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Girletti, Sabrina

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Beyond the assembly line: exploring salaried linguists' satisfaction with translation, revision and PE tasks

Sabrina Girletti



Sabrina Girletti

Department of Translation
Technology, Faculty of
Translation and Interpreting,
University of Geneva;
sabrina.girletti@unige.ch;
ORCID: [0000-0002-0990-1468](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0990-1468)



Abstract

While job satisfaction has received some attention in Translation Studies, linguists' satisfaction with their specific work tasks remains largely unexplored. This article reports on a survey-based study examining corporate linguists' satisfaction with translation, revision and PE tasks, and discusses task characteristics that contribute to positive attitudes.

Keywords: Translator satisfaction; translators' tasks; task satisfaction; post-editing; revision; professional translators; language industry; corporate language services.

Resumen

A pesar de que la satisfacción laboral ha recibido cierta atención en el ámbito de los Estudios de Traducción, la satisfacción de los lingüistas con respecto a sus tareas específicas de trabajo sigue estando en gran medida inexplorada. Este artículo presenta un estudio basado en encuestas que examina la satisfacción de los lingüistas corporativos con las tareas de traducción, revisión y posedición, y analiza sus características de modo que contribuyan a una buena recepción por parte de los profesionales.

Palabras clave: satisfacción del traductor; tareas del traductor; satisfacción laboral; posedición; revisión; traductores profesionales; industria de la lengua; servicios lingüísticos corporativos.

Resum

Malgrat que la satisfacció laboral ha rebut una certa atenció en l'àmbit dels Estudis de Traducció, la satisfacció dels lingüistes envers les tasques específiques de treball continua sent en gran mesura inexplorada. Aquest article presenta un estudi basat en enquestes que examina la satisfacció dels lingüistes corporatius amb les tasques de traducció, revisió i postedició, i n'analitza les característiques de manera que contribueixin a una bona recepció per part dels professionals.

Paraules clau: satisfacció del traductor; tasques del traductor; satisfacció laboral; postedició; revisió; traductors professionals; indústria de la llengua; serveis lingüístics corporatius.

1. Introduction

In the field of industrial-organisational (I/O) psychology — the branch of psychology concerned with the study of human behaviour at the workplace — job satisfaction is by far the most widely studied construct (Judge et al., 2017; Spector, 2022). It can be defined as an “evaluative judgment of one’s job ranging from positive to negative” (Judge et al., 2021:210), and its investigation is paramount for several reasons (Bowling and Sessa, 2021). Firstly, since work is a central part of one’s life, job satisfaction is likely to contribute to individual life satisfaction (Bowling et al., 2010). As aptly noted by Dalal (2013:341), “[a] satisfying job can provide meaning to life and be a source of self-worth; a dissatisfying job can be intolerable and a source of sleepless nights”. Secondly, job satisfaction has diagnostic value, as it can help determine which aspects of the job or of the work environment need improvement. Thirdly, job (dis)satisfaction can lead to various job-relevant behaviours, such as absenteeism and turnover (Kim and Kao, 2014; Rubenstein et al., 2018; Schaumberg and Flynn, 2017; Spector, 2022). Scholars have investigated job satisfaction across various professional categories, such as teachers (De Simone et al., 2016; Toropova et al., 2021; Troesch and Bauer, 2017), nurses (Dilig-Ruiz et al., 2018; Lu et al., 2012; Waltz et al., 2020), lawyers (Hagan and Kay, 2007; Markovic and Plickert, 2018; Monahan and Swanson, 2019) and police officers (Chen, 2018; Lambert et al., 2018; Yun et al., 2015), finding that different factors affect job satisfaction in different professions.

In Translation Studies, the interest in job satisfaction has grown more recently, particularly from the 2010s onward (Ruokonen and Svahn, 2024). Studies in this field have highlighted a paradox: translators derive great pleasure from the “art of translation itself” (Courtney and Phelan, 2019:110), despite facing several challenges in their jobs (Dam and Zethsen, 2016; Lambert and Walker, 2024; Ruokonen et al., 2020). Issues such as the low status of the profession, increasing pressure on rates, and the rise of digital translation platforms have been identified as major disruptors (Lambert and Walker, 2022). The pervasive use of translation technology, particularly machine translation (MT), is another significant factor contributing to translators’ dissatisfaction, as it affects working methods (Marshman, 2012, 2014; LeBlanc, 2017; Rossi and Chevrot, 2019; Lambert and Walker, 2022). As a result, contemporary linguists often report that translating feels “like working on the assembly line” and “a more industrial-type activity” (LeBlanc, 2017; Courtney and Phelan, 2019; see also Moorkens, 2020a for a discussion on digital Taylorism in translation settings).

A gap in existing studies on translators’ satisfaction is that they have approached the topic from a broad perspective, without delving into the different tasks that translators perform in their daily work. Since task satisfaction is one of the best predictors of overall job satisfaction (Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012; Saari and Judge, 2004), it is crucial to investigate translation-related tasks and the extent to which linguists consider them interesting, challenging and enjoyable. In this paper, we report on a survey-based study of professional linguists’ satisfaction with the tasks they perform. With “tasks”, we refer to all translation-related activities that involve the production or the correction of a

target text. We focus particularly on translation, revision and post-editing (PE), three tasks that constitute a fundamental part of linguists' workflows (Pielmeier and O'Mara, 2020). Our study examines linguists working at Swiss corporate in-house language services, a cohort of salaried linguists that has received less attention compared to institutional and agency translators (Bednárová-Gibová and Majherová, 2021; Cadwell et al., 2017; Dam and Zethsen, 2011, 2016; Monzó-Nebot, 2023; Riondel, 2021a; Rossi and Chevrot, 2019).

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: Section 2 delves deeper into task satisfaction within the fields of I/O psychology and Translation Studies. In Section 3, we present the questionnaire, describe the survey participants and provide methodological details on data collection and analysis. The findings of the study are presented and discussed in Section 4, and concluding remarks are provided in Section 5.

