36(2), 121.  
<https://doi.org/10.4025/actascilangcult.v36i2.22619>
- Scotto di Carlo, G. (2014c). The role of proximity in online popularizations: The case of TED talks. *Discourse Studies*, 16(5), 591–606. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445614538565>
- Shuttleworth, M. (2018). Translation and the Production of knowledge in Wikipedia: Chronicling the Assassination of Boris Nemtsov. *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 38, 231–263.
- Snell-Hornby, M. (2006). *The turns of translation studies: New paradigms or shifting viewpoints?* J. Benjamins Pub.

- Stanley, L., & Wise, S. (1983). *Breaking Out: Feminist Consciousness and Feminist Research*. Routledge & K. Paul.
- Sundar, N. (2006). Missing the ethical wood for the bureaucratic trees. *American Ethnologist*, 33(4), 535–537. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2006.33.4.535>
- Terranova, T. (2000). Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy. *Social Text*, 2(18), 33–58.
- Tronti, M. (1962). Factory and Society (B. David, Trans.). In *Workers and Capital*. Verso.
- Tsou, A., Thelwall, M., Mongeon, P., & Sugimoto, C. R. (2014). A Community of Curious Souls: An Analysis of Commenting Behavior on TED Talks Videos. *PLoS ONE*, 9(4), e93609. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0093609>
- Tyulenev, S., & Luo, W. (Forthcoming). Introduction. In S. Tyulenev & W. Luo (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Sociology*. Routledge.
- Valero-Garcés, C. (2022). Prisons as communities of practice: An example of situated and collaborative learning in translation and interpreting. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 37, 99–115.
- Vitali-Rosati, M. (2020). Pour une théorie de l'éditorialisation. *Humanités numériques*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.4000/revuehn.371>
- Vukovic, M., & Bartolini, C. (2010). Towards a Research Agenda for Enterprise Crowdsourcing. In T. Margaria & B. Steffen (Eds.), *Leveraging Applications of Formal Methods, Verification, and Validation* (Vol. 6415, pp. 425–434). Springer Berlin Heidelberg. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-16558-0\\_36](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-16558-0_36)
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge University Press.

- Wenger, E. (2010). Communities of Practice and Social Learning Systems: The Career of a Concept. In C. Blackmore (Ed.), *Social Learning Systems and Communities of Practice* (pp. 179–198). Springer London. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-84996-133-2\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-84996-133-2_11)
- Wermuth, M.-C., Walravens, M. J., & Lambot, M.-A. H. (2022). Collaboration and communities of practice in the field of medical ontology translation. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 37, 75–98.
- Wingrove, P. (2017). How suitable are TED talks for academic listening? *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 30, 79–95. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2017.10.010>
- Wu, A., & Qu, H. (2020). Multimodal Analysis of Video Collections: Visual Exploration of Presentation Techniques in TED Talks. *IEEE Transactions on Visualization and Computer Graphics*, 26(7), 2429–2442. <https://doi.org/10.1109/TVCG.2018.2889081>
- Xie, R. (2021). *Amateur Translation and Pop Music Fandom A study of the role of translation in the fan communities within the Chinese fandom of AKB48 based on Communities of Practice theory*. The University of Manchester.
- Yu, C. (2019). Negotiating identity roles during the process of online collaborative translation: An ethnographic approach. *Translation Studies*, 12(2), 231–252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2019.1692062>
- Yu, C. (2020). Insider, outsider or multiplex persona? Confessions of a digital ethnographer’s journey in Translation Studies. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 34, 9–31.
- Yu, C. (2022). *Online Collaborative Translation in China and Beyond: Community, Practice, and Identity*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003024200>

Zwischenberger, C. (2021). Online Collaborative Translation: Its ethical, social, and conceptual conditions and consequences. *Perspectives*, 1–18.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2021.1872662>

Zwischenberger, C. (2022). Online Collaborative Translation: Its ethical, social, and conceptual conditions and consequences. *Perspectives*, 30(1), 1–18.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2021.1872662>

Zwischenberger, C. (2023). Online Collaborative Translation: Probing Its Suitability as a Meta-Concept and Its Exploitative Potential Linked to Labour/Work. In C. Zwischenberger & A. Alfer (Eds.), *Translaboration in Analogue and Digital Practice: Labour, Power, Ethics* (pp. 213–242). Frank&Timme.

Zwischenberger, C. (2024). On Categorising Online Collaborative Translation and the Consequences for the Field of Research. *The Translator*, 30(1), 13–28.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2023.2275348>

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Certificate of Ethics Approval

<b>Université d'Ottawa</b> Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche	<b>University of Ottawa</b> Office of Research Ethics and Integrity	
22/03/2021		
<b>CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE   CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL</b>		
<b>Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number</b>	S-01-21-6363	
<b>Titre du projet / Project Title</b>	Participatory Translation and Networks of General Knowledge Dissemination in the Digital Age: A Case Study of TED Talk Subtitlers	
<b>Type de projet / Project Type</b>	Thèse de doctorat / Doctoral thesis	
<b>Statut du projet / Project Status</b>	Approuvé / Approved	
<b>Date d'approbation (jj/mm/aaaa) / Approval Date (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>	22/03/2021	
<b>Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>	21/03/2022	
<b>Équipe de recherche / Research Team</b>		
<b>Chercheur / Researcher</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Role</b>
Boya LI	École de traduction et d'interprétation / School of Translation and Interpretation	Chercheur Principal / Principal Investigator
Luise VON FLOTOW	École de traduction et d'interprétation / School of Translation and Interpretation	Superviseur / Supervisor
<b>Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments</b>		

## Appendix 2: Sample Translator Application Page on TED.com

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL `t9n.herokuapp.com/applications/new`. The page title is "Your Languages". Below the title, there is a paragraph: "Indicate the languages you want to help with. Specify whether you want to translate or transcribe. Rate your own skill in each language that you list." There are two language selection boxes. The first is for "English" with a dropdown menu open showing skill levels: "Basic", "Intermediate", "Advanced", "Near native / fluent" (highlighted), and "Native" (checked). Below it are radio buttons for "I want to translate this language" (checked) and "I want to transcribe this language". The second language box is for "Afrikaans" with radio buttons for "I want to translate this language" (checked) and "I want to transcribe this language". A "Remove" link is next to the Afrikaans box. At the bottom of the section is an "Add Language" button.

### About You

Please add your answers to each prompt below. Answers in English are preferred, but not required.

The screenshot shows the "About You" section of the application page. It contains three text input fields with prompts:

- In a sentence or two, why do you want to subtitle for TED?**  
I want to subtitle for TED because...
- Give a brief description of your experience with the languages you wish to translate or transcribe.**  
I am a native Swahili speaker who learned English at age 5...
- How did you learn about the TED Translators program? Explain in one or two sentences.**  
I heard about TED Translators from a friend...

Below this section is a "Pop Quiz!" section with the text: "In this quiz, you'll be expected to answer questions about TED's subtitle workflow and guidelines. Before you begin, we suggest re-reading [our guidelines](#) and watching the getting started video above."

## Pop Quiz!

In this quiz, you'll be expected to answer questions about TED's subtitle workflow and guidelines. Before you begin, we suggest re-reading [our guidelines](#) and watching the getting started video above.

### Should volunteers be fluent in their languages?

True or false: Translators should be fluent in both source and target languages. Transcribers should be fluent in the language they are transcribing.

