Experiences of Online Volunteer Translation and Implications for Translation Education

Thesis

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EXPERIENCES OF ONLINE VOLUNTEER TRANSLATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSLATION EDUCATION

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21 October 2020

Redacted copy (personal data removed from Appendices B, D & E)
Abstract

This study explores the boundary between online volunteer translation and translation education to gain insights into how pedagogy might respond to: a) changes in practice in the field of translation resulting from the increasing availability and use of digital tools and content; and b) the learning opportunities afforded to those who want to become professional translators by the growth of online, open volunteer translation initiatives. It considers the possibility of expanding the concept of practice-based learning within an authentic, situated learning model, to encompass online volunteer translation as a way of developing translation competence and being socialised into the practice of translation.

The study focuses on participants in TED Translators (TEDT) from across the world who plan to work as professional translators. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of interview data and a qualitative online survey, it explores their experiences and perceptions of how their engagement with TEDT fits into their learning and career journeys.

The findings identify the characteristics of the activity that make it attractive to aspiring translators as well as the difficulties they encounter; the professional and learning benefits that participants derive from engaging in TEDT; and the different paths and trajectories that link volunteering, education and profession. It concludes that online volunteer translation can offer a motivating, meaningful and situated learning opportunity through which learners can develop their translation competence and their identity as translators; and that informal learning using open tools, resources and communities can support learners’ access to and engagement with formal education. However, educators and participants must consider the challenges of learning within an online community and develop the relevant digital and participatory skills, as well as a good awareness of local cultures and customs, to successfully engage with this opportunity.

**Keywords:** translation education, online volunteer translation, translation competence, situated learning, open pedagogy, IPA
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The task of conveying information between languages is probably as old as the existence of language, however the professionalisation of translation through formal education is a recent occurrence, dating only to the late twentieth century when formal translation courses proliferated in Higher Education institutions. In many parts of the world being a translator is still regarded as a role rather than a profession and even in Europe and the Western world, where translation courses and professional associations are well established, translators continue to struggle for adequate status and recognition for their jobs (Pym, Orrego-Carmona and Torres-Simón, 2016). More recently, the impact of technology in the field of translation has affected not just productivity and content, but also practice, enabling a democratising effect that has allowed high numbers of self-selected volunteers to work collaboratively using online tools and spaces as part of the phenomenon known as online volunteer translation (Pym, 2011; O’Hagan, 2016). This expression of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006) is transforming the landscape of practice of translation, blurring once more the lines between professionals and amateurs (García, 2015; Koskinen and Dam, 2016).

This study is concerned with exploring the boundary between online volunteer translation and translation education, with the aim of gaining insights into how pedagogy might respond to: a) changes in practice in the field of translation resulting from the increasing availability and use of open digital tools and content; and b) the learning opportunities afforded to those who want to work as professional translators by the growth of online, open translation activities. This exploration can inform the potential for expanding the concept of translation competence development through project-based and practice-based learning, within a situated translation education model (Kiraly, 2015; Risku, 2010). It can also consider whether volunteer, real-world tasks can support the development of translation competence whilst facilitating learning that has an impact beyond the classroom.

In order to understand what it is that those who are planning to work as professional translators get out of their participation in online volunteer translation activities, I have chosen to study the experiences of individuals who fit this profile and participate in TED Translators (TEDT), an online volunteer translation project. This choice was driven by my own involvement in TEDT as a volunteer;¹ and by my interest in open education, a field I have worked in and researched for some time as an educational practitioner and scholar.

¹ https://www.ted.com/profiles/3291230/translator
This introductory chapter presents the context for the study, the TED Translators project, and describes the features that might make it a useful learning space for those who seek to develop their translation skills in order to make translation their profession. It also introduces some basic information about audiovisual translation and subtitling, necessary to make sense of the context and data collected. Finally, it provides a brief rationale for the study, the specific research questions and methodological choices, and an outline of how the thesis is structured.

1.2 TED Translators

In order to make sense of the context in which the investigation is located and to understand the activities and roles in which the participants engage, this section provides an overview of TED and TED Translators, and the characteristics of this online volunteer translation project that appear to make it a potentially useful resource for would-be translators. TED is ‘a nonprofit devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks’. At official TED conferences, conducted in English, experts share their knowledge with a live audience in short engaging lectures, known as TED Talks, which are then captured and published online for wider dissemination. TEDx events follow the same format but are organized locally across the world and generate numerous talks in many languages, some of which are also made available for translation.

TED conference attendance fees generate vast sums in revenue, which added to ‘sponsorship, foundation support, licensing fees and book sales’ is then spent on ‘video editing, web development and hosting (…) and support for community driven initiatives like TEDx and TED Fellows’ as well as paying ‘fair salaries to staffers and interns’. Profits are directed at making content available for free and other related initiatives.

The TED Talk format is not without critics, who have claimed its superficial coverage of topics in a compressed format not only panders to 21st century short attention spans (Moran, 2012) but actively discourages critical enquiry. Robbins (2012) goes as far as stating that ‘[t]here are no questions here: in the cult of TED, everything is awesome and inspirational, and ideas aren’t supposed to be challenged’. However, for this study the predictability of the TED format, the brevity of the talks (ranging from four to twenty minutes) and the huge

2 http://www.ted.com/about/our-organization

3 TED Conferences accounted for $42 million of the nonprofit Sapling Foundation’s income in 2018 (data from ProPublica’s Nonprofit Explorer database https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/). In 2019 TED Conferences LLC moved from the Sapling Foundation to TED Foundation, also a nonprofit.

4 https://www.ted.com/about/our-organization/how-ted-works gives more detailed information on Who owns TED? How does TED make money? and What does TED do with its money?
variety of topics addressed are positives for those who want practise translating. In aiming
to popularise and disseminate knowledge, TED Talks have to make it accessible and thus
provide a good entry point for translators into different subjects, specialisms and
terminologies.

TED Translators, launched by TED in 2009 as the TED Open Translation Project, is the
online, global project that coordinates and facilitates the work of some 35,000 registered
volunteers who transcribe and translate talks, and have so far completed over 160,000
translations into 116 languages. Adding English subtitles to English-language TED talks
not only helps those with hearing impairments but also the one billion (and growing)
worldwide who have English as an additional language (Graddol, 2000; Crystal, 2008).
Translating the subtitles of TED talks from English into other languages delivers TED’s
strategy of knowledge dissemination by making them accessible to non-English speakers
globally. The translation effort also extends to translation into English and other languages
of the many talks given at TEDx events in languages other than English. Making content
available in multiple languages has led to huge increases in traffic to the TED website; just
in its first year and with only 7,000 translations completed by 4,000 volunteers, the
translation project had delivered a 350% increase in viewers from outside the US (TED
Conferences, 2010).

There are no formal entry tests nor is there any form of vetting of participants, but volunteers
joining the project are asked to be ‘fluently bilingual in both source and target languages’
and ‘knowledgeable of subtitling best practices’ as described in TED’s own guidelines. Although these requirements are not checked, Câmara’s (2014) survey of TED Translator
volunteers (n=177) revealed that a third of respondents already had professional translation
skills and half had some translation experience acquired in other volunteer projects.

Volunteers can transcribe and translate talks, and review the work of others, although only
those who have had 90 minutes of their own work reviewed by more experienced volunteers
should take on reviewing tasks. Language Coordinators are experienced volunteers who
have been approved by the organisation to provide support and mentoring for others in their
language group and they are responsible for carrying out a final check before approving the
work for publication. All work carried out by volunteers is unpaid. This may include
transcribing, translating and reviewing and, for Language Coordinators, approving the
translations as well as supporting and mentoring their language communities. There are
paid positions in TEDT for editors and technical staff, community developers, who look after

5 https://www.ted.com/about/programs-initiatives/ted-translators figures correct at time of writing
6 https://www.ted.com/participate/translate/get-started
the large community of volunteers, or professional transcribers, who transcribe TED Talks and create the templates that are later used to translate the content into other languages.

