THE AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF TRANSLATION: TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, Translation Studies has increasingly foregrounded translators as agentive, situated, and socially embedded subjects, a development described as the "translator turn" or the emergence of Translator Studies (Chesterman, 2009; Kinnunen & Koskinen, 2010; Pym, 2009). Alongside this shift, first-person materials—such as reflective commentaries, process reports, field diaries, practitioner narratives, and activist accounts—have become central sources of empirical and theoretical insight across subfields. Yet these materials are often discussed under heterogeneous labels, while their methodological positioning remains implicit, making comparison and cumulative knowledge building difficult.

This article offers a field-sensitive conceptualization of the autoethnography of translation. Situating Translation Studies within broader methodological debates on autoethnography (Ellis et al., 2011; Anderson, 2006), it critically examines the canonical distinction between analytic and evocative approaches and argues that this binary, while productive, remains insufficient for capturing translation as a mediated, relational, and professionally structured practice. Working within a translator-oriented, reflexive, and practice-based research paradigm, the article develops a multi-axial typology tailored to the epistemic conditions of Translator Studies.

The proposed framework conceptualizes the autoethnography of translation as a structured yet flexible methodological space organized along three intersecting axes: (1) form and functional orientation, (2) embodiment and performance, and (3) number of voices and collaboration format. The model is illustrated through selected case studies that exemplify different configurations of autoethnographic practice, including analytic self-case studies of translation revision (e.g. Borg, 2024), narrative and politically situated interpreter autoethnography (e.g. Voinova, 2024), and collaborative autoethnography in multilingual research contexts (e.g. Haldane et al., 2022).

The article argues that this typological consolidation enhances methodological reflexivity, enables clearer positioning of first-person research, and clarifies how autoethnographic inquiry contributes to the study of translator-mediated subjectivity, professional knowledge, and translational agency.

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