2. Investigating job satisfaction through task satisfaction

2.1 Task satisfaction as a proxy of job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is typically measured through self-administered questionnaires, which are the simplest, cheapest and fastest way to collect employees' attitudes towards their jobs (Spector, 2022). It can be measured either as a global attitude or as the combination of attitudes towards different aspects (i.e. facets) of the job. One of the most frequently investigated facets of job satisfaction is satisfaction with the nature of the work itself, also called intrinsic job characteristics (Saari and Judge, 2004; Smith et al., 1969; Weiss et al., 1967) or satisfaction with the tasks performed on the job (Spector, 2022:4). Indeed, as Locke (1969:330) pointed out, a job is "an abstraction referring to a combination of tasks performed by an individual [for remuneration]". Therefore, when we assess satisfaction with the work itself, we are indeed assessing satisfaction with these tasks.

Scholarly literature in I/O psychology has often used the terms job design and task design interchangeably, investigating the motivational features of a job through the characteristics of the tasks performed (Griffin et al., 1981; Oldham and Fried, 2016; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978). Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) posits that job satisfaction depends on intrinsic factors (also called motivators or satisfiers), such as the nature of the work itself, while dissatisfaction is attributable to extrinsic factors (defined hygiene factors or dissatisfiers), such as working conditions, salary and supervision. Hygiene factors can prevent employees from being dissatisfied, but only motivators can lead to true satisfaction, "because they satisfy the individual's need for self-actualization in his work" (Herzberg et al., 1959:114). Indeed, "[it] is only from the performance of a task that the individual can get the rewards that will reinforce his aspirations" (ibid.). Another influential theory of job design, Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model (1976), considers that the motivating potential of each job derives from five "core" characteristics: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. A motivating job is one that (1) involves various tasks and requires a variety of skills (skill variety), (2) includes tasks that let employees work on the whole

product, rather than a small part of it (task identity), (3) includes tasks that have an impact on the lives or work of others (task significance), and provides employees with both (4) enough freedom to schedule their own work and processes (autonomy), and (5) feedback on their work. These theories have been highly influential in the literature, emphasising the central role of the nature of the work itself.

This concept has been included in several measurement instruments of job satisfaction, such as the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ; Weiss et al., 1967), the Job Descriptive Index (JDI; Smith et al., 1969), the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS; Hackman and Oldham, 1974, 1975), and the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS; Spector, 1985). Studies using these instruments have consistently reported that satisfaction with the nature of the work itself can be considered the most important aspect and the one that better correlates with overall job satisfaction (Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012; Jurgensen, 1978; Saari and Judge, 2004).

Scholars have investigated the link between task and overall job satisfaction focusing on a limited number of task characteristics. Task enjoyment has been considered the variable that most influences satisfaction with the work itself (Chen, 2018; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2014; Taber and Alliger, 1995). The percentage of time spent on enjoyable tasks has been found to correlate positively and significantly with global satisfaction (Taber and Alliger, 1995). Several studies have found that task complexity, the extent to which a task demands cognitive or physical abilities (Liu and Li, 2012), correlates positively with job satisfaction (Dodd and Ganster, 1996; Humphrey et al., 2007; Schyns and Croon, 2006; Taber and Alliger, 1995), particularly for workers who exhibit higher needs for personal growth and development (Hackman and Oldham, 1976; Loher et al., 1985). Ability utilisation, that is, the extent to which individuals perceive their skills and knowledge being used effectively in their job tasks, is also mentioned among predictors of job satisfaction (Morrison et al., 2005; G. E. O'Brien, 1982; Tian et al., 2018). Dodd and Ganster (1996) found that perceived task variety and perceived task autonomy correlate more highly with job satisfaction than their objective counterparts. Wong and Campion (1991) claimed that not only task characteristics but also task interdependence have an influence on employees' motivation, showing that too many unrelated tasks may decrease meaningfulness of the job, while too much interdependence among tasks would reduce variety, leading to low motivation. Finally, research has also shown that perceptions of a task as creative and stimulating have the potential to influence the relationship between satisfaction and performance (Baird, 1976; Kato-Nitta and Maeda, 2013; Kim, 1980; Wong and Campion, 1991).

2.2 Job and task satisfaction in Translation Studies

Though extensively studied in I/O psychology, the concept of job satisfaction has long been neglected in Translation Studies. Interpreters' satisfaction has been investigated more often than translators' satisfaction, with overall results showing that interpreters are generally highly satisfied with their job (Choi, 2007; Lee, 2017; Martikainen et al., 2018; Setton and Liangliang, 2009). Nevertheless, over the last decade, a few studies

have appeared in the fields of Translation Psychology (Bolaños-Medina, 2016, 2022) and Sociology of Translation (Chesterman, 2017; Risku and Rogl, 2022). Many of these studies have approached satisfaction as a secondary variable, focusing on principal constructs such as translators' status (Dam and Zethsen, 2011; Katan, 2009, 2011; Ruokonen and Mäkisalo, 2018), occupational stress (Courtney and Phelan, 2019; Korpala, 2021), and emotional intelligence (Hubscher-Davidson, 2016). Other studies have considered satisfaction-related constructs such as happiness at work (Bednárová-Gibová, 2020; Bednárová-Gibová and Madoš, 2019) or compared satisfaction levels among different categories of translators, such as freelancers and salaried translators (Moorkens, 2020b).