For each step in the workflow volunteers are given thirty days to complete their task, and reviewers and Language Coordinators can accept the task or send it back for further work, as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

![Figure 1 TED Translators workflow and roles](image)

Translation work is carried out in the open source subtitle editor Amara.\(^7\) Provided by the Participatory Culture Foundation, this captioning tool was used by activists to make video content on human rights crises available in different languages during the Fukushima disaster and the Arab Spring in 2011. TED adopted Amara that same year and has used since a version of the tool adapted following feedback from TED volunteers. Amara has a visual, user-friendly, simple and colourful design, and has received awards for accessibility (from the US Federal Communications Commission) and intercultural connection (from the UN) (Gray & Suri, 2019, p. 226). In 2013 Amara created Amara on Demand to offer paid captioning opportunities to its large base of volunteers, many of whom move between paid and unpaid tasks, putting to work the skills they have developed through their voluntary translation contributions. The model used by Amara emphasises teamwork and collaboration and, recognising that its success relies on its users’ creativity, it helps them by, for example, allowing them to return a task if they find it too difficult or are no longer able to complete it.

On Amara volunteers can select tasks, create and synchronise subtitles and annotate their translations with comments or questions for the reviewer. Figure 2 below shows the Amara interface which contains the video at the top displaying the subtitles as they are created by the user, the original subtitles on the left hand side (in English in this case) and their equivalent translations in the middle (in Catalan here), with space to post notes on the right.

\(^7\) [www.amara.org](https://www.amara.org)
hand side, on difficulties encountered, choices made or comments from the reviewer or approver, for example. When a subtitle is selected for editing (the top one in the middle column), an information box opens up to the right with the start and end time, the number of characters per line and the reading speed in characters per second. When these values exceed the number of characters or reading speed permitted by the system (42 per line and 21 characters per second), these numbers turn red and a red exclamation mark appears alongside the subtitle to alert the translator that the subtitle needs to be shortened, or the time it stays on screen needs to be increased.

![Figure 2 Amara interface](image)

The guidelines for volunteers\(^8\) place emphasis on capturing the style and personality of the speaker. They indicate that: meaning should be clear and translation accurate without omissions, subtitles should sound natural in the target language, and subtitles should have the correct structure and be synchronised correctly. Translators, reviewers and approvers may attach notes and comments to the translation in Amara to explain changes, provide feedback or highlight learning points, and can also message each other through Amara if they want to discuss or challenge any translation choices.

TEDT relies on human volunteers to carry out the translation of subtitles. Amara does not offer integrated machine translation or other technology-based translation tools, although it is possible for translators to download the subtitles and translate them using machine translation, before editing, uploading and adjusting them. The template provided can be

\(^8\) [https://translations.ted.com/How_to_Tackle_a_Translation](https://translations.ted.com/How_to_Tackle_a_Translation)
changed when completing the translation, adding or removing subtitles if necessary and adjusting start and end times of each subtitle to accommodate the requirements of each language. Great stock is placed in TEDT on human translation to ensure a high-quality translation, in which cultural references and idiomatic expressions are rendered appropriately in the target language.

Another feature of Amara with great potential for learning is the so-called ‘diffing tool’, which allows comparison of different versions of the subtitles so that volunteers can clearly see what changes have been made to their translations. Figure 3 below shows the comparison between two versions of a translation, with the subtitles that have been changed highlighted in orange in the later version.

Technical support is provided by Amara staff, and other issues can be discussed with peers, including Language Coordinators and TEDT personnel, through support groups in Facebook, such as the general ‘TED Translators’ group or the language-specific groups. Language Coordinators can communicate and share best practice through a dedicated Facebook group where they also feed back to the TEDT team on any problems with the system. More extensive support resources for those using the tools, and guidance on how

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9 [https://www.facebook.com/groups/ITranslateTEDTalks/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ITranslateTEDTalks/) (membership 27,781 at 13 May 2019)

10 These vary in size. On 13 May 2019 the Spanish Facebook group had 4275 members whilst the Catalan group had 121.
to translate and subtitle are collected in the OTPedia wiki\textsuperscript{11} and in a dedicated YouTube channel, the TED Translators Learning Series.\textsuperscript{12}

All volunteers create an online profile where they are identified as TEDT translators and where all their published work is assembled and credited to them. Their names are displayed alongside each talk they have worked on as translator or reviewer, as shown in Figure 4 below.

![Figure 4 TEDT Profile](image)

Having introduced TED and TED Translators, the following section provides a brief introduction to audiovisual translation and subtitling.

### 1.3 Audiovisual translation and subtitling

With the huge growth of audiovisual content online and the increasingly widespread use of captioning both on television and online, it may seem unnecessary to spend time talking about what subtitling is. However, there are specific aspects of subtitling, the type of translation that TEDT volunteers carry out for TED, that make this an attractive and

\textsuperscript{11} http://translations.ted.org/wiki/Main_Page

\textsuperscript{12} https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6b3FWOn0YwVq0MHy0DtfBq
productive but also challenging choice for those who want to take their first steps in the world of translation or want to develop their translation skills.

In the foundational text on subtitling by Díaz Cintas & Remael (2007, p. 8), subtitling is defined as:

a translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavours to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, placards and the like), and the information that is contained on the soundtrack (songs, voices off).

Subtitles should convey the message of the original and achieve a similar effect on the target audience to that of the original message. Text reduction through condensation or omission is often necessary and considered good practice. Subtitles must also be synchronised with the image and speech, and stay on screen long enough to be read by viewers without distracting them unduly from what is happening on screen. This is achieved by determining a maximum length for the subtitle and a maximum reading speed expressed as number of characters per second or words per minute. Commercial subtitle length was originally set between 32 and 41 characters for languages with a Roman script (Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2007, p. 9), but this has been increasing recently and the higher limit is now the norm. TEDT uses 42 characters per line and a reading speed of 21 characters per second. Time and space therefore strongly constrain the translation of subtitles.

Audiovisual translation is not a genre but the translation of a particular text type that is semiotically complex, multi-channel and multi-code (because it forces the translator to pay attention not just to the words but to what else is happening on screen in terms of sound and image) and multidisciplinary (because it can deal with any topic or life domain, often mixing them). This makes audiovisual translation not only challenging but also rich in opportunities for would-be translators to experience a wide variety of topics, genres, text styles and linguistic challenges.

Although TEDT volunteers can engage in the intralingual practice of transcribing, i.e. creating subtitles for a talk in the language in which the talk is given, the focus in this study is on volunteers’ interlingual translation work, which refers here to the translation of subtitles from one language to another.

1.4 Purpose of the investigation

A major driver for this research was the need to recognise the phenomenon of participation in online volunteer translation activities and to explore how it could inform the pedagogical design of a new translation qualification, an activity that occupied much of my time in my role as educator before and during this doctoral research project. By focusing on the
experiences of individuals and getting close to the detail of their stories, I wanted to expand 
existing knowledge on this new practice, online volunteer translation, to provide an insight 
into the meaning that TED Translators participants attach to their activities in TEDT but also 
to advance educators’ and scholars’ awareness of how online volunteer translation can 
contribute to the development of translation competence. The choice of topic seemed fully 
vindicated when in his 2017 monograph on crowdsourced and online collaborative 
translation Jiménez-Crespo reminded the discipline that the world of ‘amateur’ translation 
was ‘in dire need of further research’ (p. 6) and devoted a whole chapter to exploring how 
this practice could be integrated into translator training, stressing that it was imperative for 
translation studies and translation training to uncover ‘the mechanisms by which these 
volunteers and fans can acquire close to professional competence’ (p. 232).

