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English in the OECD: transcultural tool or embodiment of symbolic power?

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Abstract

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) contributes increasingly to the generation and dissemination of public knowledge. Its publishing division and the OECD iLibrary provide access to around 219,700 publications. While the OECD offers translated summaries of some of its key titles in up to 25 languages, the majority of publications are authored in English, and are stylistically regulated in accordance with Anglo-Saxon writing standards, as set out in the OECD Style Guide. This article discusses the *language effects* (Pennycook 1994) – that is, the worldmaking implications – of the OECD's predominant use of English in processes of knowledge production. It presents two contrasting perspectives: 1. (the OECD's own view) that the English language standards imposed by the organisation mean that the knowledge generated becomes widely accessible, which in turn contributes to a transcultural knowledge world; 2. (an external critique) that the dominance of English language publications embodies the OECD's symbolic power, so that knowledge can only be generated and accessed by accepting English as the *legitimate language of authority* (Bourdieu 1977). Attention will be drawn to the diverging role of translation in both scenarios, and to the concept of *institutional translation* (Koskinen 2008).

Keywords: English in the OECD; public knowledge; transculturality; symbolic power; institutional translation

1. Introduction: Worldmaking

Recognising the transformability of the current social trajectory is the first step towards developing an aspiration to change the ways of the contemporary world, to change the ways in which the world is made, so to speak. One conception of *worldmaking*, introduced by the American philosopher Nelson Goodman, thought-provokingly asserts the 'diversity of right and even conflicting versions or worlds in the making' (1978, x), implying that different frames of reference (that is, culturally positioned readings of the social world) result in different versions of the world, all of which are equally valid if reached under appropriate

conditions. These are not reducible to a single universal version of the world; rather, the world as we know it exists in many different versions. Goodman in fact suggests that world versions are the result of the *recreation* of existing world versions: by taking apart and putting together, dividing and combining aspects of existing world versions, human subjects continuously (re)create the social world they inhabit; and it is by attaching labels to recreated aspects and features that a new world is consolidated.

In this article, it is the English language in the context of the OECD that serves as the focus for two contrasting world versions. The first of these is described as a transcultural knowledge world, that is, a world in which the use of English facilitates access to knowledge generated by the OECD. In the second, English embodies the OECD's symbolic power, and thus serves as a gatekeeper to knowledge, affecting not only its accessibility but ultimately also its production. In both world versions, translation inhabits a space worth investigating. While in the first scenario translation is an activity of subordinate relevance, as the global use of English determines much of humanity's interactions, the second scenario calls for translation activity between English and other languages in the context of the OECD in order to potentially disrupt the hegemonic position of the language in terms of knowledge access and production.

What is under investigation here is not English as a language system restricted to grammar rules and vocabulary, but a *language effect* (Pennycook 1994, 17-18), understood as an epistemological (and potentially discursive) consequence of the use of English in the processes of knowledge production in the OECD. We shall consider whether English facilitates the generation of and access to transcultural knowledge (that is, as a global and public form of knowledge that is representative of and valuable for all countries across the globe) as the OECD clearly intends, or whether the knowledge generated is ideologically

biased because it is primarily produced in English, the main working language in which OECD member states communicate.

In his assessment of the ‘cultural politics of English’ (2017, xiv), Alastair Pennycook argues the need to understand the ‘local embeddedness of English’ (xi) in order to assess the language effects that might contribute to social and economic inequality. This article suggests that it is similarly important to address the institutional embeddedness of English in order to assess a *global* language effect potentially encapsulated in the public knowledge generated by the OECD.

2. The OECD as knowledge production apparatus

The OECD, an intergovernmental organisation which acknowledges the economic interdependence of countries across the globe and recognises the extent to which economic developments impact on social and public welfare, was founded in 1961. It currently comprises 35 countries from all corners of the world. Its mission statement, as published on its website, declares that its task is ‘to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world’ (2016, 1). Accordingly, evidence-based public knowledge currently generated by the OECD impacts directly on and affects the lives of millions of people across the globe.