Sources of job satisfaction have mainly been found among intrinsic factors and task-related resources (Ruokonen, 2020; Virtanen, 2019). For instance, in a study conducted by Dam and Zethsen (2016:180-182) among agency translators, translation was described as "a varied and stimulating job" (since it comprises different tasks, genres, tools), "an intellectual and creative challenge", "exciting and satisfying" and a "meaningful activity". These feelings are consistently reported in other studies (Ehrensberger-Dow and O'Brien, 2015; Katan, 2011; Moorkens, 2020b; Piecychna, 2019; Virtanen, 2019). In a study by Courtney and Phelan (2019:109), translators reported that their major sources of job satisfaction were flexibility, autonomy, and "the art of translation itself", i.e. the fact of creating new texts and producing high-quality texts. A similar construct was mentioned in Bednárová-Gibová (2020:77) and called "linguistic hedonism", or "the sense of pleasure [deriving] from working with words". In two different studies (Bednárová-Gibová, 2020; Bednárová-Gibová and Madoš, 2019), the authors investigated the happiness at work (HAW) of literary, sworn and institutional Slovak translators, and found that they often report "the ability to do quality translations" and "the increase in knowledge and skills" as their main sources of satisfaction. Similarly, the "chance to perform tasks which make use of the respondents' abilities" and the variety of tasks to carry out were reported as major sources of satisfaction among Polish sworn translators surveyed by Piecychna (2019:138). Work-scheduling autonomy, which refers to freedom in choosing one's tasks, topics and working methods, is another characteristic that positively influences translators' job satisfaction (Courtney and Phelan, 2019; Monzó-Nebot, 2023; Rodríguez-Castro, 2016; Virtanen, 2019).

Satisfaction related to performing a specific task has rarely been investigated in Translation Studies. Rodríguez-Castro (2011, 2015, 2016, 2019) has included task satisfaction among the three facets of her translators' satisfaction model. This facet includes the concepts of self-efficacy, nature of the task, self-fulfilment and job-fit, which are considered "strong intrinsic motivators" (Rodríguez-Castro, 2015:34). Self-efficacy is intended as "self-assessment of capabilities and of the power to influence outcomes and goals associated with the tasks being performed" (Rodríguez-Castro, 2011:105). The concept of nature of the task is measured through four factors, namely task complexity, novelty of the task, variety of tasks performed, and type of tasks performed. Self-fulfilment represents satisfaction of individual needs and is determined by self-actualisation (desire to grow and motivation for achievement), opportunities to learn at work (through feedback) and task appreciation (performance appraisal). Finally, job-fit is

intended as “compatibility between an individual and the work setting” (Rodríguez-Castro, 2016:203). It encompasses various characteristics, such as task autonomy (that is, the level of autonomy granted to the individual to make decisions concerning the task), occupational level and responsibility associated with experience and technical expertise, the opportunity to choose new tasks or to perform multiple tasks (task variety), allowance to take initiative to learn new processes and tasks, and the feeling of ownership and pride that derives from producing a new text (task pride).

Rodríguez-Castro tested her questionnaire with 250 translators from various countries, finding that task satisfaction is mainly attributable to the ability to perform a wide variety of tasks, intrinsic task pride and successful completion of projects, while no significant sources of dissatisfaction have been reported (Rodríguez-Castro, 2016). The author argues that this finding “might be attributed to the fact that translation professionals are highly qualified individuals who enjoy their tasks [...]” (ibid.:224). However, the question of whether translators enjoy the tasks they perform was not explicitly included in the questionnaire, nor investigated further. Furthermore, questions do not refer to specific translation-related tasks, such as revision or PE.

More recently, Álvarez-Vidal et al. (2020) conducted a study in which freelance translators were asked to rate their satisfaction with translation and PE tasks on a scale from 0 (“very bad”) to 100 (“excellent”). Translation obtained a mean score of 83, while PE scored only 56. The higher satisfaction with translation was attributed to its ability to enhance creativity and provide opportunities to work with diverse text types. In contrast, PE was described as tedious and less satisfying, as post-editors had to refrain from making extensive modifications if they wanted the task to remain profitable. This view stems from industry practices that typically pay PE assignments less than translation ones (Álvarez-Vidal et al., 2020; ELIS, 2022), which has exacerbated negative attitudes towards PE among freelance translators (Moorkens, 2020a; Nunes Vieira, 2018; Pérez Macías, 2020).

In-house linguists are generally better disposed towards translation technology than freelancers. This is primarily because salaried translators have more freedom in choosing when to use technology, and its use does not negatively impact their rates of pay (Cadwell et al., 2017; Moorkens, 2020b). However, salaried linguists have less work-scheduling autonomy, since it is usually a project manager who assigns them the tasks to perform, depending on the customers’ needs. Being forced to perform tasks that are not appreciated can be frustrating and should be avoided to preserve the long-term motivation of any worker. Introducing new tasks should also add variety and new skills for professional linguists, thus enriching rather than impoverishing their daily workflows. In this scenario, the introduction of PE can be perceived as an element of disruption, which can be positive or negative depending on the individual personality and attitudes towards MT.

To conclude, previous research on linguists’ satisfaction has overlooked satisfaction with the various tasks that linguists perform in their job. Because existing measurement instruments were not tailored to evaluate linguists’ task satisfaction, we developed a

questionnaire for this purpose. In the present study, we define task satisfaction as “the positive attitude experienced by a worker during, or upon completion of, a task” (Fisher, 1980, cited in Rodríguez-Castro, 2016:202). By focusing on this topic, our aim is to extend existing knowledge on translators’ work-related attitudes and inform better management practices in translation workflows, particularly in in-house translation settings. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first survey to examine professional translators’ satisfaction with specific translation-related tasks, and also the first conducted on salaried translators working at in-house corporate language services in Switzerland.

3. A questionnaire on linguists’ task satisfaction

3.1 Background

The study on linguists’ task satisfaction was part of a larger project aimed at investigating PE and revision practices of salaried linguists working at corporate in-house language services (detailed in Girletti, 2024). It was approved by the Ethical Review Board of the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting at the University of Geneva (reference number 32/2021). The project included two questionnaires, available in English, French, German, and Italian, over a period of three months, from November 2021 to February 2022.