To delimit and contain the scope of the investigation, I decided to focus on those participants 
who planned to work as professional translators, as they were the more likely to be or have 
been involved in formal education as well. Thus, the first aim of the investigation was to 
answer the following three research questions:

1. What are the experiences of participation in TEDT of those TEDT contributors 
who plan to work as professional translators?
2. How do these contributors perceive their participation in TEDT in relation to their 
educational aspirations?
3. How do these contributors perceive their participation in TEDT in relation to their 
professional aspirations?

Given the lack of previous research on online volunteer translation and TEDT, an 
exploratory approach was required to address these three research questions, whilst the 
focus on individuals’ experiences suggested a qualitative, phenomenological methodology 
(Creswell, 1998), hence the methodological choice of Interpretative Phenomenological 
Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

Ultimately, the purpose and aim of the investigation was to assess whether translation 
education could profitably harness online volunteer translation, or some of its elements, as 
part of a situated pedagogical model. For this it was important to uncover the opportunities 
online volunteer translation offers to educators and the benefits that participants derive from 
it, but also the challenges that may prevent profitable engagement by both students and 
educators. Therefore, a further research question was required to address this intersection 
between online volunteer translation and translation education:

4. What are the opportunities and challenges of incorporating online volunteer 
translation into translation education?

In order to discuss this in relation to the learning that takes place in TEDT, an approach to 
learning as social participation seemed appropriate, hence the choice of situated learning
in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) as the conceptual framework used in this investigation. The findings of the phenomenological investigation conducted to address the first three research questions are discussed in chapter 4, whilst chapter 5 relates these findings to theory and practice in order to answer the fourth research question.

I hope that the insights generated by this work will help educators develop a better awareness of the role that online volunteer translation plays in the landscape of practice of translation, so that those considering whether and how they might include online volunteer translation in their teaching understand this activity better and can provide clear pedagogical designs and adequate support for their students.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

The thesis is organised in six chapters, in addition to references and appendices, as follows:

- Chapter 1 provides some background to the area and purpose of the investigation, and the context chosen for the study.

- Chapter 2 contains the literature review, which covers translation competence, models of translation education with a focus on socio-constructivist approaches, the impact of technology on translation and the area of online volunteer translation. It also presents the conceptual framework of situated learning in communities of practice.

- Chapter 3 discusses the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions for the study, and covers all aspects of research design and method, including reflections on ensuring quality and the positionality of the researcher.

- Chapter 4 describes the findings of the investigation from the viewpoint of the participants and relates them to each of the first three research questions.

- Chapter 5 offers the researcher's interpretation of the findings, relating them to theory and practice, and discussing their significance in relation to what online volunteer translation can offer to learners and educators, thus addressing the fourth research question.

- Chapter 6 includes a summary of the findings and their significance, and a discussion of the contribution that this work makes to knowledge and practice, including the limitations of the study and some suggestions for further research.
2 Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review deals with the two areas of practice that intersect in this study, translation teaching in Higher Education and online volunteer translation. First a critical overview of approaches to translation competence and its development is presented, which frames an understanding of translation as a problem-solving activity, and deliberate practice (Anders Ericssonson, 2008) as the mechanism used to develop translation competence. Congruent with that view of translation competence development is a pedagogical approach to translation education that is based on situatedness and authenticity, and on openness as an enabler for this approach. The opportunities and challenges presented by such a pedagogy are then evaluated in relation to pedagogical projects that have integrated activities involving online volunteer translation in the translation classroom.

The second part of the literature review examines the impact that technological change has had in the practice of translation and the emergence of the phenomenon of online volunteer translation. Research on online volunteer translation is examined and a gap in the literature is identified in relation to how volunteers in online volunteer translation projects make sense of their participation in terms of their educational and professional trajectories.

Having reviewed the literature on translation competence, pedagogical approaches to translation education, and online volunteer translation, the researcher has drawn on her own observations and experiences as a participant in TED Translators (TEDT) to venture that this might constitute a community of practice. The final section introduces the concepts of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), which provide a useful conceptual framework to discuss how participants in TEDT make sense of their participation in TEDT in relation to their learning trajectories and their identities as future translators. The notion of cognition that underpins this approach to learning is briefly described, as is the way in which the concepts of formal and informal learning are used in the study.

The literature review concludes with a clear delimitation of the gap in the literature and the rationale for determining the research questions posed.

2.1 Translation teaching in Higher Education

Higher Education has experienced a paradigmatic shift in the last few decades as a result of rapid changes in technology. These have democratized knowledge and led to changes in access and delivery (open education, online provision, internationalization), spurred the search for more effective models of student learning (research-based or project-based learning), and placed greater emphasis on rights, values and employability, highlighting the fact that learning can and should connect with the world outside the classroom, as in service learning, and prepare students for the world of work (Blessinger, 2018).
Many translation educators in Europe have been replacing instructivist teaching methods with more innovative pedagogies based on tasks and projects (González Davies, 2004; Kiraly, 2005, 2012; Mitchell-Schuitevoerder, 2014; Kiraly et al., 2016; González-Davies and Enríquez-Raído, 2016). These approaches are often anchored in a socio-constructivist paradigm and a post-positivist, post-modern epistemology, based on the Vygotskian notion that knowledge and learning are intersubjective, constructed through participation in social and cultural settings, and mediated by language and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). The metaphor of ‘mind as computer’ and the notion of learning as acquisition which have for so long dominated education are slowly being challenged by socio-constructivist and expansive or emergentist notions of learning as participation (Sfard, 1998) and learning as transformation (Hager and Hodkinson, 2009).

This section examines the notion of translation competence and its development through deliberate practice, and considers the ways in which translation education might use a pedagogy that is based on situatedness, authenticity and openness to support translation competence development.

2.1.1 Translation as a problem-solving activity

Translation educators are under increasing pressure to create programmes that ‘ensure a good match between graduates’ competences and employers’ requirements’ (Schäffner, 2012, p. 31). However, it is worth keeping in mind that the professionalization of translation and the creation of university translation courses that prepare students for the profession are relatively recent phenomena, starting in the last quarter of the 20th century and developing fast as technology has continued to transform the profession in recent decades (Dam and Koskinen, 2016). Before the creation of translation degrees, translation competence was developed on the job through independent study, experience and whatever supervision could be secured from a more experienced translator. This is still the case in some places around the world, where translation continues to be regarded as a role rather than a profession. For example, Sela-Sheffy (2016) reports that professionalisation is resisted in Israel by both literary translators, who promote a narrative of ‘artistry’, and community and ad-hoc translators, who aspire to other careers and view translation as a temporary occupation.

The translation industry recognises that translation competence can be gained in different ways, and not exclusively through formal higher education (unlike in other professions, such as medicine). In a survey carried out across over 20 European countries and taken by over 700 employers in the professional translation market, experience in the field of professional

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13 Literary translation had been studied in comparative literature university courses for some time.
translation was viewed as having higher value than qualifications. In fact, it was rated ‘essential’ or ‘important’ by 88% of respondents, whilst a university degree in translation or related fields only achieved 78% (Optimale, 2012). Equally, the ISO 17100:2015 Standard for Translation Services requires translation providers to employ translators of a certain standard, and that is defined as having either a degree in translation, a degree in another discipline and two years of full-time experience as translators, or five years of experience as translators, thus valuing professional experience equally with higher education qualifications.

This section explores the concept of translation competence and the various models that have been proposed within the discipline of translation studies to describe it. For the purpose of this investigation, translation is conceived of as problem-solving and the development of translation competence as being achieved through deliberate practice. There has been a tendency to break up translation competence into components, which, from a pedagogical point of view, are useful for determining what students need to learn and be assessed on. When looking at integrating online volunteer translation activities into translation training, componential translation competence models can be used to map the knowledge and skills that participants can develop through their participation. Jiménez-Crespo (2017, pp. 251-253) used the PACTE (2003) model (see 2.1.1.1) to illustrate precisely that, although his list of potential benefits is mostly based on informed hypotheses rather than research-based evidence, which is still scarce in this area of translation studies.