In practical terms, the OECD’s key tasks consist of collecting and analysing empirical data from a multiplicity of countries across a wide range of policy indicators (e.g. tax, health, education, agriculture), and monitoring economic and social developments in both the OECD and in non-OECD countries. For instance, it comments on and evaluates the economic and social impact of the UK’s vote to leave the European Union, while also addressing broader, cross-national issues such as corruption or carbon pollution, to name specific examples. The data gathered by the OECD is primarily used to generate comprehensive knowledge (mostly

in the form of reports and statistics) that provides policy makers and national governments across the world with a quantitative foundation with which to assess the success and effectiveness of the policies and recommendations implemented. In this regard, Joscelyne (2000, 83) points out that the OECD presently performs a public consultancy role, suggesting policies and best practices, and making recommendations to national governments, though it lacks the political mandate enjoyed by other international organisations, like the EU, to enforce their implementation. This, in turn, reflects the organisation's key objective of producing and disseminating public knowledge that is openly accessible to all.

The OECD generates instrumental as well as prescriptive knowledge (that is, specific knowledge to support the process of policymaking with empirical evidence), while continuously increasing its level of public engagement through knowledge dissemination. Its audience is not restricted to government officials and policymakers, but increasingly encompasses professionals as well as the interested general public seeking comparative information about specific social and economic indicators and aspects of public life. In recognition of this increase in public awareness, it uses a number of avenues to disseminate and share the knowledge gathered and generated through its work. Most visible are the webinars, or online lectures, which mediate its relationship with the professional public (most are on expert subjects directed at trained professionals in a respective field). It also uses social media, which serves as its interface with the general public (its various Facebook and Twitter accounts are updated more than once a day and generally report on and promote the organisation's activities, reports, conferences, and meetings). While none of the webinars organised by the OECD appear to be offered in languages other than English, the organisation engages with the wider public by means of Twitter accounts in French and English, and Facebook accounts in English, Spanish and Japanese, reflecting the geographical locations of its centres (in Washington, Mexico City and Tokyo, alongside its headquarters in Paris).

However, while these accounts offer local-language summaries of debates and issues discussed in the social media posts, only very few of the actual documents and events at the core of the posts appear in languages other than English. One example is the *OECD Statistik des Tages* (statistic of the day), a German Facebook account run by the OECD centre in Berlin, which, according to its own online description, publishes one statistic related to a specific aspect of the economy, society or environment every day. It also posts visual representations of statistical analyses conducted by the OECD and other organisations in the form of league tables and graphs, comparing countries across various indicators. For anyone seeking in-depth information about the depicted chart, a link is generally available within the Facebook post, usually leading to a publication, document or blog written in English. A brief review of another OECD Facebook page, *OECD Publications*, shows that out of 244 posts published between 1 January and 26 August 2016, only two referred to publications written in French, while there were no links whatsoever to reports in any other language. A similar picture emerges from the organisation's main Facebook account: 48 posts were published between 1 August and 26 August 2016, from where all of the links provided lead the reader to documents, YouTube channels and websites published in English.

Given the quantity and significance of the data produced by the OECD, and the organisation's mission to ensure that 'economically more advanced nations should co-operate in assisting to the best of their ability the countries in process of economic development' to 'increase general well-being' (OECD Convention 1960), the knowledge generated by the organisation (such as monitoring reports, comparative statistics and factbooks containing data on approximately 100 different policy indicators from over 30 countries) clearly purports to be representative of a transcultural knowledge world, openly accessible to all. The term 'transcultural' is employed here with reference to the cultural philosopher Wolfgang Welsch (1999), who introduced the concept in the context of the debate about cross-cultural