The first questionnaire (Q1) targeted language service directors and project managers and contained questions about the structure and workflow of the language service. It also gathered information on the MT systems in use and their integration into the workflow, and explored PE and revision practices, including the existence of PE and revision guidelines and whether in-house linguists had received specific training in these activities. Fifty-two corporate language services responded to Q1, of which 26 (50%) were already using MT in their production workflows. Twenty-two out of 26 services used MT through a plugin in their computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools. Regarding MT-CAT tool integration, most respondents (68%) opted to provide linguists with an MT suggestion only if there were no translation memory (TM) matches, or if these matches were below a certain percentage of fuzziness. Results revealed that source texts were often pre-translated using MT and TM (providing the linguists with one suggestion at a time in the editing zone).

The second questionnaire (Q2) was addressed to corporate linguists working in the language services that had implemented MT (n=26). It included questions about linguists’ workflows, strategies and attitudes towards translation, revision, and PE tasks. Further details on the first part of Q2 can be found in Girletti (2022). In what follows, we will focus on the section of questionnaire Q2 dealing with linguists’ task satisfaction. However, data from Q1 and the first part of Q2 will be reported when relevant.

3.2 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire-design phase was informed by a thorough review of the literature. We examined studies from the fields of I/O psychology and Translation Studies to identify the aspects (“core concepts”) that would be relevant to our study. These core concepts are presented in Table 1, along with their sources and concise definitions:

Core concept	Retrieved or adapted from	Definition
Task-specific self-efficacy	Rodríguez-Castro (2011); Konttinen (2021)	The extent to which linguists feel they own the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out a specific task.
Creativity of the task	MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967); JDI (Smith et al., 1969); Moorkens (2020b)	The extent to which linguists find that the task allows them to be creative.
Task complexity	JDI (Smith et al., 1969); JDS (Hackman and Oldham, 1974); Rodríguez-Castro (2011)	The extent to which the task requires various skills and knowledge to be completed.
Stimulating nature of the task	JDS (Hackman and Oldham, 1974); Dam and Zethsen (2016)	The extent to which the task is considered intrinsically rewarding, challenging and engaging.
Control (over final quality)	Marshman (2012, 2014); Rossi and Chevrot (2019)	The linguists’ perception of exerting some control over the final quality of the text.
Ability utilisation	JDI (Smith et al., 1969); MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967)	The extent to which linguists perceive their skills and knowledge being used effectively in a specific task.
Task identity	JDS (Hackman and Oldham, 1974); Rodríguez-Castro (2011)	Linguists’ perception that the task lets them create a new text.
Task enjoyment	JSS (Spector, 1985)	The extent to which performing a specific task enhances positive feelings.

Table 1 – Core concepts included in the questionnaire, with their sources and definitions.

In addition, two other constructs were included in the questionnaire, though they relate to the overall job rather than to specific tasks. The first construct is work-scheduling autonomy, expressed with the statement “I can choose the tasks I want to perform on a daily basis (e.g. ask to perform more translation, rather than revision)”. The second construct is task variety, expressed with the statement “[the] introduction of machine translation in my workflow has helped to make my daily work more varied and

stimulating”. Responses to these statements provided additional information to interpret responses to task-specific items.

Each core concept was represented in the questionnaire by a single statement and applied to the three tasks of translation, revision and PE. To clarify the differences among these tasks, translation was described in the questionnaire as “translating without using MT”. PE was defined as “working with MT”, to account for cases where MT was used as an additional suggestion during the translation process. For revision, we provided the ISO 17100:2015 definition that describes this task as the “bilingual examination of source and target” carried out by a reviser (International Organization for Standardization, 2015). Additionally, statements related to the revision task specified that we meant “revising (human) translations”.

In total, the section contained 26 statements to which respondents could answer using a five-point, bipolar Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”, with “neither disagree nor agree” as the midpoint. In addition, a “cannot choose” option was included to account for instances where the statement was not applicable. All the statements were positively-worded, and those associated with the same construct maintained a parallel structure across the three tasks, to prevent misunderstandings and avoid the potential influence of different wordings when investigating the same construct across different tasks (Barnette, 2000; Bowling et al., 2018; Chyung et al., 2018). Four open-ended, optional questions were also included to elicit comments on aspects that linguists did or did not appreciate about working with MT and revising human translations, respectively. However, data from these questions will not be discussed in the present article.

The questionnaire was pre-tested internally with 11 colleagues from the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting at the University of Geneva, many of whom are active freelance translators or have experience as in-house staff in internal translation services. Additionally, an external freelance translator participated in the pre-testing phase. Feedback from colleagues and the external professional led to several amendments that improved the clarity of the original questionnaire.

3.3 Participants and data collection

Eighty-five participants from 23 different corporate in-house language services (CILS) answered all the mandatory questions in the task satisfaction section. We did not receive any responses from linguists working at three of the 26 CILS contacted. Based on the number of in-house linguists reported by each company in questionnaire Q1, the overall response rate was 43%. The age distribution of participants was as follows: 8% were aged 18-29, 31% 30-39, 28% 40-49, 31% 50-59, and 2% 60 or older. The main mother tongue among participants was French (45%), followed by Italian (24%), German (18%) and English (9%), while 5% identified themselves as bilingual or had a different mother tongue. Translation experience ranged from two to 36 years, with an average of 15.8 years and a median of 14 years. Overall, participants had been working at their respective language services for an average of nine years and a median of seven years.

Questionnaire Q2 was distributed to in-house linguists working at language services that used MT in production. Dissemination was mainly handled by language services' directors or project managers who filled out the first questionnaire. A reminder was sent after two weeks, either by the lead researcher or by the same director or project manager who initially sent the invitation. Both the email and the consent form clearly stated that participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. The questionnaire was hosted on the LimeSurvey platform and was made accessible from November 15th, 2021 until February 16th, 2022.

3.4 Data analysis

Responses to survey statements were coded in the SPSS software and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Responses were assigned a numerical value ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); the higher the score, the higher the agreement with the statement investigated. A score of 0 was assigned whenever a participant selected the "cannot choose" option; these observations were excluded from further analysis.