2.1.1.1 Multicomponential models of translation competence

There is general agreement on the fact that translation competence is more than just bilingual competence. Over time, scholars have been identifying an increasing number of elements that seem to be necessary aspects of translation competence. A number of multicomponential models have been proposed by educators, scholars and the industry. Some models (PACTE, 2003; Kelly, 2007) identify what students need to be taught and assessed on and are used to guide curriculum design, whilst others emerged from investigations on the acquisition of translation competence (Göpferich, 2008). Industry models (EMT, 2009; Toudic & Krause, 2017; NAATI, 2015) are more concerned with the accreditation and certification of training programmes and professional translators and, amongst these, the European Masters in Translation (EMT) Competence Framework is widely used in Higher Education to guide curriculum design, a requirement for institutions who want to be awarded this quality label from the European Commission.

Whilst the new EMT Competence Framework is an invaluable resource for educators putting together a programme of study, its stated aim to ‘consolidate and enhance the employability of graduates’ (Toudic & Krause, 2017, p. 3) and its focus on industry requirements might be to the detriment of important postgraduate skills, for example it acknowledges that it ‘does not, for instance, include the theoretical knowledge or the
generic research skills that are an integral and important part of many advanced translation studies programmes’ (p. 4). These are instead reflected respectively in the Knowledge about Translation and Instrumental Sub-Competences in the model proposed by PACTE (2003) and the Transfer Competency and Research Competency in the model by NAATI (2015). In addition, the articulation of competences as learning outcomes (following the language set out in the European Qualifications Framework) makes the content more suited to those developing educational programmes than to those seeking to understand what the different components of translation competence are, instead of than how we should teach them or what students need to know to satisfy employers.

Two examples of multicomponential models are described here to illustrate the elements that are identified as making up translation competence: an early model developed by PACTE research group at Barcelona’s Universitat Autònoma (PACTE, 2003) and the model from Australia’s National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI, 2015). Multicomponential models use slightly different terminologies to parcel up what are ultimately very similar areas of competence. It needs to be acknowledged that as translation practice evolves, so must these models, so there is limited value in espousing one particular model to the exclusion of others. The decision to use PACTE and NAATI has been taken on the basis that the PACTE model is backed by fifteen years of empirical validation (PACTE, 2011; Hurtado-Albir, 2015 & 2017) whilst the model developed by NAATI drew on extensive work previously done by EMT (2009) and the American Translation Association (Koby and Melby, 2013) to map translation competence (NAATI, 2015, p. 6). A critical examination of these two models will serve as the basis for determining the elements that make up translation competence but also for justifying a different approach to translation competence.

The PACTE model identifies five sub-competences (see Figure 5 below) modified by psycho-physiological components that are not exhaustively specified in the model but include cognitive and attitudinal aspects (memory, curiosity, motivation...), abilities (creativity, analysis...) and psychomotor mechanisms. The five sub-competences are described as follows:

- Bilingual sub-competence: procedural knowledge used to communicate in two languages (includes grammatical-lexical, textual, socio-linguistic and pragmatic knowledge).
- Extra-linguistic sub-competence: declarative knowledge about the world in general, the source and target cultures and specific areas of knowledge as required.
- Knowledge of translation sub-competence: declarative knowledge about the strategies and techniques involved in the translation process and the practice and context of professional translation.
• **Instrumental sub-competence**: procedural knowledge related to research and documentation processes, and information and communication technologies applied to translation.

• **Strategic sub-competence**: procedural knowledge to mobilise all other sub-competences, problem-solve and ensure the success of the translation process.

![Diagram of PACTE (2003) model of translation competence.](image)

*Figure 5 PACTE (2003) model of translation competence.*

The NAATI (2015) model breaks down translation competence into more competencies and focuses more strongly on professional and workplace aspects of translation, with the inclusion of service provision and ethics, for example (see Figure 6 below). It also outlines the knowledge and skills that relate to each competency, and the attributes, which it defines as ‘personal characteristics required to integrate the knowledge and skills previously described in order to be an effective translator’ (p. 14). Attributes are not linked to specific competencies but are considered ‘integral in the overall professional practice as they determine how a translator applies their knowledge and skill’ (p. 14). The inclusion of attributes in the model is a useful addition to render visible important aspects without which the development of knowledge and skills could not be successfully achieved.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Competency (in two languages)</td>
<td>Vocabulary knowledge</td>
<td>Language proficiency enabling meaning transfer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grammar knowledge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Idiomatic knowledge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Language trends knowledge</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural Competency</td>
<td>Cultural, historical and political knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sociolinguistic skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Competency</td>
<td>Research tools and methods knowledge</td>
<td>Terminology and information research skills</td>
<td>Create and maintain a knowledge bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological Competency</td>
<td>Translation technology knowledge</td>
<td>Computer skills: Text production and management</td>
<td>Objective</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Computer skills: Internet</td>
<td>Attentive-to-detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Computer skills: Computer-Assisted Translation</td>
<td>Desire-to-excel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Competency</td>
<td>General knowledge</td>
<td>Textual analysis skills</td>
<td>Reliable</td>
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<td>Current events knowledge</td>
<td>Meaning transfer skills</td>
<td>Willing-to-learn</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subject-matter specific knowledge</td>
<td>Writing skills</td>
<td>Objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer Competency</td>
<td>Translation methods knowledge</td>
<td>Follow specifications</td>
<td>Accepting-of-criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Textual conventions knowledge</td>
<td>Revision, proofreading and post-editing skills</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self-reflective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Provision Competency</td>
<td>Knowledge of the business of translation</td>
<td>Translation business skills</td>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Textual conventions knowledge</td>
<td>Translation business system skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Competency</td>
<td>Ethics knowledge</td>
<td>Professional Ethics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6 NAATI (2015) model of translation competence**

Multicomponental models fulfil a valuable pedagogical and accreditation function but have been criticised for being too descriptive and overloaded, and failing to explain how competences interact (Shreve, Angelone and Lacruz, 2018; Cheng, 2017). Educators have also recognised that their fragmentary nature could ‘make it hard for students to establish connections between the components’ (Kelly, 2007, p. 137). Furthermore, the competence model itself and the ease with which competences might be turned into certifiable competencies has been widely criticised as a Western gatekeeping mechanism that ‘may have grave consequences for marginalised groups’ (Jeris and Johnson, 2004, p. 1108) pricing them out of routes into a profession.

In an attempt at identifying the essence of translation competence, Pym (2003) proposed a minimalist approach in which he considered translation competence a matter of generation and selection, comprising ‘the ability to generate a series of more than one viable target text (TT1, TT2, …, TTn) for a pertinent source text (ST)’ and ‘the ability to select only one viable TT from this series, quickly and with justified confidence.’ (p. 489). This approach to translation competence accords a central role to problem solving in specific contexts and presupposes other competences such as knowledge of the two languages and cultures, or research and information skills, for example. Malmkjær (2009) was equally critical of models of translation competence that included long lists of features, and questioned whether most of these were not just necessary prerequisites to translation rather than integral to it, favouring a focus on ‘transfer competence’, added to an ‘initial state’ of linguistic competence in two languages, and driven by what she called ‘the pleasure principle’, an intrinsic motivation derived from the enjoyment of translation itself (p. 131).
Kiraly (2013, p. 201) also criticised multicomponential models for being ‘static box-like representations of an ideal(ised) relationship between dispositions, abilities and skills that translators can be expected to possess’ and advocated a more holistic conceptualization of competence. His model of emergent translator competence aims to capture ‘the complex interplay of translational sub-competences and their non-parallel emergence over time’ (Kiraly, 2015, p. 27). In Figure 7 below each dynamic vortex represents a competence that grows and evolves over time. As the learner progresses from novice (bottom) to expert (top), competences begin to integrate until they merge ‘into a highly integrated and intuitive super-competence’ (p. 29), which Kiraly terms ‘professional translator competence’, that enables the translator to successfully, efficiently and consistently (i.e. expertly) complete translation tasks. The value of this model is its attempt to represent how translation competence, understood as an integrated ‘super-competence’, develops and emerges over time as a result of experience, as well as highlighting the need for a supported transition from the educational context, when work may be initially focused on developing individual competences, to translating professionally, or workplace competence, which requires a much more integrated and holistic approach to translation competence. Kiraly (2000) had already been making this distinction between ‘translation competence’ and ‘translator competence’, and bringing attention to the crucial role of authentic, collaborative projects as the ideal vehicle to enable learners to integrate all competences and develop translator competence.