- True
- False

### What roles are available to new volunteers?

Subtitles go through several steps before publication. Select the roles that are available to new volunteers:

- Transcribing TEDx talks
- Translating
- Reviewing
- Mentoring

**How many subtitled talks should you have published in order to be eligible as a reviewer?**

## Appendix 3: TED Translation Interface on Amara.org

**Keyboard controls** more commands »

- Tab Play / Pause
- Shift + Tab Skip back
- Shift + Enter Insert a line break

TED Guidelines »

French (original) Version 10

1. Select a reference language  
If you change the reference language, use  
→ Copy Timings to update the  
translation timing.

des années 1960,

et son histoire est vraiment incroyable.

2. Type the translation  
Don't leave any blanks.

Editing Chinese, Simplified...

3. Done translating?  
Click to adjust the timing.

3. Review and complete

Team Notes

Start	0:06.14
End	0:10.33
Duration	4.19s
Characters	0
Chars/sec	0.0

New to Amara? Here are some pointers.  
Click to hide. Reopen anytime from the tools menu ( > Show tutorial).  
Please go away. ■

**Keyboard controls** more commands »

- Tab Play / Pause
- Shift + Tab Skip back
- Shift + Enter Insert a line break

Subtitling Guidelines »

1. Type what you hear

2. Sync Timing

3. Review and complete

Publish

Just look at Atlas, a humanoid robot,

Atlas is remarkable because it's built

But sometimes

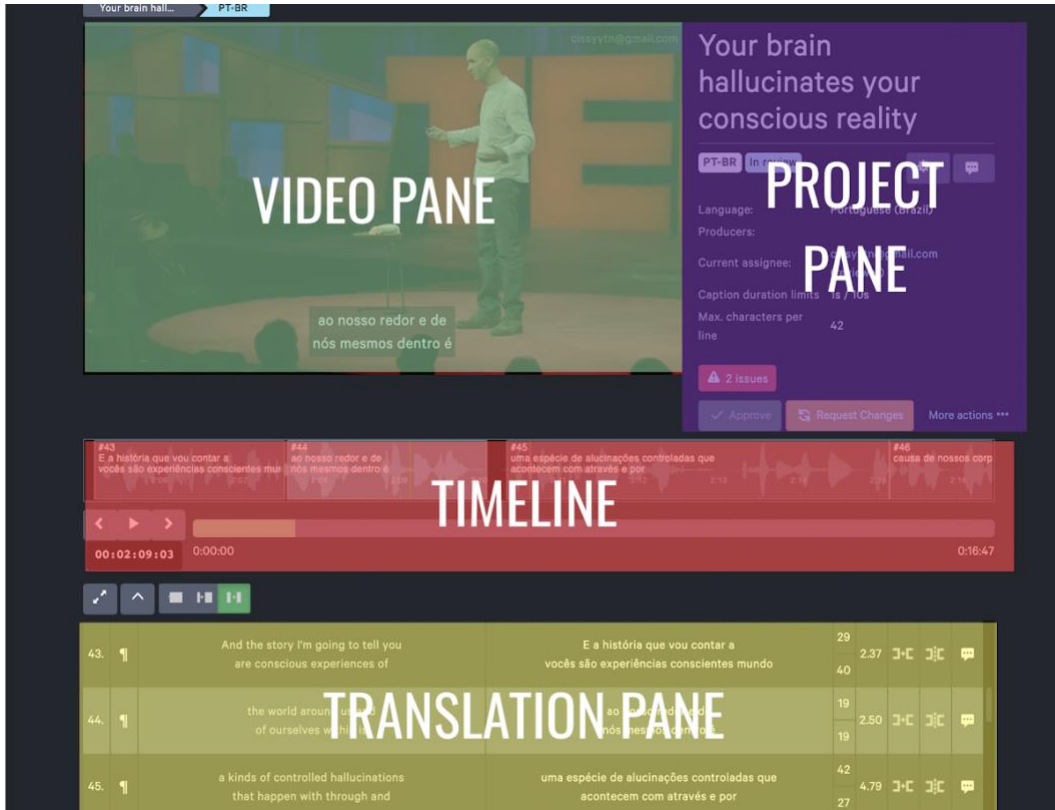
ish

Editing English...

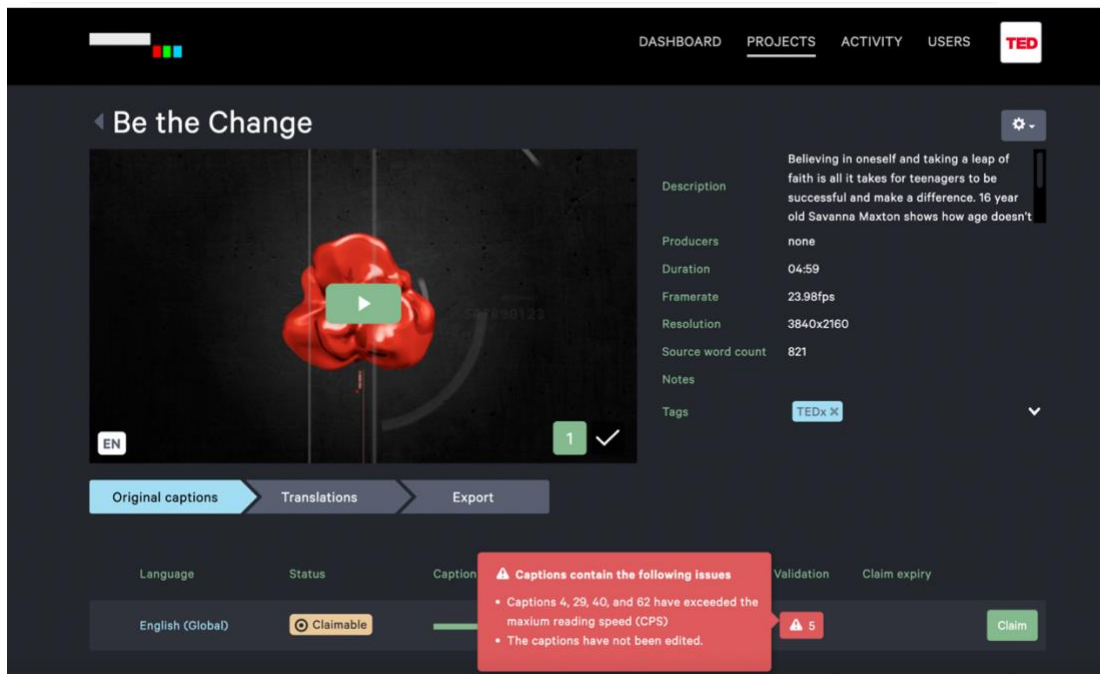
( upbeat electronic music )	0:00.05
Some of the latest advancements	0:05.03
Just look at Atlas, a humanoid robot.	0:08.26

Team Notes

## Appendix 4: TED Translation Interface on Captionhub



Source: <https://sites.google.com/ted.com/captionhub-resources/editing-your-work>