interrelationships active in the humanities in the 1990s (see, for example, Charles Taylor 1994 on multiculturalism and Homi Bhabha 1991 on cultural positioning).¹ Welsch asserts that the concept of transculturality eradicates the presupposition of distinct, separate and static cultures, suggesting instead that contemporary cultural and identity formation is determined by cultural mobility and cultural permeability. In this regard, Welsch stresses that transculturality must not be equated with cultural uniformisation and homogenisation, for while diversity disappears in transcultural processes, ‘a new type of diversity takes shape: the diversity of different cultures and life-forms, each arising from transcultural permeation’ (1999, 203). Welsch also describes the multidimensional complexities arising from transcultural networks as reflective of a true cultural encounter detached from national and geographic restrictions, thereby rendering the transcultural encounter the only ‘pure cultural interchange process’ (204). Transculturality therefore characterises the process of culture-crossing, the transcultural encounter between cultures, in a way that does not require participating cultures to surrender identity-forming cultural features and values. In fact, the transcultural process is determined by cultural specificities, without any pressure to morph different cultures into one homogenous cultural system, a process so often feared by those opposing globalisation.

The concept of transculturality is relevant for the workings of intergovernmental organisations like the OECD for two reasons. Firstly, it advances an operational discourse that reflects and responds to the social and cultural world in flux, giving agency to all of those involved in the transcultural process. As a result, multidimensional transcultural constellations emerge that are at times capricious or ephemeral, but which also have the potential to provide a degree of stability and continuity due to their ability to reflect a world in flux. Secondly, transcultural permeations are not characterised and driven by power inequities between individuals or groups involved in the transcultural process, which means that it is not a

process of cultural annexation, but a process of ‘cultural annexability and transmutability’ (Welsch 1999, 200). Although Welsch’s approach has been criticised for being rather utopian and idealistic (in that much of the argument hinges on the notion of an ideal human subject who wishes to engage unproblematically in transcultural contact and is open to cultural and social change), it nevertheless provides a framework for an alternative way of thinking about cultures and about the ways in which cultures meet and engage with each other in the context of intergovernmental organisations. While the concept makes explicit the agency of each individual and social group in the process of (trans)cultural (group) identity formation, it also implicitly appeals to the (ethical) motivation for such agency. In other words, if individuals or social groups within intergovernmental organisations desire a world that is ‘multi-meshed and inclusive, not separatist and exclusive’ (Welsch 1999, 200), then it lies within their ability as well as within their responsibility to create such a world. In this regard, the transcultural situation described in this article is based on the public knowledge generated by the OECD, which, in effect, is produced and generated in an attempt to create a transcultural world in which culturally positioned knowledge can serve all cultures in the implementation of public policies designed to enhance economic growth and prosperity, and, ultimately, peace.

3. English in the OECD

The predominance of English in the daily workings of the OECD has directly impacted upon French, the second language of the institution. While French continues to be a working language, its role within the OECD has shifted significantly over the past 30 years, as highlighted by Joscelyne:

Since 1985, the relative proportion of French and English target translations has changed dramatically. Fifteen years ago, 70 percent of all documents were authored in French for translation into English. By 1999, this relative apportionment had radically changed: today

over 80 percent of all source documents are in English, and only 20 percent are authored in French. (2000, 88)

The sheer volume of publications issued by the OECD (the organisation has its own publishing division, *OECD Publishing*, which, according to its website, prints and releases over 250 new books, 40 statistical databases and thousands of journal articles and working papers every year), combined with the ease with which that (unclassified) material can be accessed by policymakers and the general public through the OECD iLibrary, guarantee that the institution's voice can be heard loud and clear in the political and public sphere.

But what linguistic style of English is used in these publications? The third edition of the OECD Style Guide, published in 2015, states that '[t]he OECD's audiences are made up of time-constrained, Internet savvy readers who mostly access our content online' and the demand is therefore for 'clear, crisp, accessible and consistent' writing 'to serve this international readership' (OECD 2015, 10). The Style Guide is published in English as well as in French, and the contents of each version are independent of each other as regards the linguistic features discussed; both, however, advocate a writing style that is 'concise, and with clear, action-oriented messages' (13), primarily based on the Inverted Pyramid Model,² which guides much of Anglo-Saxon writing for publication.