Results are described with measures of central tendency, such as mean values (M) and standard deviations (SD). Data were also analysed by means of hypothesis testing and cross-referenced with information from questionnaire Q1 and from the other sections of questionnaire Q2 (Girletti, 2022). Correlations among variables were performed using Spearman's rho, a preferred choice when dealing with ordinal data, such as Likert scale items (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2013).

4. Findings and discussion

Results for each statement representing a specific core concept are shown in tables. We report the frequency distribution of responses and mark the category that attracted the highest number of respondents for each task. All tables refer to the full sample of 85 participants.

"I have the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out [this task]"	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither disagree nor agree		Agree		Strongly agree		Cannot choose	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Translation	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	1.18	17	20.00	66	77.65	1	1.18
Revision	0	0.00	1	1.18	0	0.00	20	23.53	63	74.12	1	1.18
Post-editing	0	0.00	1	1.18	7	8.24	22	25.88	54	63.53	1	1.18

Table 2 – Responses to the statement regarding task-specific self-efficacy.

Respondents are generally confident in their ability to carry out translation, revision and PE (Table 2). However, while 98% (n=83) of linguists indicate that they feel well-prepared to perform both translation ($M=4.77$, $SD=.449$, n=84) and revision tasks ($M=4.73$,

$SD=5.23$, $n=84$), participants are slightly less confident regarding PE ($M=4.54$, $SD=7.02$, $n=84$). Indeed, only 89% ($n=76$) of post-editors agree or strongly agree with this statement, while 8% ($n=7$) remain neutral.

Studies have reported that training plays a role in improving self-efficacy (de Sousa Mata et al., 2021; Nørgaard et al., 2012). We examined the interaction between these two variables using data from Q1 and Q2, hypothesising that linguists trained in PE and revision would report higher levels of self-efficacy in these tasks compared to those without such training. Mean comparisons showed minor differences in self-efficacy levels between the two subgroups, with trained linguists reporting slightly higher self-efficacy. We conducted two t-tests for independent samples, finding a statistically significant difference only for revision training ($t(78)=2.572$, $p=.006$). This divergence may be attributed to revision being a more established practice with robust pedagogical strategies. Revision has been part of university curricula longer than PE and may be better integrated into the main curriculum than training in translation technology use. Additionally, PE training for professional translators often consists of one or two full-day sessions. While an introductory session provides a basic understanding of the implications of working with an MT engine, it may not be enough for linguists to achieve high self-efficacy in PE tasks.

"[This task] is a creative task"	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither disagree nor agree		Agree		Strongly agree		Cannot choose	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Translation	0	0.00	1	1.18	8	9.41	26	30.59	50	58.82	0	0.00
Revision	0	0.00	10	11.76	25	29.41	32	37.65	15	17.65	3	3.53
Post-editing	1	1.18	19	22.35	29	34.12	29	34.12	5	5.88	2	2.35

Table 3 – Responses to the statement regarding creativity of the task.

Most in-house linguists (89%, $n=76$) agree that translation can be considered a creative task when MT is not involved ($M=4.47$, $SD=7.17$, $n=85$). Revision is also considered creative, but to a lesser extent ($M=3.63$, $SD=9.23$, $n=82$). PE ranks third ($M=3.22$, $SD=9.11$, $n=83$), with 34% of linguists remaining neutral and 24% disagreeing (Table 3).

These findings confirm previous studies reporting that the use of translation technology in general (Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey, 2014; Salmi, 2021) and MT in particular (Daems et al., 2017; Guerberof Arenas and Toral, 2022; Sakamoto, 2019) hinders linguists' creativity. The results also support previous claims that revision is less creative compared to translation tasks (O'Brien, 2012; Mossop, 2020).

“[This task] is complex (i.e. it requires skills and knowledge)”	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither disagree nor agree		Agree		Strongly agree		Cannot choose	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Translation	0	0.00	1	1.18	3	3.53	21	24.71	60	70.59	0	0.00
Revision	0	0.00	2	2.35	3	3.53	33	38.82	46	54.12	1	1.18
Post-editing	1	1.18	1	1.18	9	10.59	32	37.65	40	47.06	2	2.35

Table 4 – Responses to the statement regarding task complexity.

Respondents’ opinions converge on the complexity of the tasks: all three are considered complex, in the sense that they require specific skills and knowledge (Table 4). Translation is perceived as the most complex ($M=4.65$, $SD=.612$, $n=85$), followed by revision ($M=4.46$, $SD=.685$, $n=84$), which is deemed slightly more demanding than PE ($M=4.31$, $SD=.810$, $n=83$).

As noted by Bolaños-Medina (2014:197), “it is a well-established fact that translation is a complex activity, involving not only various skills but also affective and attitudinal factors”. The same can be said for revision, an activity typically reserved for more experienced professionals (Mossop, 2020; Riondel, 2021b) and involving strategic, instrumental and interpersonal subcompetences that are shared with PE (see Konttinen et al., 2020, and Nitzke et al., 2019, for a discussion). However, PE has often been considered a simpler task than translation or revision, and typically assigned to linguists with less experience or fewer qualifications, or even to subject-matter experts without translation experience (Guerberof Arenas, 2014; Konttinen et al., 2020).

Salaried linguists in our survey acknowledge that PE tasks, just like translation or revision tasks, require skills and knowledge. This recognition suggests a positive shift in the perception of PE compared to previous studies. This shift could be attributed to the specific context of this study, where MT has been gradually integrated into the workflow without compromising the quality of the final product. Data from Q1 show that only a few CILS have adopted light PE, while most use MT as a tool to expedite linguists’ work, with the expectation that the final output will meet the usual high standards of quality. This approach has contributed to elevating the status of PE as an activity requiring skills and knowledge, challenging the outdated notion that this task merely involves checking low-quality content for accuracy.

“[This task] is stimulating”	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither disagree nor agree		Agree		Strongly agree		Cannot choose	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Translation	0	0.00	1	1.18	7	8.24	26	30.59	51	60.00	0	0.00
Revision	1	1.18	9	10.59	21	24.71	33	38.82	18	21.18	3	3.53
Post-editing	5	5.88	15	17.65	29	34.12	26	30.59	8	9.41	2	2.35

Table 5 – Responses to the statement regarding stimulating nature of the task.