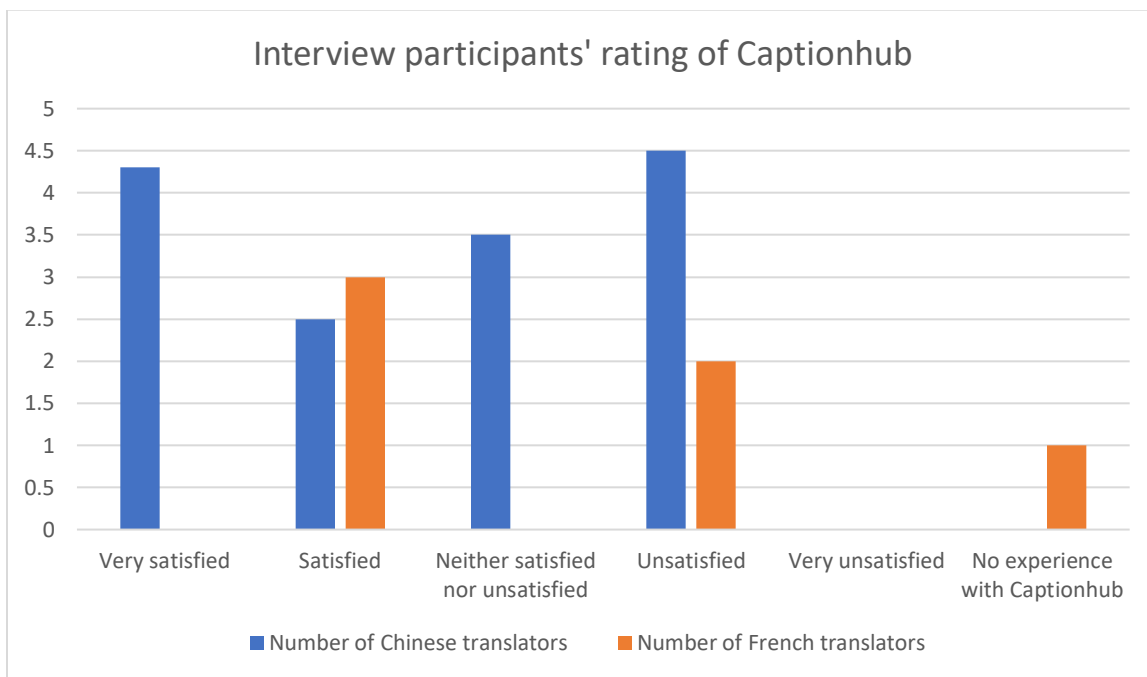
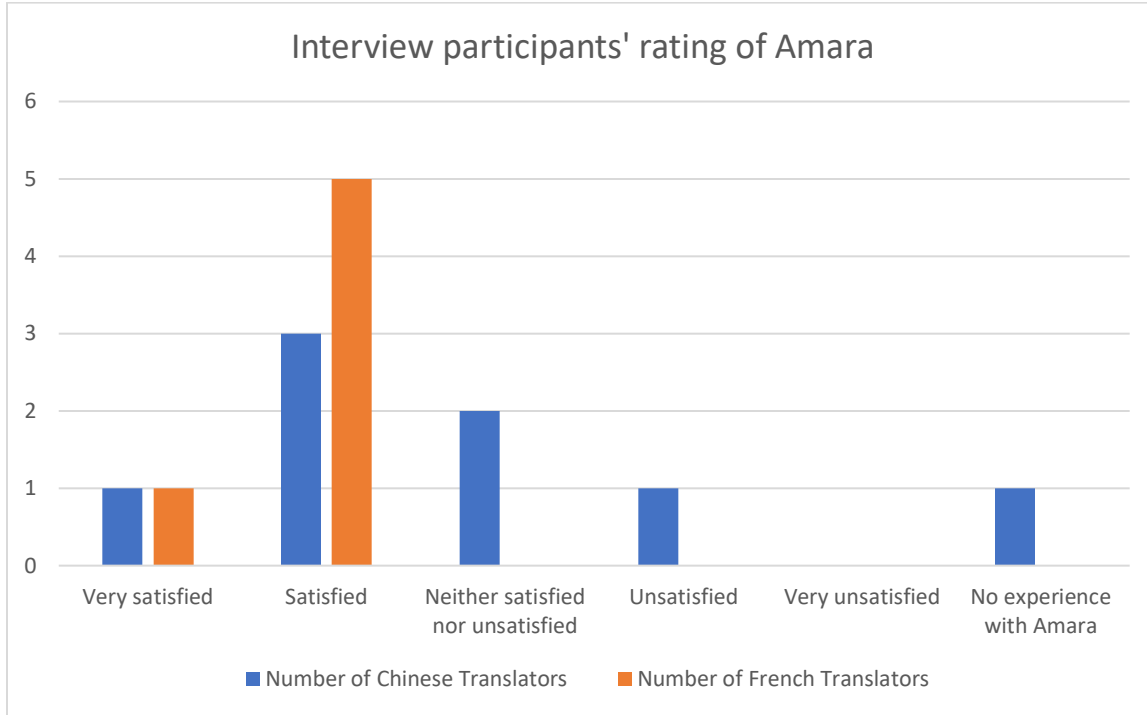


## Appendix 5: Collaborative file shared in the French TED Facebook Group for summer translation challenges

	Titre	Lien	Statut	Tâche assignée à		
physics	Pettit   TEDxNaperville	<a href="#">astronauts-theory-of-how-dinosaurs-flew-don-petit</a>	Publié		1	En cours de traduction
physics	TEDxNatick	<a href="#">future-of-astronomy-is-biology-dimitar-sasselov</a>				En attente relecture
physics	astronomy   Kirsten Banks   TEDxYouth@Sydney	<a href="#">years-the-great-history-of-australian-aboriginal</a>	Publié		1	En cours de relecture
physics	Window on the Universe   Martin Hendry	<a href="#">long-wave-astronomy-opening-a-new-window-on-the</a>	Publié		1	En attente d'approbation
biology	memories   Oded Rechavi   TEDxVienna	<a href="#">neural-biology-the-biology-of-heritable-memories</a>				Publié
biology	Blankenship   TEDxDU	<a href="#">were-long-the-biology-of-shape-todd-blankenship</a>				
biology	Kantermann   TEDxGroningen	<a href="#">to-take-chronobiology-seriously-thomas-kantermann</a>				
biology	Sean Ward   TEDxVilnius	<a href="#">synthetic-biology-is-exploring-biological-complexity-sean</a>				
biology	Make Materials for Energy Devices	<a href="#">sch-angela-beicher-engineering-biology-to-make</a>				
biology	TEDxVilnius	<a href="#">is-technology-oshoenova-agabi-tedxvilnius</a>				
biology	Drew Endy   TEDxStanford	<a href="#">biology-what-should-we-be-vibrating-about-drew-endy</a>				
biology	The neurobiology of beauty   Semir Zeki   TEDxUCL	<a href="#">neurobiology-of-beauty-semir-zeki-tedxucl</a>				
biology	Programming biology   Eric Klavins   TEDxUofW	<a href="#">mng-biology-eric-klavins-tedxuofw</a>				
biology	TEDxCaltch	<a href="#">integrated-circuit-of-biology-stephen-quake-tedxcaltech</a>				
biology	TEDxParis Universités	<a href="#">without-borders-thomas-landrain-at-tedxparisuniversites</a>				
biology	at TEDxNYU	<a href="#">biology-a-new-frontier-christopher-bradley-at-tedxnyu</a>	Publié		1	
physics	Shohini Ghose   TEDxNickelCity	<a href="#">3e039510/</a>				
physics	Spooky physics   Leo Kouwenhoven   TEDxDelft	<a href="#">physics-leo-kouwenhoven-tedxdelft</a>	Publié		1	
physics	TEDxUCR	<a href="#">crazyist-metaphysics-of-mind-eric-schwitzgebel-tedxucr</a>				
physics	Dragan Mihalović   TEDxLjubljana	<a href="#">can-physics-tell-us-about-stock-market-crashes-dragan</a>				
physics	Physics Constrain Our Sustainable Energy Options	<a href="#">arwick-davist-mackay-how-the-laws-of-physics-constrain</a>				
physics	physics   James Beacham   TEDxBerlin	<a href="#">large-hadron-collider-and-the-beginning-of-physics</a>	Publié			
physics	TEDxBeaconStreet	<a href="#">printing-the-physics-of-objects-emily-whiting</a>				
physics	TEDxPloieAriana	<a href="#">magic-of-physics-samia-charif-kaddour-tedxploieariana</a>				
physics	Smoot at TEDxSalford	<a href="#">are-a-simulation-physics-can-prove-it-geome-smoot-at</a>				
diplomacy ?	TEDxKrakow	<a href="#">physics-of-diplomacy-charles-crawford-at-tedxkrakow</a>	Publié		1	
physics	TEDxYorkSchool	<a href="#">and-stars-isabelle-sanford-tedxvorkschool</a>				
physics	Dawson   TEDxCardinalNewmanHS	<a href="#">search-for-meaning-among-the-stars-samantha-dawson</a>				
physics	Kairé at TEDxSandaga	<a href="#">pieds-sur-terre-la-tete-dans-les-ettoles-maram-kairé-at</a>				
physics	Djeridane   TEDxAx	<a href="#">a-medicale-la-tete-dans-les-ettoles-fayal-djeridane</a>				
physics	Mars   Allison Anderson   TEDxMileHigh	<a href="#">build-a-better-space-suit-for-a-human-mission-to-mars</a>	Publié		1	