In more general terms, OECD publications are often lengthy detailed documents containing a great deal of quantitative and qualitative information, graphs and statistics (the Technical Report for the international student assessment PISA 2012, for instance, comprises 468 pages). Therefore, in order to be accessible to as many readers from different language backgrounds as possible, 'all OECD publications must contain an executive summary' (OECD 2015, 28), that is, a short document of 850 to 1000 words that outlines the key points and conclusions of the report. It is in fact primarily the executive summaries that are translated into languages other than English and French, although a brief search with the

OECD iLibrary search engine shows that a significant number of executive summaries remain untranslated. While 128,081 English language publications are listed, all of which supposedly contain an executive summary, a search for such summaries in German and Dutch results in only 320 and 163 document listings respectively (15 September 2016). This suggests that translation is currently not a core activity at the heart of the OECD. In contrast, the English language plays an increasingly important role in the generation of and access to knowledge.

3.1. World version 1: English as a transcultural tool

If the process of transculturality is characterised by cultural permeation and an understanding of the contingencies of cultures, as suggested by Welsch, English is conceptualised as a transcultural tool that gives access to the knowledge created by the OECD, thereby contributing to a transcultural world. To some extent, this reverberates with the view of David Crystal, who has proposed ‘the adoption of a functionalist account of English, where the language is seen as a valuable instrument enabling people to achieve a certain goal’ (2003, 24). A similarly instrumental conception of English has been put forward by Mary Snell-Hornby (1999), who describes the development of international English primarily as the result of the political, cultural and technological dominance of the United States. However, Snell-Hornby also suggests that inherent linguistic features, such as simple grammatical structures and a small core vocabulary, mean that English is ‘easily acquired for everyday conversation as needed for superficial communication by speakers of other languages all over the world’ (1999, 14). According to this argument, English, with its structural simplicity, is inherently suited to the role of international language of communication. Going a step further, Crystal asserts that ‘English has a new functional role, no longer associated with the political authority it once held’ (2003, 25). Both scholars thus emphasise the possibility of disengaging geopolitical and ideological discourse and belief systems from the language system, thereby

reducing English to a ‘vehicular language’, that is, ‘a medium, a means of conveyance or transmission’ (Munat 2007, 3).

This perspective is reflected in the OECD English Style Guide, which describes it as an instrument ‘designed to help [...] draft and organise [...] published material so that readers can easily navigate, understand and access OECD analysis, statistics and information’ (OECD 2015, 3). Indeed, the importance of language simplicity is emphasised throughout the Style Guide, not only in terms of linguistic features such as syntax structure and core vocabulary, but also in relation to the ways in which the information is epistemologically presented, structured, and organised. For example, the active voice is preferred over the passive and indicative signposting is recommended:

[W]rite short sentences (20 words or fewer) and keep paragraphs succinct (one idea per paragraph). Keep background information to a minimum, omit unnecessary information and do not overuse citations. (OECD 2015, 18-19)

The English used in OECD publications is therefore stripped down to the bare essentials, not only linguistically through the emphasis on simple language and short sentences, but also epistemologically through an eliding of the thought processes intrinsic to the creation of knowledge. In other words, English, as a working language of the OECD, has been ascribed a purely functional, value-neutral role, and as such could be characterised as a transcultural tool facilitating easy access to the knowledge generated by the OECD.

3.1.1. Translation as non-necessity

What role does translation play in this version of the world? Crystal in fact raises the question of ‘whether the presence of a global language will eliminate the demand for world translation services’ (2003, 27), a perspective which would seem to be endorsed by the OECD, given that the majority of the organisation’s publications remain untranslated in their entirety, as

mentioned above. While the executive summaries are specifically authored for the purpose of being translated into relevant languages, most of the vast body of public knowledge generated and disseminated by the OECD is primarily transmitted through simple, clear and concise English. Consequently, translation is not a key player in this scenario.