*Figure 7 Emergent Model of Translator Expertise (Kiraly, 2015, p. 28)*
In spite of all efforts to define it, translation competence remains an elusive concept, although there seems to be some agreement on the fact that it is more than the mere sum of its component competences. As a ‘super-competence’ (Kiraly, 2015), it seems to have as its core the ability to mobilise other elements to solve problems, the role that PACTE had accorded to the ‘strategic sub-competence’. Pym (2003, p. 489) also talks about translation competence being ‘a problem-solving process that often occurs with apparent automation’ and in the PACTE model being competent in a profession is equated with ‘being able to solve the types of problems most frequently encountered in the course of one’s professional activity’ (Hurtado Albir, 2017, p. 109).

Building on this idea that translation is a problem-solving activity, Cheng (2017) proposes a definition of translation competence as ‘a demonstrated ability to translate resulting from orchestrating a combination of knowledge, skills and attributes in carrying out a given translation task under given conditions’ (p. 43). This definition is useful because it is flexible in respect of what the knowledge, skills and attributes are, leaving room for these to change as translation evolves (for example, post-editing skills, mentioned in the NAATI model, are a fairly new addition to the translator’s repertoire). As Pacheco Aguilar (2016, p. 26) points out ‘it is impossible to foretell precisely what the profession will be like in the future, and therefore to prepare the students for any defined set of future conditions’. Bernardini (2004) makes a related point when she advocates resisting pressures from industry to adopt a narrow training model, and ensuring that the focus in university translation programmes, particularly those at undergraduate level, is on ‘capacities to be fostered, not competences to be gained’ (p. 21), with the reminder that ‘translation is an activity that requires educated rather than trained professionals’ (p. 22).

Cheng’s problem-solving approach also highlights that mastering knowledge, skills and attributes is not enough, as the key to translation competence is being able to mobilise the right combination of these to deal with each translation task and the many translation problems that each task involves. In that respect this conception of translation competence is helpful to the present study because it underscores the importance for learners of being exposed to activities that are as close as possible to professional activity, enabling them to orchestrate their knowledge, skills and attributes, that is, integrate all competences, to solve problems. In order to support this, educators should provide pedagogical tasks that are increasingly authentic, complex and situated so as to ‘enhance learners’ capacity to think and act like professionals’ (González-Davies and Enríquez-Raido, 2016, p. 1).

### 2.1.1.2 Development of translation competence

PACTE advocates a training model employing a (mostly classroom-based) task- and project-based methodology and focuses on the development of procedural knowledge, which drives development and restructuring of the sub-competences in a dynamic, spiral process towards growing expertise. On the surface, this process of competence
development is not dissimilar from Kiraly’s emerging translator competence model. However, Kiraly advocates that competence is developed through experience and learning rather than directly by teaching, a notion based on an enactivist view of cognition that regards learning as being “occasioned” rather than ‘caused’ (…) dependent on, but not determined by, the teaching (Davis and Sumara, 1997, p. 115). This leads him to recast translation competence instruction as a process where the teacher provides learning opportunities that are as close as possible to real life professional tasks, and accompanies learners as more expert co-participant in their learning journey, whilst orienting, scaffolding and facilitating their learning. This model of translation teaching could easily accommodate a pedagogy that makes use of informal, non-professional translation opportunities, such as online volunteer translation, as intermediate steps between classroom-based instruction and the workplace.

Within Cheng’s definition of translation competence, developing translation competence involves not only improving translation-related knowledge, skills and attributes but, equally important, improving one’s ability to orchestrate them. To do that, learners need to be routinely exposed to tasks that require them to exercise this ability to orchestrate their knowledge, skills and attributes to solve translation problems. In other words, they need regular practice. Shreve (2006) draws on the expertise framework from cognitive science to propose the concept of deliberate practice (Anders Ericsson, 2008) as the key to understanding translation competence development.

Deliberate practice is defined by Shreve (2006, p. 29) as ‘regular engagement in specific activities directed at performance enhancement in a particular domain’, ensuring that it involves engaging with ‘similar kinds of texts, in discrete domains, for similar purposes, over relatively long periods of time’ (p. 30). Translating is necessary but not enough. Ideally, deliberate practice would focus on well-defined tasks of appropriate difficulty to the individual and present opportunities for informative feedback, repetition and error correction. The choice of similar texts aids the translator in developing greater automaticity, that is, using less time and effort in processing the source text and generating the best target text, whilst the choice of increasingly difficult texts forces the learner to develop new mental schemas to tackle new problems. Text selection and the availability of feedback are key to effective deliberate practice and, outside academic and (some) professional contexts in which educators, trainers or project managers can provide these, (would-be) translators require high levels of self-regulation and metacognition to critically assess the suitability of tasks for their development and to evaluate the quality of their own performance. Environments that can provide a steady supply of suitable texts, include feedback and mentoring opportunities, and facilitate learners’ critical assessment of their own work can be extremely valuable to would-be professional translators who are seeking to engage in
deliberate practice to develop their translation competence, and constitute ideal practice environments alongside formal translation training.

The next two sections examine how translation educators are increasingly advocating a situated pedagogy that makes use of authentic materials. Section 2.1.3 then turns to how the use of open content, tools and communities in translation education allows learners to engage with learning opportunities for deliberate practice in which they can solve real, complex and contextualised translation problems. Some examples from existing literature are discussed to identify the benefits and challenges that these approaches pose for both educators and learners.

2.1.2 Situatedness and authenticity in translation education

As an activity that goes beyond mere linguistic transfer, translation involves ‘interpreting and managing entire communicative situations’ (Kiraly, 2005, p. 1102). Each translation is carried out in a unique set of circumstances that encompass the translator (experience, biography, dispositions…), the task itself (audience, length, difficulty…) and the context in which the translation occurs (time pressures, politics…). Translation is understood as a situated cognitive activity (Kiraly, 2005; Risku, 2002) and a complex profession, similar in that respect to teaching or nursing, where practice is highly contextualized and where, beyond high levels of expertise in the subject, practitioners are constantly called on to solve problems and make decisions, and so need to develop high levels of metacognition and autonomy in learning (Kiraly, 2000; Billett, 2015).