**Appendix 7: Participants' Rating of the Two Translation Platforms**



## Appendix 8: Corpus on how to translate Disclaimers compiled by French-language Reviewers and LC/LS

Expression	Utilisée dans	Projet	Traduction	Commentaires	Mise à jour faite par :
This animation is part of TED-Ed's series, "There's a Poem for That," which features animated interpretations of poems both old and new that give language to some of life's biggest feelings.	There's a poem for that	TED-Ed	Cette animation fait partie de la série TED-Ed « Il y a un poème pour cela », des transpositions en dessins animés de poèmes à la fois récents et anciens qui mettent des mots sur certaines des émotions les plus fortes de notre vie.		
An animated interpretation of someone's poem	There's a poem for that	TED-Ed	Une transposition en dessin animé du poème de ...		
View full lesson:	TED-Ed	TED-Ed	Voici la leçon complète :		
Lesson by ... directed by ...	TED-Ed	TED-Ed	Leçon de ... réalisée par ...		
This ambitious idea is part of The Audacious Project, TED's initiative to inspire and fund global change.	Audacious Project	TED	Cette idée ambitieuse fait partie de l'initiative de TED « The Audacious Project » destinée à promouvoir et financer le changement à l'échelle mondiale.		
The Audacious Project	Audacious Project	TED	The Audacious Project		
WorkLife with Adam Grant	WorkLife	TED	WorkLife avec Adam Grant	Si possible, ajouter la traduction « La vie au travail »	
I'm Adam Grant. This is WorkLife, my TED podcast. I study how to make work not suck.	WorkLife	TED	Je suis Adam Grant. Vous écoutez WorkLife, mon podcast avec TED. J'étudie comment le travail peut ne pas craindre.		
Thanks to ... for sponsoring this episode.	WorkLife	TED	Merci à ... d'être le sponsor de cet épisode.		
This talk was given at a TEDx event using the TED conference format but independently organized by a local community. Learn more at <a href="https://www.ted.com/tedx">https://www.ted.com/tedx</a>	TEDx	TEDx	Cette présentation a été donnée lors d'un événement TEDx local utilisant le format des conférences TED mais organisé indépendamment. Un savoir plus : <a href="http://ted.com/tedx">http://ted.com/tedx</a>	<a href="https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wvunWtQ9M4XMEgnc0k6faw-Bx1VwH7PwRlRy2R04hdv7wsp-haimg&amp;fbclid=IwAR5K2ZL9YkLE04Dum1COE1aNpXm72k13D2qeWBTy0dY5e6S2_eY">https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wvunWtQ9M4XMEgnc0k6faw-Bx1VwH7PwRlRy2R04hdv7wsp-haimg&amp;fbclid=IwAR5K2ZL9YkLE04Dum1COE1aNpXm72k13D2qeWBTy0dY5e6S2_eY</a>	
The TED-Ed Clubs program supports students in discovering, exploring and presenting their big ideas in the form of short, TED-style talks. In TED-Ed Clubs, students work together to discuss and celebrate creative ideas. Club Leaders receive TED-Ed's flexible curriculum to guide their Members in developing presentation literacy skills to help inspire tomorrow's TED speakers and future leaders.	TED-Ed	TED-Ed	Le programme TED-Ed Clubs aide les étudiants à découvrir, explorer et présenter leurs grandes idées sous la forme de conférences similaires aux conférences TED. Dans les TED-Ed Clubs, les étudiants travaillent ensemble pour discuter d'idées innovantes et les célébrer. Les dirigeants du Club suivent le programme modifiable TED-Ed pour guider les membres du Club dans le développement de leurs compétences de présentation, afin d'inspirer les conférenciers TED de demain et les futurs dirigeants.		
To learn more about TED-Ed Clubs or to start your own club, go to <a href="http://ted.ted.com/clubs">http://ted.ted.com/clubs</a> .			Pour en savoir plus sur les Clubs TED-Ed ou pour commencer le vôtre, allez sur <a href="http://ted.ted.com/clubs">http://ted.ted.com/clubs</a> .		
The Way We Work	The Way We Work	TED	Note: Façon de Travailler		
Ugly History	TED-Ed	TED-Ed	Triste Histoire		
Think Like A Coder, Ep 1	Think Like A Coder	TED-Ed	Pense comme un programmeur, épisode 1		
This is episode 1 of our animated series "Think Like A Coder." This 10-episode narrative follows a girl, Etica, and her robot companion, Hedge, as they attempt to save the world. The two embark on a quest to collect three artifacts and must solve their way through a series of programming puzzles.	Think Like A Coder	TED-Ed	C'est le premier épisode de notre série animée « Pense comme un programmeur ». Ce récit de 10 épisodes suit une fille, Etica, et son compagnon robot, Hedge, alors qu'ils tentent de sauver le monde. Les deux entreprennent une quête pour recueillir trois artefacts et doivent résoudre une série de puzzles de programmation.		
DIY Neuroscience	DIY Neuroscience	TED-Series	De la neuroscience à faire soi-même		