Crystal (2003, 182) describes how Anglophone officials and politicians in the EU react to the multilingual circumstances and ‘foreign-language patterns’ they face in their daily work by developing simpler sentence structures and avoiding idiomatic and colloquial expressions. Hence, the language advocated by the OECD English Style Guide results from ‘a natural process of accommodation’ (ibid.) between the speakers. This globalised form of English, which Crystal calls “World Standard Spoken English” (WSSE), effectively renders redundant the need for interpreting and translation into other languages within intergovernmental organisations.

3.2. World version 2: English as an embodiment of symbolic power

Over the past twenty years, the OECD has arguably developed into one of the most significant multilateral institutions involved in the generation of public knowledge. Its technical expertise in data collection and analysis, its strategic push for evidence-based policy-making, and its self-declared position as the ‘pathfinder of globalisation’ (OECD 2004, 9) render it ‘an effective tool for the multilateral policy learning so badly needed in a world of complexity and turmoil’ (Gass 2003, 30). However, it has also been criticised as ‘the rich man’s club’ of the global North (ibid.), as its 35 member states comprise some of the wealthiest and politically most influential nation states from across the world. To discuss the organisation within the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology of politics assumes that exploring power relations between social groups is not only possible in the context of a nation state - ultimately the key focus in Bourdieu’s work - but equally applicable

to the relationship between members of intergovernmental organisations such as the OECD and non-members (who are perhaps aspiring membership). This assumption upholds if one considers that ‘power concentrates in particular arenas of struggle for control of the social order’ (Swartz 2013, 1), and is indeed in accordance with the OECD’s incessant expansion in terms of membership, public areas of influence, and scope of global policy impact, which have enabled the organisation to join the ‘arena of struggle’ in time of globalisation. Bourdieu asserts that all areas of social life are organised and to some extent determined by the power struggles that constitute, perpetuate, and maintain these areas. It is in the power struggle between the OECD and non-OECD states, that is, the struggle for the generation of (global) policies surmised to encourage economic growth and prosperity and to advance a common global discourse in response to the social challenges engendered by globalisation, and thus the drive to impose ‘a legitimate vision of the social world’ (Bourdieu 1989, 22) - a world vision that is perceived and recognised as legitimate and commonsensical - that the organisation holds symbolic power. While it is perhaps viable to account for the OECD’s symbolic power solely by highlighting the member states’ dominance in terms of their economic capital, Bourdieu suggests that alternative forms of capital, such as language, play an equally significant, if potentially more subtle role ‘as resources that both constitute and maintain social hierarchies’ (Swartz 2013, 4).

Language has in fact been recognised, by Bourdieu and many other scholars (e.g. Fairclough 2001, Pennycook 1994, Goke-Pariola 1993) as one of the most influential forms of symbolic capital in the establishment and perpetuation of power relations. However, Bourdieu’s sociological approach to the study of language invites us to refrain from describing the English language itself (as a structured grammatical and linguistic system) as symbolic capital, but instead to emphasise *competence* in it within a context that acknowledges it as a legitimate language of authority (Bourdieu 1977). In other words, it is

not only the ability to speak, read, and write English that brings power (though it is through this that knowledge is generated and disseminated in the OECD and access to it is granted or refused); rather it is the *acknowledgement of English as the language of authority* in the cycle of knowledge creation and reception within the OECD that allows us to construe English not only as symbolic capital but ultimately as an embodiment of the OECD's symbolic power. This view opposes the conceptualisation of English as a neutral transcultural tool by reintroducing 'the whole social world into the science of language' (Bourdieu 1977, 650); that is to say, language is recognised not merely as 'an object of understanding', but indeed as 'an instrument of power' (645, 648).