Translation is viewed as a highly stimulating task by the majority of participants ($M=4.49$, $SD=.701$, $n=85$). Revision is ranked second ($M=3.71$, $SD=.975$, $n=82$), though it shows a higher percentage of linguists who remain neutral or disagree. PE ($M=3.20$, $SD=1.045$, $n=83$) is considered slightly less stimulating than revision (Table 5).

“When [performing this task] I feel I have control over the text’s final quality”	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither disagree nor agree		Agree		Strongly agree		Cannot choose	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Translation	1	1.18	3	3.53	7	8.24	32	37.65	39	45.88	3	3.53
Revision	1	1.18	10	11.76	13	15.29	31	36.47	28	32.94	2	2.35
Post-editing	0	0.00	7	8.24	14	16.47	40	47.06	20	23.53	4	4.71

Table 6 – Responses to the statement regarding control (over final quality).

As shown in Table 6, the majority of respondents (83.5%, $n=71$) report that they can control the final quality of the text when translating ($M=4.28$, $SD=.865$, $n=82$). Compared to translation, both revision and PE seem to allow for less control, with both tasks obtaining the same mean value (3.90). However, revision shows more variation among respondents ($SD=1.043$, $n=83$) than PE ($SD=0.875$, $n=81$).

The degree of control over the text’s final quality varies between revisers and (in-house) post-editors. Revisers are often the last linguists to check the text’s quality but do not always have the final say on the changes to be made (Riondel, 2021a, 2021b). They are also instructed to keep their interventions to a minimum (Mossop, 2020), which may contribute to the perception of reduced control over the final product. In contrast, in-house linguists working with MT often use it as a source of inspiration and can disregard suggestions as they see fit. Most often, PE tasks are left unrevised (Girletti, 2024), placing full responsibility for text quality on post-editors.

Our findings partly confirm those of previous studies. Interviewees in Virtanen’s study (2009) mentioned that translation is a meaningful job that allows control over the quality of one’s work. However, Marshman (2012, 2014) found that the use of translation technology affects users’ perception of control over the quality of their work, with text segmentation interfering negatively in this respect. This issue is also echoed in Doherty (2016) and in LeBlanc (2013), where in-house translators noted that being forced to reuse matches from the TM limits their control over the target text, leading to “a sense of disempowerment” (ibid.:10). Similar considerations have been expressed for PE. Rossi and Chevrot (2019) investigated how MT influenced perceptions of control among salaried translators working at the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Translation. The majority of respondents reported that when using MT, they have less control over their working methods, while their control over the quality of the target text is affected only in part.

We investigated whether the working mode in PE tasks influenced linguists' perceptions of control over the text's final quality. Most linguists in our sample worked with fully pre-translated texts in PE tasks, while only 24 out of 85 respondents received MT suggestions in a separate window within the CAT tool. Mean comparisons indicate that post-editors working in pre-translation mode report higher levels of control over final quality ($M=4.09$, $SD=.784$, $n=46$) compared to those in the second group ($M=3.63$, $SD=.970$, $n=24$), and this difference is statistically significant ($t(39)=2.015$, $p=.025$).

“When [performing this task] I make good use of my skills and knowledge”	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither disagree nor agree		Agree		Strongly agree		Cannot choose	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Translation	1	1.18	2	2.35	5	5.88	26	30.59	49	57.65	2	2.35
Revision	1	1.18	1	1.18	3	3.53	33	38.82	46	54.12	1	1.18
Post-editing	2	2.35	4	4.71	12	14.12	36	42.35	29	34.12	2	2.35

Table 7 – Responses to the statement regarding ability utilisation.

Responses in Table 7 indicate that most in-house linguists who filled out our survey feel they make good use of their skills and knowledge when translating ($M=4.45$, $SD=.815$, $n=83$) and revising ($M=4.45$, $SD=.735$, $n=84$). This is also true, albeit to a slightly lesser extent, when post-editing ($M=4.04$, $SD=.956$, $n=83$).

“When [performing this task] I feel I am creating a new text”	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither disagree nor agree		Agree		Strongly agree		Cannot choose	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Translation	1	1.18	6	7.06	22	25.88	32	37.65	22	25.88	2	2.35
Revision	7	8.24	33	38.82	23	27.06	13	15.29	5	5.88	4	4.71
Post-editing	5	5.88	17	20.00	32	37.65	24	28.24	3	3.53	4	4.71

Table 8 – Responses to the statement regarding task identity.

Table 8 shows the results for the statement referring to the level of task identity associated with translation, revision and PE, i.e. to what extent these tasks provide linguists with the feeling of creating a new text. While most translators agree with the statement ($M=3.82$, $SD=.952$, $n=83$), revisers tend to disagree ($M=2.70$, $SD=1.042$, $n=81$). Compared to revision, PE allows for a higher level of task identity ($M=3.04$, $SD=.955$, $n=81$).

Task identity is perhaps one of the characteristics that make linguists perceive PE as more similar to translation than to revision tasks (Do Carmo and Moorkens, 2020). The high number of responses in the middle category also suggests that this observation has prompted many translators to question the nature of translation itself and whether translating involves creating a new text.

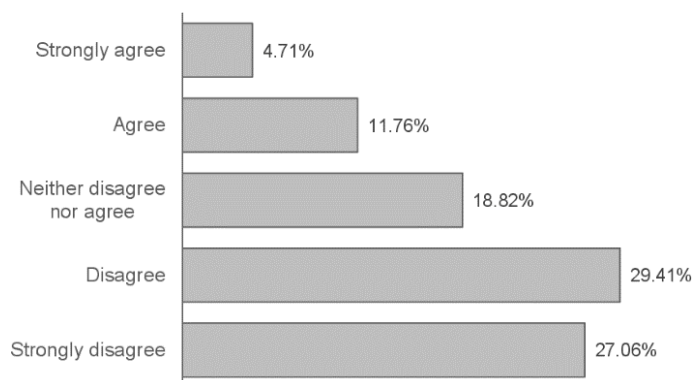


Figure 1 – Responses to the statement “I can choose the tasks I want to perform on a daily basis” (work-scheduling autonomy).