## Appendix 9: Corpus for reference on how to translate high-frequency words in TED Talks created by a French LC/LS

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Term	Translation	Part Of Speech	Definition	Comments	Translation2	Part Of Speech2	Definition2	Comments2	
Apr	Avril	Noun	Short for April. Please make it 3 characters or less.						
attendee	participant	Noun	Someone who has attended a TED or TEDx event. Often used in combination with the name of the event (e.g. "TEDxMetropolis attendees").						
attendees	participants	Noun	Plural of "attendee," defined as: "Someone who has attended a TED or TEDx event. Often used in combination with the name of the event (e.g. "TEDxMetropolis attendees")."						
Aug	Août	Noun	Short for August. Please make it 3 characters or less.						
beautiful	beau	Adjective	One of the ways you can rate a TEDTalk. Meaning: Attractive to the senses, charming.						
business	business	Noun	A theme in TEDTalks. This is a tag that the user can click to view similarly themed talks.						
community	communauté	Noun	A group of people that share common characteristics or interests. Often modified, e.g. "TED community."						
confusing	déroulant	Adjective	One of the ways you can rate a TEDTalk. Meaning: Chaotic, unclear, puzzling because of an unclearly presented message or intent.						
courageous	courageux	Adjective	One of the ways you can rate a TEDTalk. Meaning: Requiring or demonstrating courage, brave.						
created by	organisé par	Adverb	Identifies the name of the person who selected the talks in a playlist (e.g. "Curated by Jill Bolte Taylor").						
creator	organisateur	Noun	Organizer, license-holder. Sometimes a synonym to "TEDx organizer" or "TEDx licensee."			Noun	talks in a playlist.		
curators	organisateurs	Noun	Plural of "curator," defined as: "A person who has selected the talks in a playlist."			Noun	Organizer, license-holder.		
Dec	Déc	Noun	Short for December. Please make it 3 characters or less.						
design	design	Noun	A theme in TEDTalks. This is a tag that the user can click to view similarly themed talks.						
entertainment	divertissement	Noun	A theme in TEDTalks. This is a tag that the user can click to view similarly themed talks.						
event	événement	Noun	Often a synonym of "conference," e.g. "a TEDx event" a TEDx conference. Occurs often — you may want to think of some synonyms for variety.						
events	événements	Noun	Plural of "event," defined as: "Often a synonym of 'conference,' e.g. 'a TEDx event' a TEDx conference. Occurs often — you may want to think of some synonyms for variety."						
fascinating	fascinant	Adjective	One of the ways you can rate a TEDTalk. Meaning: Captivating, attractive, arousing great interest.						
Feb	Fév	Noun	Short for February. Please make it 3 characters or less.						
fellow	member	Noun	A TED Fellow. The TED Fellow program is designed to bring together young world-changers and trailblazers who have shown unusual accomplishment and exceptional courage.						
fellows	membres	Noun	Plural of "fellow," defined as: "A TED Fellow. The TED Fellow program is designed to bring together young world-changers and trailblazers who have shown unusual accomplishment and exceptional courage."						
funny	délic	Adjective	One of the ways you can rate a TEDTalk. Meaning: Can make you laugh.						
global issues	enjeux mondiaux	Noun	A theme in TEDTalks. This is a tag that the user can click to view similarly themed talks.						
spreading	Des idées à partager	Noun	A phrase that encapsulates TED's mission.						
informative	informatif	Adjective	One of the ways you can rate a TEDTalk. Meaning: Serving to inform, providing or disclosing information, instructive.						
ingenious	ingénieux	Adjective	One of the ways you can rate a TEDTalk. Meaning: Characterized by inventiveness, creative ideas, novel solutions.						
inspiring	impressionnant	Adjective	One of the ways you can rate a TEDTalk. Meaning: Providing inspiration, encouraging, stimulating. (Wiktionary)						
Jan	Jan	Noun	Short for January. Please make it 3 characters or less.						
jaw-dropping	stupéfiant	Adjective	One of the ways you can rate a TEDTalk. Meaning: Causing great surprise or astonishment. (Wiktionary)						
Jul	Juil	Noun	Short for July. Please make it 3 characters or less.						
Jun	Jun	Noun	Short for June. Please make it 3 characters or less.						
license agreement	contrat de licence	Noun	A document defining the rules of a TEDx license.						
licensee	titulaire d'une licence	Noun	Someone who has been granted a license to organize a TEDx event. Sometimes used as a synonym to "organizer" or "curator."						
licensees	titulaires d'une licence	Noun	Plural of "licensee," defined as: "Someone who has been granted a license to organize a TEDx event. Sometimes used as a synonym to 'organizer' or 'curator.'"						

## Appendix 10: Recruitment Script for the Survey and Interview

Hello,

You are being invited to take part in my research on TED OTP because you are a TED Talk Translator. The purpose of my research is to investigate TED Talk translator network and culture. You will be asked to fill out a short questionnaire via Survey Monkey which asks questions like your age group and gender, whether or not you have received training in translation or have relevant work experiences before joining TED OTP, how long have you joined TED OTP, what responsibilities do you take as a volunteer, what topics you are most interested in translating, etc. The questionnaire should take about 10 minutes to complete. After you fill out the survey, you will participate in an interview that expands on your answers to the survey, such as why you joined TED OTP, whom you collaborate with when you translate, how you navigate the digital tools used for subtitling, etc. The information gathered will be analyzed in my PhD research project.

If you are interested, please contact me by email or by messaging me directly.

Thank you for considering this invitation and I look forward to hearing from you! If you know other people who you think might be interested in participating in this study, feel free to refer me to them.

## Appendix 11: Consent Form

**Title of the study:** Crowdsourced Translation as Immaterial Labour: Emerging Communities of Practice in the TED Translation Project

**Name of Principal Investigator:** Boya Li, PhD Candidate, School of Translation and Interpretation, University of Ottawa

**Supervised by** Dr. Luise Von Flotow, Professor, School of Translation and Interpretation, University of Ottawa

**Invitation to Participate:** I am invited to participate in the abovementioned doctoral thesis project conducted by Boya Li under the supervision of Luise Von Flotow.

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of the study is to better understand what audiovisual translation is like in a non-professional, crowdsourcing context and its impact on knowledge dissemination in the digital age, how volunteer translators collaborate with one another and the digital tools that they use for translation, and what they can gain from taking part in TED OTP.

**Participation:** My participation will consist essentially of taking part in an interview that lasts 30 to 50 minutes during which I will be interviewed via video call or instant messaging. The sessions are to be scheduled at a time at my convenience. If I participate in an online or telephone interview, someone around me may overhear what I am saying. It is therefore important that I plan well for the interview in a place that provides me with a minimum of privacy. I will also be asked to complete a questionnaire before the interview, which should take about 5-10 minutes of my time.

**Risks:** There is no known risk to me as a participant in the study.

**Benefits:** My participation in this study will offer me the opportunity to share my experiences and thoughts as a TED Talk translator to have my work endorsed by researchers in translation studies. The research findings will contribute to the development of knowledge on crowdsourced translation and may be used to provide guidance on how to improve the experience of TED translators.

**Confidentiality:** I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for the analysis of crowdsourced translation in this study and that my confidentiality will be protected.

**Anonymity:** TED Talk translators are credited in the TED Talk videos which are available to the public. Thus, anonymity cannot be completely guaranteed. Nonetheless, I can ask the researcher to remove my name and any other information that might identify me from presentations of research findings to achieve as much anonymity as possible. I can choose to be identified by my name in this research. **However, I should not choose to be identified if my identity could reveal the identities of other people.**

**Conservation of data:** The data collected (audio recordings, transcripts and written notes of interview) will be kept in a secure manner. All print data will be stored in a locked drawer in the home of the researcher and all electronic data will be encrypted and stored on the personal computer of the researcher protected by a password during the full period of retention (five years from the defense of the doctoral thesis).

**Voluntary Participation:** I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative

consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all electronic data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be securely deleted and all print data will be shredded.

**Acceptance:** I, (*Name of participant*), agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Boya Li of the School of Translation and Interpretation, Faculty of Arts, University of Ottawa, which research is under the supervision of Dr. Luise Von Flotow.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or her supervisor.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

Tel.: (613) 562-5387

Email: [ethics@uottawa.ca](mailto:ethics@uottawa.ca)

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: (*Signature*)

Date: (*Date*)

Researcher's signature: (*Signature*)

Date: (*Date*)

## Appendix 12: Interview Guide

### A. Translating TED Talks

1. What is your name as appearing on your TED Translator profile?
2. Why did you join TED Translation Project as a volunteer?
3. Have you been trained in translation before joining TED Translation Project? If yes, what kind of training? How does it affect your participation in TED Translation Project?
4. Do you have professional experiences with translation before joining TED Translation Project? If yes, what kind of experiences? How does it affect your participation in TED Translation Project?
5. Do you watch TED Talks? If yes, what topics are you interested in?
6. How do you select the TED Talks for translation? Examples might include topic of the Talk, availability of translation tasks, fame of the TED Talk speaker etc.
7. What problems have you encountered during subtitling? This could include linguistic issues, technical issues, or problems with the understanding of the source-language cultural context. How would you resolve those problems?
8. How useful do you find the TED style guides for subtitling? To what extent do you adhere to the style guide during subtitling?
9. Please elaborate on your answers to questions 12 and 13 in the questionnaire. Why do you feel happy/unhappy with Amara/Captionhub? Where do you look for help regarding technical issues with the subtitling platform?
10. As a translator, what do you think are the main changes in your work environment after the migration of TED Translation Project from Amara.org to Captionhub? How have you been affected by the migration?