It follows that, in this world version, access to the knowledge generated and disseminated by the OECD is granted primarily to those who accept English as the language of authority, which in turn results from linguistic competence combined with the privilege of being granted 'the right to speak' and, consequently 'the power to impose reception' (Bourdieu 1977, 648). In other words, English embodies the OECD's symbolic power by helping the organisation not only to impose its 'vision of the social world' through the knowledge it generates and the discourse it creates, but also by insinuating that the English language is the sole appropriate tool for the generation and dissemination of knowledge, and consequently the only viable tool in the creation of a common global discourse.

If, with Foucault (1972), we understand discursive practices and knowledge to be fluid contingent practices determined by specific historical and social contexts, then the work of the OECD in the first two decades of the twenty-first century might be perceived likewise. This means that it is open to revision and transformation from external influences. We might therefore ask what role translation can play in transforming the knowledge and discourse produced and disseminated by the OECD, and how much agency the individual translators actually have in this process.

3.2.1. Translation as epistemological disruption

If we call into question the conceptualisation of English as a purely linguistic system and value-neutral carrier of information within the OECD, it follows that there may be ways of disrupting the processes and conditions under which such a conceptualisation is currently manifested. These might target firstly the processes involved in the generation of public knowledge, and secondly, the conditions under which access to this knowledge is granted.

With regard to the former, Joscelyne describes the OECD Translation Division as ‘a quality filter through which the organisation’s bilingual discourse passes’ (2000, 85), drawing attention to the primary translation activity taking place between the two working languages, English and French. At the same time, he suggests that translators commissioned by the OECD directly contribute to the knowledge generated by the organisation, as they are ‘involved in various cognitively rich feedback loops - checking with the authors, inventing neologisms as new concepts emerge, establishing official usages, and reusing finalised knowledge products to decode new knowledge’ (Joscelyne 2000, 87). Accordingly, translation processes do more than merely facilitate interlingual text transfer. Instead, the epistemological products of those processes are an intrinsic component of the knowledge generated by the OECD.

What is more, if translation assumes the role of knowledge contributor in the OECD Translation Division, it is ultimately also able to influence the prevalent epistemology and thus, to some extent, the global discourse advanced by the OECD, currently facilitated primarily by the use of English. In the context of the OECD such influence is, however, only possible under two conditions. It is necessary, first, that English be acknowledged as an ideologically charged system of performative discourse which impacts directly on the knowledge it aids to produce. Then, there needs to be recognition that knowledge, discourse,

and power multilaterally determine and are determined by each other, so that in their ‘net-like organization’ (Foucault 1980, 98) there is no beginning and no end, no driver and no follower, no dominance or submission. Under these conditions, translating institutional discourses from English into other languages has the potential to disrupt the hegemony of English in its position as the gatekeeper to OECD knowledge.

4. Conclusion: Translating for the OECD

To what extent is it currently truly possible for translators to assume an influential position in the OECD in order to impact on the knowledge that is generated by the organisation? In an ethnographic study of the use of translation in the European Union, Kaisa Koskinen asserts that translation in the context of intergovernmental and international organisations ‘is qualitatively different’ (2008, 22) from other genres of translation, in that institutions primarily produce tightly regulated self-translations of their documents that ultimately render the translator fully invisible. Drawing on her own experience as a translator for the European Commission, Koskinen declares that ‘[i]n the Commission, my words are not mine’ (2008, 24). In this case, the translator not only represents the institution but is in fact the professional embodiment of it.

Yet, while this might hold true for the EU, it has been suggested above that the role of the translator in the OECD is less fraught with constraints. While the stringent multilingual language policy underpinning the EU’s work means that translation is tightly regulated, the OECD’s reliance on English as the institution’s *lingua franca* permits translators to engage more actively in the processes of knowledge generation (for instance through the creation of neologisms and through cognitive involvement in the processes of knowledge production).

Anthony Pym, in 2001, pointed out that the use of a *lingua franca* by an intergovernmental organisation does not annul the need for translation. For him, it is

imperative to translate the institutional discourses and public knowledge produced in a ‘central language’ in order to safeguard their communicative value to a culturally and linguistically diverse target audience (2001, 8). This suggests that translators working for the OECD may be able to impact the knowledge and discourses generated by the organisation so long as the OECD acknowledges and recognises the significance of communicating to a broad target audience in languages other than English.