Responses to the statement investigating work-scheduling autonomy indicate that only a minority of in-house linguists (16.5%, $n=14$) can negotiate their daily tasks with project managers (Figure 1). For most respondents (56.5%, $n=48$), daily tasks are imposed, which could exacerbate negative attitudes towards certain tasks that are already less appreciated than others. We also noted that seven respondents chose not to answer this question.

We hypothesised that interacting with MT as a deliberate choice, rather than an imposed task, could contribute to PE enjoyment. We excluded from this comparison respondents who decided not to position themselves towards the statement (options “neither disagree nor agree” or “cannot choose”). We found that linguists who reported higher work-scheduling autonomy also reported a slightly higher level of PE enjoyment ($M=3.71$, $SD=.914$, $n=14$) compared to those with less freedom in choosing their tasks ($M=3.41$, $SD=.979$, $n=46$). However, it is important to note that the two subgroups were particularly unbalanced, and the difference was not statistically significant ($t(58)=1.023$, $p>.05$).

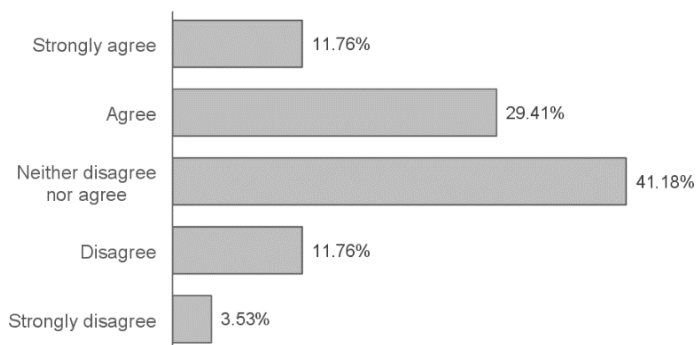


Figure 2 – Responses to the statement “The introduction of machine translation in my workflow has helped to make my daily work more varied and stimulating” (task variety).

Mixed attitudes towards PE are also reflected in responses to the statement about task variety (Figure 2). While 41% of respondents agree that MT has brought variety to their daily workflows, an equal proportion remain neutral.

“I enjoy [this task]”	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither disagree nor agree		Agree		Strongly agree		Cannot choose	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Translation	0	0.00	3	3.53	10	11.76	25	29.41	47	55.29	0	0.00
Revision	0	0.00	2	2.35	10	11.76	33	38.82	39	45.88	1	1.18
Post-editing	2	2.35	9	10.59	24	28.24	34	40.00	14	16.47	2	2.35

Table 9 – Responses to the statement regarding task enjoyment.

Finally, we report the results for the statement “I enjoy [this task]” (Table 9). Mean values indicate that PE is less appreciated than the other tasks. Translation obtains a mean score of 4.36 ($n=85$; $SD=0.829$) and revision receives a mean score of 4.30 ($n=84$; $SD=0.773$), while PE scores only 3.59 ($n=83$; $SD=0.976$) out of five. It is worth noting that a relatively high number of participants remain neutral when the statement refers to PE.

We cross-referenced these data with those from other sections of the same questionnaire, focusing on perceived quality of the MT tool in use, training, and prior experience in PE and revision. We found a positive, moderate and significant correlation between the perceived quality of the MT system used in production and the level of enjoyment experienced during PE tasks ($r=.561$, $p<.001$). However, this does not imply that linguists who perceive their MT tool as providing good quality enjoy PE tasks more than those who interact with (perceived) low-quality output. It is important to remember that correlation does not equal causation; an unaccounted-for third variable could have influenced both factors. It is also possible that linguists who enjoy working with MT tend to rate MT systems more favourably.

When analysing the effect of training on PE and revision enjoyment, we found that trained post-editors report a higher level of PE enjoyment ($M=3.82$, $SD=.971$, $n=44$) compared to linguists who had not received formal training ($M=3.33$, $SD=.927$, $n=39$) — a difference that is statistically significant, with $t(81)=2.319$, $p=.011$. In contrast, revision training seems less effective in enhancing revision enjoyment, and the difference between the two subgroups is not statistically significant ($t(82)=1.027$, $p>.05$).

In the first part of Q2, respondents were also asked whether they had prior professional experience with PE and revision, i.e. whether they started practising these activities at their current CILS or in a different workplace. We hypothesised that exposure to PE and revision in various contexts would positively influence linguists’ attitudes towards these tasks. We observed a difference between linguists with prior PE experience and those without, with the former subgroup reporting a higher mean value for PE enjoyment ($M=4.06$, $SD=.899$, $n=17$) than the latter ($M=3.47$, $SD=.964$, $n=66$). This difference is statistically significant ($t(81)=2.276$, $p=.013$), though we note that the two

subgroups are unbalanced, as only a few respondents had prior PE experience. In contrast, most respondents had gained revision experience in a different work setting. Experienced revisers reported only a marginally higher mean value for revision enjoyment ($M=4.39$, $SD=.779$, $n=56$) compared to those who had performed revision tasks only at their current CILS ($M=4.11$, $SD=.737$, $n=28$). This difference was not statistically significant ($t(82)=1.613$, $p>.05$).

“I enjoy [this task]”	“I enjoy PE”		
	M	SD	n
Revision \geq Translation	3.79	.894	58
Revision $<$ Translation	3.12	1.013	25

Table 10 - Mean comparison: “I enjoy PE”, broken down by revision/translation preference.