### B. TED OTP as an online translator community

1. Do you consider yourself a member of TED Translation Project as a community?
2. Do you use social media and other online platforms to connect with other volunteers in TED Translation Project? If yes, what online platforms do you use?
3. Where do you look for help and resources for TED Translators? Examples might include certain people, websites etc.
4. How likely is it for you to collaborate/ communicate with other members of TED Translation Project for problems during translation?
5. According to you, is it important to have your contribution endorsed by TED (e.g. by crediting you in the published subtitles, setting up a personal web for you as a translator)? Why?
6. Would you like to be considered as an active, productive participant in TED Translation Project? Why or why not?
7. According to you, how do you benefit from participating in TED Translation Project? Examples include improving your language/translation skills, having your subtitled talks listed on your personal web page, building connections with other volunteers in TED Translation Project etc.

## Appendix 13: Implied Consent for Online Survey

**Title of the study:** Crowdsourced Translation as Immaterial Labour: Emerging Communities of Practice in the TED Translation Project

**Principal Investigator:** Boya Li  
PhD Candidate  
School of Translation and Interpretation  
University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, ON

**Supervisor:** Dr. Luise Von Flotow  
Professor  
School of translation and Interpretation  
University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, ON

**Invitation to Participate:** You are invited to participate in the abovementioned doctoral thesis project conducted by Boya Li who is supervised by Luise Von Flotow.

**Participation:** If you wish to participate in this study, please complete the online survey. Your decision to complete and return this survey will be interpreted as an indication of your consent to participate. The survey should take you approximately 15 minutes to complete. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

**Purpose of the Study:** From this research we wish to better understand what audiovisual translation is like in a non-professional, crowdsourcing context, how volunteer translators collaborate with one another and the digital tools that they use for translation, and what they can gain from taking part in TED OTP.

**Benefits:** Your participation in this study will offer the opportunity to share your experiences and thoughts as a TED Talk translator, and have your work endorsed by researchers in translation studies. The research findings will contribute to the development of knowledge on crowdsourced translation and may be used to provide guidance on how to improve the experience of TED translators.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity:** The information that you will share will remain strictly confidential and will be used solely for the purposes of this research. The only people who will have access to the research data are Boya Li and Luise Von Flotow. In order to minimize the risk of security breaches and to help ensure your confidentiality we recommend that you use standard safety measures such as signing out of your account, closing your browser and locking your screen or device when you are no longer using them / when you have completed the study.”

**Conservation of data:** Your response to the survey will be encrypted and kept on the researcher’s computer for a period of 5 years at which time they will be destroyed.

**Voluntary Participation:** You are under no obligation to participate and if you choose to participate, you may refuse to answer questions that you do not want to answer. Completion and return of the questionnaire by you implies consent.

If you have any questions or require more information about the study itself, you may contact the researcher or his/her supervisor at the numbers mentioned herein.

If you have any questions with regards to the ethical conduct of this study, you may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5, tel.: (613) 562-5387 or [ethics@uottawa.ca](mailto:ethics@uottawa.ca).

Please keep this form for your records.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

## Appendix 14: Survey Questions

1. What is your name on the TED Translator profile?

Answer:

2. What is your age group?

a. under 20 b. 20-25 c. 26-30 d. 31-35 e. over 35

3. How long have you been a member of TED Translation Project?

a. Less than 6 months b. 6-12 months c. 13-24 months d. longer than 2 years

4. What is your highest level of education?

a. Secondary school diploma b. Baccalaureate c. Master's d. PhD

5. What is your field of study?

a. Sciences/technology b. Social sciences/humanities c. Art d. business/finance d.  
Others:

6. What is your role in TED?

a. Translator b. Reviser c. Language Coordinator

7. What languages do you speak?

Answer:

8. What languages do you translate from in TED?

Answer:

9. What languages do you translate into in TED?

Answer:

10. How many TED Talks have you subtitled?

a. 1-5 b. 6-10 c. 11-15 d. 16 and more

11. What are the topics of the TED Talks you subtitled?
- a. Sciences/technology
  - b. Business/finance
  - c. Arts/humanities
  - d. Entertainment
  - e. Design
  - f. Global issues
12. Rate your satisfaction with Amara on a scale of 1-5
- 1(Very dissatisfied) 2(somewhat dissatisfied) 3(Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied)
- 4(Satisfied) 5(Very satisfied)
13. Rate your satisfaction with Captionhub on a scale of 1-5
- 1(Very dissatisfied) 2(somewhat dissatisfied) 3(Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied)
- 4(Satisfied) 5(Very satisfied)
14. Is it easy to find an available TED Talk translation task for you?
- 1 (Very hard) 2(Hard) 3(Neither hard nor easy)
15. Rate your satisfaction with communications from TED to translators in terms of the usefulness, frequency and accessibility of these info.
- 1(Very dissatisfied) 2(somewhat dissatisfied) 3(Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied)
- 4(Satisfied) 5(Very satisfied)

**Appendix 15: Final List of Codes Built in NVivo for Data Analysis**

Name	^		
------	---	--	--

- (Absence of) conflict
- Accessibility
- Acknowledgement or credit
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Community sense of belonging
- Competition
- Cross-cultural Skills
- Identity-role
- Imagination (as part of a community)
- Immaterial labour
- LC
- learning
- Level of experience
- Motivation
- Network
- networking
- Participation
- Peripheral participation
- Personal historybackground
- Playbour
- Problems or challenges
- Reification
- Rules-norms
- Selection of source material
- Social Capital
- Technology
- Transition-change
- translation as 'presumption'
- Translation as cultural brokerage
- translation as lived experience
- visibility