However, without an acknowledgement on the part of the organisation of the culturally, epistemologically and linguistically multifaceted nature of its target audience, translators’ hands are truly tied. If the first worldview described here (English is a transcultural tool) continues to prevail and the OECD continues to disregard broader language needs, then translators will remain marginal players in the organisation. Perhaps the solution might lie in the creation of a sound language policy in which English, as the organisation’s *lingua franca*, becomes the starting-point for an active and ethically committed translation process.

In recognition of Nelson Goodman’s concept of worldmaking, this article has proposed two distinct versions of the position that English holds in the OECD: on the one hand, it is seen as a transcultural tool for the gathering, analysis and transmission of public knowledge; on the other, as an embodiment of symbolic power. It is also suggested that translation plays a very different role in each scenario. While in the first case, the use of strictly regulated, simple and concise English renders translation redundant, in the second, translation from English into other languages brings the potential to influence the hegemonic use of language within the OECD, impacting directly on the public knowledge and neoliberal discourse the organisation currently generates and advances.

Goodman never calls into question the existence of a multiplicity of actualised and real worlds in which statements carry degrees of truth-value according to the frame of reference in which they are uttered. For him, statements are always context-dependent, embedded in

‘systems of description’ (1978, 2) that determine their truth-value. This allows for the co-existence of what might be perceived as contradictory utterances, in effect suggestive of the existence of multiple truths. In other words, statements such as ‘English is a transcultural tool’ or ‘English is an embodiment of the OECD’s symbolic power’ hold equally true in the context of knowledge production and access in the OECD. However, while both might be reflective of current world versions, Goodman emphasises human agency in the process of worldmaking:

...while readiness to recognize alternative worlds may be liberating, and suggestive of new avenues of exploration, a willingness to welcome all worlds builds none. Mere acknowledgement of the many available frames of reference provides us with no map of the motions of heavenly bodies; acceptance of the eligibility of alternative bases produces no scientific theory or philosophical system; awareness of varied ways of seeing paints no pictures. A broad mind is no substitute for hard work. (1978, 21)

It is in this light that this article suggests that translators, as human agents actively involved in worldmaking processes, have a responsibility to actively position themselves vis-à-vis the multiplicity of world versions of which English is a vital component. This is done not merely by acknowledging the existence of such pluralism, but by taking a personal stance that reflects an acute awareness of the broader cultural, social, political, and epistemological circumstances within which any act of translation is always situated. Translating into and out of English arguably calls for greater introspection and self-reflexivity on the part of individual translators and the global translation community, for no other living language occupies such a dominant role in these communication situations. Thus, any precedent that we as translators set in this regard might impact significantly on the world of tomorrow. As a general direction for Translation Studies, it is perhaps feasible to suggest that more attention must be drawn to the space the English language inhabits in intergovernmental organisation such as the OECD

in the twenty-first century so that translation acts and processes may be mobilised in an attempt to shed light on and influence worldmaking processes as they unfold.

¹ Transculturality is understood here as conceptually different to transculturation as discussed, for instance, by Mary Louise Pratt in her seminal work *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992). While transculturation is often imbued with discourses of periphery and centre and (post-)colonial encounters, transculturality aims to capture cultural fluidity and contingencies that are (seemingly) reflective of the encounters that take place in intergovernmental organisations such as the OECD.

² The Inverted Pyramid Model is a top-down writing approach in which a piece of writing (generally for mass and print media) begins with the most important information and a general summary of the content, followed by some detail, and ending with the least relevant information. Accordingly, the reader can choose to “drop out” of reading at any point after the opening, while still receiving the most relevant information. This approach is prevalent in English-language media and journalism. For a critical and cross-cultural assessment of the model, see Thomson, 2008.

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