Situated approaches to translation education advocate creating opportunities for learners to solve real translation problems so that they can experience the full complexity, uncertainty and unpredictability of translation. Lave and Wenger (1991) already cautioned that situating learning in school risked creating a parallel practice focused on talking about rather than learning the actual practice learners were meant to be learning. Tackling short or simplified translation tasks in the classroom or discussing aspects of translation is no substitute for solving translation problems. Situation as such is what allows learners to master a complex task, as translation demands creative solutions to contingent problems (Risku, 2002). There are difficulties in teaching this highly context-dependent practice, and while acknowledging that decontextualized rules might have a role to play in the early stages of training, Risku argues that as learners gain experience, their practice starts to become detached from lexical and syntactical patterns, to function heuristically at the level of meaning and perception and to become more holistically integrated (as illustrated in the top section of Kiraly’s model in Figure 7 above). These are the troublesome ‘intuitions’ that translators themselves find difficult to describe and that Kiraly (2000, p. 4) defines as ‘dynamically constructed impressions distilled from countless occurrences of action and interaction with the world’.
Kiraly’s model of emerging translator competence is based on the premise that ‘true expertise can only be developed through authentic situated action, collaborative construction of knowledge and personal experience’ (Kiraly, 2000, p. 3) and considers that the key activity in translator education should be “the ‘authentic, collaborative translation project’ (a holistic piece of work undertaken by a team of students in the service of a real-world client or user)” (Kiraly, 2012, p. 84). In her thesis, Mitchell-Schuitevoerder (2014) scaled up a version of this socio-constructivist project-based pedagogy to the development of a whole syllabus, considering what it means for assessment and the teacher’s role, and found that its success relied heavily on ‘whether the students take ownership of their learning, and whether the teacher offers clear guidance, visibility and sets goalposts’ (p. 243). This highlights that some of the challenges of employing innovative pedagogical approaches relate to how the expectations of teachers and learners are managed.

Situated learning in translation education aims to expose learners to real-life or highly simulated translation tasks and projects in translation (González-Davies and Enríquez-Raído, 2016) and is considered an effective way of developing translator competence, understood as ‘the ability to transition from a classroom community of practice to a professional community of practice’ (p. 2). Common ways of implementing situated approaches to translation education include the use of realistic tasks using authentic materials (González-Davies, 2004; Motta, 2016); the use of simulated or real project work carried out inside or outside the classroom with differing degrees of teacher supervision (Kiraly, 2005 and 2012; Szymczak, 2013; Al-Shehri, 2017; Martínez-Carrasco, 2018); and the use of work placements, physical or virtual, that take students into real professional contexts (Calvo, 2016; Marco, 2016; Chouc and Conde, 2016).

Work placements have long been regarded as essential in professions such as law, nursing or teaching, as they enable students to enact the tasks pertaining to those occupations in real contexts and in a diversity of circumstances. Employers and governments are increasingly demanding graduates who are job-ready and can immediately and effectively function in the workplace, so providing realistic learning experiences through tasks, projects or practice-based learning can become a valuable part of a translation education programme, and link into the employability agenda in higher education (Billett, 2015). Virtual work placements in translation for the voluntary, non-profit sector or for professional companies are increasingly common (Calvo, 2016) and in fact very congruent with the remote, online working model that many translators will encounter in the workplace.

In general, universities have made considerable efforts to align with the needs of the translation industry (Schäffner, 2012), but critical voices have also been raised cautioning against dogmatic assumptions that real tasks and projects are best when training future translators, and pointing out that students are not yet professionals and should be allowed to develop the skills and competences they require through activities that are pedagogically
appropriate (Bernardini, 2004). Still, the idea that authentic learning can lead to increased motivation and more relevant and richer experiences (Kennedy et al., 2015; Kiraly et al., 2016) is rarely questioned, although the concept of authenticity can be understood in different ways and does not necessarily entail placing learners in real or professional contexts. For Duda and Tyne (2010) authenticity can refer to input (materials), purpose (task design), output (meaningful to the learner) or methodology (using corpora, for example), and van Lier (1996) advocates the use of authentic resources in purposeful, creative language learning tasks that are cognitively authentic, understood to be as close to real situations that are relevant to the learner.

In the case of this thesis, having adopted a conception of translation as problem-solving, Risku’s view of authenticity is particularly relevant in relation to a situated approach to translation: ‘an authentic learning situation is achieved by enabling students to manage the whole range of tasks involved in translation’ (2002, p. 531). Authenticity seems closely linked to the issues of identity, so it is important to remember that:

Authentic learning, far from being a transparent and painless activity, implies the risk of becoming someone new and unexpected, and thus the violence of transforming the learner into something unforeseen and different (Pacheco Aguilar, 2016, p. 29).

Translation educators are well placed to encourage and support this transformative experience in their students but need to be aware of and ready for its potential consequences. Having looked at situatedness and authenticity, the next section deals with openness, the third dimension of the approach to translation education that frames this thesis, and examines how this concept is being used in translation education.

2.1.3 Openness and translation education

Openness as an educational belief is rooted in ‘the simple and powerful idea that the world’s knowledge is a public good, and that technology in general and the World Wide Web in particular provide an extraordinary opportunity for everyone to share, use and reuse that knowledge’ (Smith and Casserly, 2010, p. 10). The term openness is defined in many ways, but is conceived here as a mindset or a set of values that can encompass ‘freedom, justice, respect, openness as attitude or culture, the absence of barriers, promotion of sharing, accessibility, transparency, collaboration, agency, self-direction, personalization and ubiquitous ownership” (Baker, 2017, p. 131-132).

The advent of the Internet has facilitated access to content, and the evolution of the participatory web has opened up new opportunities for dialogue and participation. Openness has enabled many developments such as open source software, open access publication, open educational resources (OER) and practices (OEP), Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and open scholarship. There is an opportunity for education to capitalise
on these to open access to knowledge, enhance pedagogy and the student learning experience, and promote the enhancement of teaching and personalised learning (McGill et al., 2013). A new pedagogy of abundance (Weller, 2014) has become possible, in which content is plentiful and accessible, and the teacher is no longer the only source of knowledge available to students.

Critics have pointed out that ‘this discourse of facilitation or empowerment forms a powerful rhetoric of educational change’ but is actually an ideal rather than a reality (Knox, 2013, p. 23). The focus on access to content gives the misleading impression that learning is simply about information, and the unquestionable potential of the technology to enable educational change is often presented uncritically, overlooking the non-trivial fact that human beings need to change their behaviours to make these things happen.

Lane (2009) highlights the fact that rather than promoting educational justice, open education may be exacerbating inequality. MOOC learner profiles confirm that ‘universal access to the world’s best education’ (Coursera, 2019) benefits mostly confident and experienced learners, who are already well educated, three quarters of them to degree level (FutureLearn, 2016). The digital divide and other challenges encountered by disadvantaged groups such as the less academically confident or disempowered women in certain cultures, mean that many are still not benefitting from open educational opportunities. Access to content is a good thing but not enough, and learners cannot make the most of these opportunities unless they have the necessary skills and support to engage with them (Littlejohn et al., 2016). Lane (2009, p. 9) points out the need to ‘recognise and draw upon existing networks within communities, using local champions to develop skills and confidence’. More recent research has also underscored the importance of collaboration and learning in communities to increase engagement with open content, teaching and learning, leading to a ‘growing awareness of the importance of open processes, which might include the experience of learning and teaching with OERs, in open courses, networks and platforms, and with open source technologies’ (Koseoglu & Bozhurt, 2018, p. 453).

Working openly enables learners and educators to tap into authentic opportunities to develop not only subject knowledge but also generic and employability-related skills such as digital and participatory literacies, team working, problem solving and collaboration (Jenkins, 2006; Wikipedia Education Programme, 2012). Weller (2014, p. 17) pertinently notes that working openly also provides an opportunity for higher education to become more relevant and connected to society.

Using online volunteering activities in the training of translators offers a way of engaging students in authentic tasks that are motivating because they are meaningful, though authentic is used here as having a purpose and an impact beyond the classroom, and not necessarily that they are, or need to be, completed to a professional standard. This contrasts with what Wiley (2013) called the ‘disposable assignment’, one the student
spends hours preparing, the teacher spends thirty minutes marking and which is then thrown away. The American tradition of service learning, where service to the community is paired with reflection and learning (Eyler and Giles, 1999), can be usefully combined with an open pedagogical approach that enables students to use their time creatively in meaningful tasks that make a visible contribution to society, turning their cognitive surplus into civic value (Shirky, 2010) whilst pursuing individual interests and showcasing their work beyond the classroom.