**Appendix 16: Original text for the interview excerpts which have been cited**

LC/LS	<p>Les TEDx, c'est bien, mais ce n'est pas ce qui intéresse TED. Pourtant, certains organisateurs TEDx essaient de créer des liens plus forts entre eux et d'agir.</p>
	<p>Oui en effet. La dynamique est complètement cassée. Le rôle de LC, ceux qui animent les communautés, n'existe plus que dans le titre. TED aussi semble se désintéresser totalement de l'animation de ses communautés. C'est très triste.</p>
	<p>Personnellement, je ne relis les textes que (1) des personnes que je connais et qui sont de qualité ou (2) des personnes qui me sollicitent personnellement et dont, à première vue, la qualité est bonne.</p>
	<p>Pourquoi ? Parce que le rôle de LC a disparu et donc la formation est inexistante. Donc, si la qualité des traducteurs est médiocres et que je relis, en corrigeant - beaucoup -, et que ce traducteurs au bout de 10 traductions deviennent automatiquement relecteurs, que se passe-t-il ? On a des relecteurs pas compétents qui vont mettre en ligne des textes qui ne sont pas à la hauteur. [...] Je ne souhaite pas cela et donc, je n'y contribue pas.</p>
	<p>Fondamentalement, je pense que TED a pour objectif de promouvoir ses propres talks et de faire du clic. Les traducteurs contribuent à cela en faisant des traductions EN-&gt;toutes les autres langues. Dans ce sens, je pense être un tâcheron de TED. Mais je le fais car cela m'apporte quelque chose.</p>
	<p>Pourquoi est-il important d'animer une communauté? Je pense que ça tire tout le monde vers le haut, quelque part. Il y a des gens qui traduisaient et qui envoyaient les traductions qui ne sont pas bonnes. C'est mieux quand on se connaît mieux, c'est comme ça qu'on progresse. [...] On peut vouloir entrer dans la communauté, mais après, je pense qu'il faut avoir le sentiment d'en faire partie et donc c'est mieux, c'est mieux si on a l'impression qu'il se passe des choses qu'on peut contribuer, même si ça reste quelque chose où les gens viennent et prennent ce qu'ils veulent ou apportent ce qu'ils veulent. Il n'y a pas d'obligation, pas de rétribution, il n'y a rien du tout. Donc, je pense que c'est important pour le niveau de qualité globale.</p>
	<p>Oui et non. Moi, je travaille beaucoup avec un coordinateur et on a la même sensibilité. Ça, c'est facile. On a le même protocole. D'abord, s'il n'y a pas de faute d'orthographe, d'accord des temps, on regarde si le message est exact et bien traduit. Il n'y a pas d'erreur. Et puis après, on garde la qualité. C'est un processus qui est un peu simultanée, mais par exemple, on simplifie certaines tournures de phrases en général. Et c'est ça qu'on fait parce que parfois, le traducteur reste trop près de la traduction du texte original. Et donc, en tant que relecteur, on a un regard un peu plus éloigné, et on peut trouver une tournure de phrase plus simple. En général, on essaie d'aller vers la simplification grammaticale, mais je sais qu'il y a une autre coordinatrice qui est extrêmement pointilleuse et qui corrige tout, même quand je juge que ce n'est pas nécessaire parce qu'on fait attention à ne pas imposer notre style. Par contre, on regarde aussi le style de l'orateur dans sa manière de parler pour que ce soit en français plus ou moins le même niveau de langage. Si c'est quelqu'un de casual, on va prendre un langage plus familier ; si c'est quelqu'un un peu plus strict, on prend un langage plus poli. On fait attention à ça, mais on n'a pas vraiment de règles.</p>

	<p>On n'a pas établi de règles de qualité. C'est un peu par rapport à notre niveau personnel.</p> <p>De manière générale, mon impression est que la plupart des traducteurs préfèrent être mentionnés comme "traducteur" que comme "relecteur". C'est pareil avec les transcriptions, il y a peu de personnes qui font les transcriptions. Pourquoi ? Je ne sais pas. Je vois cela comme une forme de narcissisme.</p> <p>C'est important. C'est la mise en valeur du travail offert. C'est totalement symbolique car je ne suis pas certaine que beaucoup de personne visitent mon profil TED. Mais cela nous sort de l'anonymat et nous reconnait comme un membre contributeur au grand projet TED.</p> <p>Je ne sais pas si c'est le bon moment pour le dire, mais je trouve que la relation qui manque, en fait, c'est la proximité entre les speakers et les traducteurs... elle est pas générée par les organisateurs de TEDx, n'avait pas beaucoup parlé par TED non plus. Mais ça m'est arrivé plusieurs fois de tomber, notamment dans les summits...tomber sur des gens. J'avais traduit le texte et je suis allé leur dire bonjour je connais vos textes j'ai les traduits alors.. comment ils n'avaient pas de textes traduits en France. Le problème est que je ne sais pas, mais en tout cas, les gens étaient allés l'expliquer était plutôt reconnaissant. Et pour certains et beaucoup d'Américains étaient assez étonnés que leurs textes aient été traduits en français et qui n'étaient pas du tout dans leur cibles d'audience parler pour des Américains et savoir des Français qui les lisaient, c'était un petit peu inattendu. Donc, voilà. Mais sinon, la relation avec le speaker est plutôt bonne, naturellement, sont plutôt contents du travail qu'on essaye de faire, de populariser, de diffuser leurs textes.</p>
Reviewers	<p>C'est mon avis personnel, mais je pense que si on ne fait jamais que des traductions de l'anglais vers une langue, c'est la vision anglo saxonne qui est transmise vers les autres, alors que la vision des autres nations ou des autres cultures ne va pas dans l'autre sens ou vers les autres sens. Et donc, je trouve que c'est intéressant d'écouter des taux qui sont faits dans des pays différents simplement parce que ça, ça ouvre, l'expliquaient sur une autre manière de voir le monde. Et pour ça, c'est intéressant d'écouter les TED d'autres pays et de pouvoir les traduire dans d'autres langues, vers l'anglais, bien sûr, mais aussi vers le français ou d'autres langues. [...] Chaque pays a un regard vraiment très différent et c'est bénéfique pour tout le monde de savoir, de savoir. C'est pour ça que j'aime bien. Je pense que c'est important, mais bon, ce n'est pas l'affaire principale de cette initiative. Donc c'est une initiative pour nous; on avait les gens qu'on connaît, donc leur demande.</p> <p>C'est le deuxième effectivement. L'origine américaine, c'est pas un problème mais quand même une forte inclination vers des les thématiques américaines avec un point de vue américain. J'étais avocat d'un certain nombre de Talks en français pour les diffuser. Ce qui m'intéresse, c'est vraiment le contenu. Je pense qu'il y a des contenus qui peuvent être universels. Je pense qu'à l'inverse il y a des TED Talks qui ont des contenus qui sont très américain-centré et qui n'ont pas une résonance. C'est intéressant parce que c'est une espèce de fenêtre culturelle sur les Etats-Unis, mais c'est pas forcément un rayonnement mondial. On ne dit pas que ça ne m'intéresse pas, on peut apprendre sur le système</p>

<p>judiciaire aux Etats-Unis et les gens qui veulent le réformer. Je trouve ça très bien, mais ça ne me concerne pas directement. A l'inverse, le fait de partager des bonnes idées du monde entier et d'arriver à pousser pour que les gens se disent ah oui, ça peut être que ça peut marcher dans mon contexte, dans mon pays ou dans ma ville, ça me fait sens. Je pense que c'est l'universalité des TED Talks.</p>
<p>Dans ce sens, je pense faire partie d'une communauté de personnes qui ne veulent pas que les conférences restent des mots creux.</p>
<p>Il y a certes une certaine fierté à être traducteur TED et un sentiment de faire partie d'une communauté aux aspirations similaires. Si une personne que je ne connais pas me contacte via TED, j'ai tendance à lui faire confiance plus vite.</p>
<p>J'apprends beaucoup. [...] quand tu regardes TED, quand tu écoutes un TED sur le podcast, t'apprend, mais je te dirais que quand se traduit un TED, tu apprends doublement. Parce que non seulement il faut que tu saches que tel mot se traduit de telle manière, mais souvent, moi, quand j'allais sur Wikipédia, j'allais lire: qu'est-ce que c'est exactement, ce truc? Lorsqu'il leur parle de telles personnes, par exemple, qui est cette personne? Donc pour moi ces connaissances-là, je les acquiers dans le processus et ça, c'est quelque chose qui me plaît aussi.</p>
<p>Je suis bénévole, traductrice bénévole, pour plein d'organismes différents et ça m'apprend du vocabulaire. Ça m'apprend des techniques.</p>
<p>Je regardais aussi ou surtout au début, les modifications qui étaient faites par les relecteurs et les coordinateurs de langue. Et ça, ça m'aide beaucoup aussi à mieux faire les traductions, donc après quand le talk était publié, je regardais systématiquement ce qui avait été corrigé ou pas, et ce que je pourrais mieux faire.</p>
<p>J'utilise les TED dans le cadre de mes cours. Et j'ai réalisé Ça arrive parfois que je trouvais certaines conférences TED que j'aurais voulu utiliser, mais les sous-titres n'existaient pas en anglais ou en coréen, parce que surtout pour les TED ou il y a un niveau de langage le plus difficile, beaucoup de terminologie spécifique, j'offre toujours à mes étudiants la possibilité d'avoir accès ou à la transcription en coréen. [...] Et j'ai réalisé que souvent, les sous-titres manquaient et la question m'est venue naturellement : qui traduit ça? Alors, j'ai commencé à chercher et j'ai trouvé l'application pour être bénévole et moi, ma première motivation, c'était parce qu'il y avait un TED que j'adorais et dont la transcription n'existe pas en anglais.</p>
<p>Pour moi, c'est très important. C'est très important parce que personnellement, c'est quelque chose qui me fait plaisir et qui me motive de voir le résultat de mon travail. C'est quelque chose qui me motive, mais aussi, il faut que les gens réalisent que les traducteurs d'TED sont des bénévoles, que c'est déjà qu'ils font ça par intérêt personnel et qui rédigent leur temps et leur énergie à faire ça. Donc oui, moi, ça me semble très important. Et surtout, tu vois, moi, je te dirais c'est quelque chose qui est sûrement « curriculum vitae ». Ça fait partie de mes accomplissements qui ne sont pas nécessairement dans le cadre de mon travail, mais ça fait partie de mon expérience professionnelle.</p>
<p>Les traducteurs ont une réputation et moi, c'était toujours important pour moi d'avoir une bonne réputation. Et j'ai remarqué que quand moi, je traduis un TED, il ne restait pas dans la queue pour être révisé très longtemps. Et souvent, une</p>