Finally, we hypothesised that respondents who enjoy revision tasks at least as much as they enjoy translation tasks are also likely to enjoy PE more than those who prefer translating above all other activities. The rationale is that linguists tend to frame PE as “revision of the MT output” (Mossop, 2020); therefore, those who enjoy one task would also enjoy the other. Our assumption is confirmed by mean comparison of the two subgroups (¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.). Results of a one-tailed t-test for independent samples indicate that the difference is statistically significant ($t(81)=3.023$, $p=.002$).

Overall, our findings revealed an interesting hierarchy among the primary tasks performed by linguists in their job. Translation scores highest on all core concepts investigated. Translation tasks were valued more than revision tasks, which, in turn, were rated higher than PE tasks. In their survey of freelance translators, Pielmeier and O’Mara (2020) included a question about the task that linguists preferred among translating, editing human translation and editing MT. Our results broadly match theirs, but we have provided more information on the characteristics of these tasks and the level of satisfaction they can ensure.

PE was perceived as less gratifying, less creative, and slightly less demanding (in terms of skills and knowledge) than revision and translation. These findings align with previous studies that have reported negative attitudes towards PE tasks and the use of MT in professional contexts (Álvarez-Vidal et al., 2020; Läubli and Orrego-Carmona, 2017; Nunes Vieira, 2018). However, our respondents also reported that PE, more than revision, enables them to create new content and exert greater control over the text’s final quality. Previous research on salaried translators’ perceptions of control over text quality in PE (see Rossi and Chevrot, 2019) suggested that MT limits perceptions of control only in part. Our data offer additional insights on this point. Indeed, it seems that the common practice of instructing revisers not to make extensive modifications to translated texts restrains their perception of control over the final text’s quality more than the use of MT tools alone.

Our data do not indicate that the mode of using MT suggestions in the CAT tool affected overall satisfaction with the PE task. Contrary to our expectations, post-editors who work on fully pre-translated texts reported a higher level of control over the text's final quality than those who display MT suggestions in a separate window. Notably, the former mode of working is also the most common among our respondents, suggesting that they have become accustomed to post-editing fully pre-translated texts and have found other ways to exert their control over the text's final quality. Further investigation is needed to better understand this relationship.

The prevalence of pre-translation mode among our respondents supports the view that the PE process is more akin to revision than to translation tasks (do Carmo and Moorkens, 2020). Scholars have reported that many linguists perceive editing and revising as less enjoyable than translating (Mossop, 2020; S. O'Brien, 2012). However, in our sample, several linguists valued revision tasks as much as translation tasks. Interestingly, these linguists tended to be more satisfied with PE tasks than those who did not enjoy working with pre-translated texts. The underlying reasons for this phenomenon, whether they stem from individual predispositions or other factors, deserve further investigation.

Linguists who had received PE training reported higher levels of satisfaction with PE tasks than those who had not received such training. In contrast, revision training influenced linguists' perception of having the necessary skills and knowledge required to perform revision tasks, but not satisfaction with these tasks. Experienced post-editors expressed greater satisfaction with PE tasks than novice post-editors. However, experience in revision did not seem to affect satisfaction with revision tasks. Previous studies have highlighted the value of training and experience in improving productivity and self-efficacy (Álvarez-Vidal et al., 2020; De Cespèdes, 2018; Guerberof Arenas, 2014; Kontinen, 2021; van Rensburg, 2017). However, to the best of our knowledge, the relationship between these factors and linguists' satisfaction has not been explored.

5. Concluding remarks

We conducted a survey-based study to investigate the task satisfaction of salaried linguists working at corporate in-house language services in Switzerland. The survey explored eight key concepts, namely task-specific self-efficacy, creativity, complexity, stimulating nature of the task, control over the text's final quality, ability utilisation, task identity, and task enjoyment. Additionally, we included statements to determine the level of work-scheduling autonomy, and the perceived impact of MT on task variety. Eighty-five participants completed all the mandatory questions of the survey.

Our findings unveiled a hierarchy among the tasks performed by salaried linguists. Translation tasks were valued more than revision tasks, which, in turn, were rated higher than PE tasks. Drawing on Malow's theory of motivation, Lambert and Walker (2024:96) explained that "translators must translate if they are to be ultimately satisfied". The increase in revision-related tasks risks undermining the intrinsic satisfaction derived from the art of translating. Linguists must adopt new coping mechanisms to safeguard their

feelings of self-actualisation. While freelance translators have the autonomy to choose their tasks, corporate linguists rarely have this possibility. Nevertheless, in-house translation settings provide an optimal environment for leveraging translation technology without economic repercussions.

To avoid the perception of working on an assembly line, it is essential to enrich rather than simplify the job (Herzberg, 1959). For salaried linguists, this implies having the opportunity to choose their working methods and the tasks they perform. Providing such autonomy can significantly enhance job satisfaction by allowing linguists to engage more deeply with their work and exercise their creativity and expertise.

Understanding the distinct factors that contribute to task satisfaction can help language-services managers tailor tasks to individual preferences and strengths. Furthermore, our findings indicate that investing in targeted PE training can enhance linguists' satisfaction with handling PE tasks. This, in turn, optimises the integration of MT into translation workflows and contributes to creating a more motivating and fulfilling work environment.

The order in which tasks are presented in educational contexts may also influence the development of the task satisfaction hierarchy. It is common in translation pedagogy to introduce PE later in the curriculum (Guerberof Arenas and Moorkens, 2019; Konttinen et al., 2020; S. O'Brien, 2002). While this approach has its merits, it can leave students with the impression that PE is a peripheral activity. In reality, when students begin working in in-house translation services, they quickly discover that MT is much more prevalent. Expectations about the nature of translation work in the neural MT era should be shaped during university training to better prepare students for the realities of the profession.

In conclusion, by focusing on various characteristics associated with task satisfaction in performing translation, revision and PE, our study provided insights into the intricate relationship among these activities. As task satisfaction is the facet that better correlates with job satisfaction, our findings contribute to a deeper understanding of what professional, salaried translators appreciate or dislike about the very nature of their jobs.

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