There is now widespread agreement on the huge potential of learning beyond the classroom in the field of languages (Benson and Reinders, 2011; Sauro, 2017; Comas-Quinn, Beaven and Sawhill, 2019), but, in spite of a growing interest in finding ways of integrating online volunteer translation into translation education, engagement with the opportunities offered by open resources, tools and practices is still limited (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017). Edfeldt, Fjordevik and Hiroko (2012) analysed fanfiction and scanlation; Orrego-Carmona (2014) engaged students in trying out non-professional subtitling platforms Amara and aRGENTeaM; Michalak (2015) looked at the potential of the translation platform attached to the citizen science project Zooniverse; and Comas-Quinn (2019) has reported on different attempts to integrate TED Translators into language and translation education. However, the majority of the efforts reported in the literature focus on the pedagogical use of Wikipedia.

Wikipedia is not only the largest open resource on the planet with nearly 50 million articles in over 300 languages, but it offers an educational programme specifically aimed at supporting teachers who want to incorporate its use in the classroom. Benefits of using Wikipedia in education are summarised in the Wikimedia Education Project resources (Wikimedia, 2019) in terms of student learning (information literacy, citing and referencing, literature review, writing and collaboration, amongst others) and student engagement (writing for a real audience, being able to showcase one’s work and getting feedback from a wider audience, acquiring new skills whilst making a contribution to society). In spite of being demanding of students and requiring robust planning by educators, working with Wikipedia in the translation classroom is a valuable opportunity to make a contribution to the dissemination of knowledge, and ‘to surface knowledge between different languages and cultures’ and tackle inequalities in the distribution of knowledge across languages (McAndrew and Campbell, 2019).

Additionally, although the authentic translation project has been advocated as an ideal learning vehicle for the development of translation competence (Kiraly, 2012), Szymczak

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14 Scanning and translating comics, generally Japanese manga, done without permission from the author or publisher.
(2013) notes that locating and delivering translations to real commercial clients, though not impossible – as demonstrated by Schäffner (2012) or Kiraly (2013) –, is not an easy undertaking, besetting the educator with difficulties relating to quality, confidentiality, timescales and responsibilities. Hence the choice of working with an open resource, Wikipedia, which according to Szymczak (2013, p. 63) can solve these problems by ‘combining the productive thrill of genuine translation with the more leisurely pace of academic assignments while providing a safe environment tailored to the trainees’ capabilities’.

Szymczak’s (2013) own project involved getting students to translate Wikipedia articles on translation theorists into Polish. His students appreciated the excitement and novelty of publication, the freedom of choice and the social utility of the task (p. 64). Reflecting on the pedagogical advantages of this kind of task, he noted:

Because the texts are intended for real users, they foster a sense of professional responsibility; because each project is unique, there is more individual focus in the feedback and grading process; and because the trainees are empowered by working for the benefit of actual users, the texts stand a better chance of being perceived as relevant, helping the instructor to discuss concepts in translation theory in a more tangible context. (p. 66)

In spite of the advantages of this kind of project, Szymczak also noted some drawbacks and limitations: students are only exposed to a very specific type of text containing factual information; the project can be time consuming for the educator and may require a lot of their input to ensure work is of publishable quality; and there was some frustration with the technology amongst students. As a teacher he was also frustrated by the fact that most of the articles created were never published because many students did not ensure that their articles met Wikipedia’s publication guidelines.

Similar projects have been used since in the translation classroom: Al-Shehari (2017) set the translation of a Wikipedia article as a collaborative learning activity that translation masters’ students tackled in groups at Durham University, UK; Martinez-Carrasco (2018) used it as an independent, assessed activity that students completed outside class time at Universitat Jaume I, Spain; and McAndrew and Campbell (2019) describe a model in which the Wikipedia translation is an elective component in a credit-bearing ‘Independent Study’ course for the MSc in Translation Studies at the University of Edinburgh, UK. These examples show that Wikipedia as a source of multilingual open content can provide fertile ground for a translation pedagogy that is based on situatedness, authenticity and openness. It can also help educators in ‘introducing collaborative projects with genuine outcomes’ so that students can ‘coherently develop the competences required for professional translators.’ (Al-Shehari, 2017, p. 371), although which competences and to what extent they are developed has not yet been researched. Another helpful aspect for educators is
that Wikipedia has recently developed an easier interface that greatly reduces the technological difficulty of formatting the pages, and is trialling a Content Translation tool, which presents language versions side by side and resolves much of the formatting work besides integrating machine translation to facilitate the task of the translator (McAndrew and Campbell, 2019).

In an early attempt at introducing non-professional subtitling in translation training, Orrego-Carmona’s (2014) students found that joining the subtitling communities Amara and aRGENTeAN allowed them to learn skills that would be useful for their future careers as translators, whilst doing something enjoyable and of benefit to others. Orrego-Carmona also noted that this experience made students more aware of the translation process, the market and the agents involved, and forced them to take control of their own learning process.

Finally, two collaborations by the author on the integration of TEDT in translation education include a small initial research study on graduate learners’ perceptions of working with TEDT (Câmara and Comas-Quinn, 2016, reported in 2.3.3 below), and a subsequent project with 45 recent languages graduates working across several language combinations (Comas-Quinn and Fuertes-Gutiérrez, 2017 & 2019), designed to trial the incorporation of online volunteer translation into an undergraduate languages programme. Participants were presented with online volunteer translation as an initial introduction to translation and subtitling, and a way of keeping their language skills alive post-graduation. Participants noted the steep learning curve, particularly in relation to the technology, but overall found the activity enjoyable and exciting, beneficial to their language learning, and a good introduction to the applied skills of translation and subtitling. They liked having choices over the content to translate and learning from the topics of the talks, and valued ‘the fact that it is a real piece of work, in the real world, [it] makes it more satisfying and it motivates you to do a really good job’ (Comas-Quinn, 2017, p. 16), although that in itself was also deemed to add pressure to get things right. An important consideration in this project was to ensure that learners retained ownership of their own work and were able to make decisions on how to participate in the activity, which meant in this case, whether to submit their work for publication to the TEDT project or to keep it as a learning activity reviewed by their peers in the safety of the student group.

This section has covered different approaches to translation competence and its development, and has supported a view of translation as a problem-solving activity which can be developed through deliberate practice. It has reviewed the literature on translation teaching approaches that incorporate situatedness, authenticity and openness and has highlighted how these concepts can support a pedagogical approach to translation education that focuses on providing opportunities for learners to experience translation in its full complexity.
2.2 The growth of non-professional translation

Translation is an expression of bilingual competence and has always been performed by those who are competent in more than one language, being a feature of everyday life in bilingual and multilingual societies (which are the majority across the world). A large proportion of translation is carried out daily by non-professionals, defined as those who receive no remuneration. There is less agreement on other features of what constitutes non-professional translation, in particular, whether or not non-professionals have been trained (Orrego-Carmona and Lee, 2017, p. 5). Also open to discussion are aspects such as ‘not abiding by a code of ethics or standards of practice and lacking in social prestige’ (Antonini and Bucaria, 2016, p. 9) as many non-professional translators may join communities that require them to comply with local standards of practice, for example. Non-professionals can range from ‘natural translators’ (Harris, 1976), bilinguals without translation training who translate in the course of their everyday lives, to non-professional experts translators who, still unpaid and in spite of rarely having had training in translation, have developed their translation competence through experience to a level that is comparable with that of professionals.