	<p>collègue de France on ne s'est jamais rencontrés en personne, Mais on a beaucoup travaillé ensemble parce que traduisait et moi, je voyais que c'était elle qui l'a attrapé sa traduction pour la réviser et l'inverse parce qu'il y avait un niveau de confiance au niveau de confiance au niveau de la réputation, la qualité du travail de quelqu'un. [...] Parce que personnellement, moi, j'ai réalisé assez vite que de réviser un TED mal traduit est encore plus lent et plus frustrant que de le traduire toi-même.</p>
	<p>Je me souviens que quand on était sur Amara, quand j'ai été appliqué sur le compte Facebook, quand je traduisait beaucoup plus, Je me sentais vraiment comme un membre de l'équipe. Il y avait ce sentiment dont je me souviens que les LC/LS nous écrivaient de donner les statistiques sur le nombre de TED traduit par l'équipe, qu'il y avait ce sentiment de cheerleading... et il y a quelque chose de très motivant.</p>
	<p>Tout se mélange, tout va ensemble, mais toutes les expériences sont bonnes à prendre.</p>
	<p>Parce que c'est un travail qui est bénévole, on n'est pas payé pour ça. Et le fait d'avoir une reconnaissance, d'avoir une page Web qui montre notre travail. Je trouve que c'est une reconnaissance qui est importante personnellement et professionnellement, parce que si on veut devenir traducteur professionnel, c'est une façon aussi de prouver notre travail, de dire voilà ce sur quoi j'ai travaillé. Donc, je pense que c'est effectivement une reconnaissance personnelle et professionnelle qui est pour moi. [...] C'est quelque chose qui est pour moi aussi très important et c'est quelque chose que je mets sur mon profil LinkedIn.</p>
	<p>[得到 TED 官方认证对我来说] 重要，我觉得比较容易展示自己的翻译成果，而且能为知识分享起到桥梁作用，感觉挺自豪的，挺有成就感。我觉得 TED 译员算是我的一种身份了，比较有归属感。能证明自己有一定的翻译经验。</p>
	<p>选择加入 TED 翻译项目初表:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 身处外贸行业，拓展视野和增长见识</li> <li>2. 作为从乡村走向城市的一代 80 后，见证身边和国家的变化，融入互联网和大数据时代，拥抱最前沿的技术、思考和探索</li> <li>3. 疫情原因，有更多时间关注和了解外部世界同时帮助优秀人士思想和思考在中文世界传播，拓展和影响更多人的生命</li> </ol> <p>我们这些可能翻译经验不那么丰富的翻译者会做一个私下的交流。</p>
Translators	<p>我最开始是从领英上看到了到其他国家的译者拿到了这个证书，我才了解到有这个翻译指导项目，所以说在我拿到了我的证书以后我也把它放到了我的零英上面，我觉得这是一个可以得到认可的事情。你要说它能直接带给我什么帮助，大概是没有的，但是个人品牌的创立也不是一朝一夕的，</p>

	<p>是点点滴滴的事情积累起来了，可以说是仪式感吧，就是说付出了一些精力，得到了一定的，就是荣誉证书还是蛮开心的一件事情。</p>
	<p>很重要，虽然外国的证书都那么简朴，朴实无华到感觉读了一个假文凭。自我实现的过程中认识到了很多志同道合的朋友，人生的宽度延展了。TED 的证书也得看给谁啦。Catti 的翻译专家就觉得 TED 证书不是那么重要，必须要有 Catti 的证书才能去翻译儿童绘本。</p>
	<p>在疫情之前我读了全英文的教育硕士，也和世界各地的老师一起有很多的讨论和交流，这样的经历让我觉得世界很美，地球村的村民们不论肤色种族爱好，彼此都是相互支持且融合的，所以我很想把这样的感受（特别是温暖有用的知识）带给我自己国家的人民，可以让更多的中国人了解世界动态，所以我就加入了。</p>
	<p>我目前的想法是这样，我目前的职业呢，我是做审计师的，职业的发展比较清晰，就是我未来的十到二十年之间应该不太会跳行，干这行还蛮开心的，也就是说我各方面的能力都是围绕着我的主职去进行的。翻译对我来说是一个蛮重要的技能，它主要是因为我是一个华人，但我生活在英文的环境里，所以呢我本身有一定的需求是沟通我中文和英文的两方的客户，客户这个词不是很准确，就是身边的同事也好，上下级也好，包括客户和潜在客户，就是没有直接生意往来的人。就是对一个比较大的群体，有中文和英文两方面的需求。所以翻译对我来说是一个锦上添花的事情。如果有一天通过我不断的磨练，我的翻译技术很好，能够通过它有一定的经济收益的话，那当然好，但是我不是为了这个目的去提高我的翻译能力的。就是说，哪怕我永远没法在翻译方面赚到钱，我也很开心，没有什么付出了这么多为什么你没有一定的收获，没有这种想法。</p>
	<p>会促使我有进步的去学习，而且我在翻译的过程中我对分享者的内容吸收度是更高的，而且作为一个翻译者我对分享者的内容的理解程度是更高的，如果作为一个纯粹的观看者，我的理解可能没有那么深，而且透过我自己的去翻译，这个对作品的理解会更深。</p>
	<p>这个主题我比较感兴趣，我不太熟悉但我很想去了解这方面的内容，我就会去领，因为我在翻译之前会去学习这方面的知识，所以我会去领取这个项目。</p>

我觉得对于这个问题的话我会说 **yes and no**。说重要的话，我觉得这是我的一个实践的过程，因为我觉得翻译一个项目来说是需要时间精力的，所以我觉得我的名字出现在我翻译的视频里，我觉得是一个认可，所以我会说 **yes**。但是说 **no** 的话，我觉得他不是我看的最重要的一个点吧，因为我觉得我参加 **ted** 这个翻译项目不是为了让我的名字出现在上面，而是去体验这个翻译的过程，我比较喜欢，我也喜欢翻译这种志愿的服务。

有一些重要，因为我主要是分享给国内的一些朋友，所以作品有名字我觉得更能打动朋友，通过我的影响力去影响他们认真的观看作品。