Whilst it has been claimed that ‘non-professional translation is increasingly bound to challenge our understanding of professional identities and the current organization of labour in the translation and interpreting industries’ (Pérez-González and Susam Saraeva, 2012, p. 152), the reality, however, is that the professional translation sector is still ‘fragmented and unregulated’ (Schäffner, 2012, p. 30) and, in many countries, ‘an open proposition’ (Gouadec, 2007, p. 105), that is, available to anybody with knowledge of two languages without a requirement for training or qualifications. There are many types of translators in a profession ‘characterised by a large share of part-time, freelance and transitory manpower, that is, by being porous and unstable’ (Dam and Koskinen, 2016, n.p.), and largely dominated by women, particularly amongst part-time and freelance translators (Gouadec, 2007; Pym et al., 2012). Indeed, it includes large proportions of ‘second job translators’ (Gouadec, 2007, p. 104), who do professional translation alongside their main occupation, and ‘invisible translators’ (p. 103), professionals in other fields who have the necessary language skills and who would not call themselves translators, such as journalists who translate foreign news as part of their job or secretaries called to translate business documents when required.

Whilst the professionalization of translation through higher education is in fact a recent phenomenon and, hence, still new and contested, non-professional translation (NPT or NPIT to include interpreting) as a phenomenon that is separate from professional practice has only recently been recognized as a discrete area of study in translation studies (Pérez-González and Susam Saraeva, 2012; Antonini and Bucaria (eds), 2016; Antonini et al. (eds), 2017; Orrego-Carmona and Lee, 2017). This section examines the impact that technology
has had in the field of professional and non-professional translation, describes the phenomenon of online volunteer translation and presents the research that has been conducted on the specific setting of this study, the TED Translators volunteer translation project.

2.2.1 Technology and translation

Translation in the 21st century is closely linked to technology, which both supports it (Jiménez-Crespo, 2015) but is also increasingly threatening to take over. Cronin (2010) considers that translation studies has undergone a ‘technological turn’ which reflects fundamental changes in practice: from using the Internet for communicative and documentary purposes to new, increasingly cloud-based technologies such as machine translation or translation memory, used to improve productivity.

Technology-fuelled productivity gains had already resulted, in the space of a decade, in a 50% drop in rates for subtitlers and similar decreases in turnaround times, according to Georgakopoulou (2012). Further downward pressure on rates for translation in general has been consistently applied as a result of deprofessionalisation in what is an unregulated market available to non-professionals, attracted to online translation marketplaces such as ProZ, a community and platform with low barriers to membership where jobs are available to the (often) lowest bidder (Risku & Dickinson, 2009).

Technology has had and continues to have a huge impact on audiovisual translation. Georgakopoulou (2018) highlights digitalisation and crowdsourcing as past milestones, and argues that new developments such as the increasing use of cloud-based tools and the incorporation of machine learning in the form of machine translation and speech recognition and synthesis have the potential for transforming the industry beyond recognition.

Indeed, the use of cloud- and platform-based technological solutions has made it harder for translators to retain control of their work or build up their own resources. Sometimes even access to the glossaries, termbases and parallel text translators create for agencies becomes difficult, whilst these assets have suddenly acquired new value and are being monetised by agencies and used to train machine translation systems. Subtitling companies have centralised working processes and adopted a template method that facilitates the creation of parallel texts. These data have been used in projects like the EU-funded SUMAT, which evaluated the impact of using machine translation to subtitle films for the entertainment industry. With some variations across languages and individual translators, it found that 50% of the subtitles translated using machine translation could be used without editing, resulting in overall productivity gains for subtitlers in the region of 40% (Georgakopoulou, 2018). Machine translation such as Google Translate or Microsoft Translate is already embedded in some subtitling tools with variable success. Still, improvements in machine translation and speech recognition continue apace and will result
in further downward pressure on rates and greatly reduced job opportunities for audiovisual translators, potentially re-shaping their roles towards post-editing or even eventually rendering them redundant in some contexts.

Meanwhile, cloud-based technological solutions have become more intuitive and accessible and hence allow massive participation in the translation of the growing amount of content being generated online, most of which would not otherwise be professionally translated. Cronin (2010) has argued that the unstinting appetite of users for digital content is changing reading and viewing practices, resulting in a higher tolerance for lower quality translation if that means increased access to content.

2.2.2 Online volunteer translation

A new form of collaborative non-professional translation performed online by volunteers has emerged as a result of the confluence of technological developments, the participatory nature of the internet (Jenkins, 2006) and the increasing desire for access to digital content. It is based on a new work organisation model, crowdsourcing (Howe, 2008), understood as outsourcing work through an open call to online users. This has been welcomed by the business world as a way of further engaging some users, whom Ritzer & Jurgenson (2010) labelled ‘prosumers’, defined as users who consume content but are also engaged in producing that content.

Non-professional translation has always been a part of the landscape of practice of translation, however the addition of technology has allowed both for-profit and not-for-profit organisations to harness the bilingual skills of many on a much larger scale, rendering visible once more the ‘fuzziness’ of the profession and the blurred lines between professionals and non-professionals in the landscape of translation practice. This, according to García (2015, n.p.), should not be cause for alarm, as it just reflects the reality that:

> [t]he translation industry has both room and need for a spectrum spanning professionals, semi-professionals, casual aficionados and even untrained volunteers. Quality is not always critical, and there is nothing inherently wrong with enterprises, institutions and NGOs dipping into the appropriate "cognitive surplus" (Shirky 2010). Translation is essentially a manifestation of bilingual literacy, and just as no one needs to be a professional writer to write, no one needs to be a professional translator to translate.

Many terms have surfaced in the literature to refer to non-professional translation. ‘Crowdsourced translation’ (DePalma and Kelly, 2011) has been used for activities that involve an open call to a crowd by a commercial organisation (Howe, 2008), and that make use of technology to capitalise on this work. O’Hagan (2012) initially favoured the terms ‘community’ or ‘collaborative’ translation for non-profit activities and distinguished between
‘crowdsourced translation’ for a legitimate call initiated by a commercial entity, and the illegal translation of copyrighted material by fans in ‘fansubbing’ or ‘fandubbing’ (subtitling or dubbing of audiovisual content). Her more recent terminological proposal (O’Hagan, 2016), Massive Open Translation (MOT), focused on the massive, self-selected and interest-based nature of the crowd, and echoed similar acronyms such as MOOG (Massive Open Online Games) or MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) whilst linking back to Désilets’ (2007) Massive Open Collaboration (MOC), an early proposal to collaboratively create and share translation memory and terminological databases.

Although recent monographs covering this phenomenon have opted for ‘crowdsourcing and online collaborative translation’ (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017), ‘non-professional interpreting and translation’ (Antonini et al., 2017) or ‘non-professional subtitling’ (Orrego-Carmona and Lee, 2017), for this study the term ‘online volunteer translation’ (Bey, Boitet and Kageura, 2006; Pym, 2011) has been chosen. This term reflects more precisely that the activity is unpaid and allows for the fact that it might be cause-driven, that is, in aid of a cause, rather than product- or outsourcing-driven (Kelly, Ray and DePalma, 2011), and that it is ‘formally organized and for the benefit of others’ (Olohan, 2014, p. 19). Online volunteer translation is defined in the present study as the translation of content that would not otherwise be translated, by a group of volunteers through an online platform. Online volunteer translation benefits ‘people that have been ignored by the mainstream translation and localization industry because they do not represent a viable business case’ (O’Brien and Schäler, 2010, n.p.) and is therefore a way of ‘rectifying inequality in the way information is offered to language groups’ (Dombek, 2014, p. 92).

2.2.3 Ethical issues surrounding volunteer translation

Some translation scholars have voiced concerns that the practice of crowdsourcing translation, when initiated by commercial organisations that could instead pay for the translation task to be done professionally, may reinforce the view that translation is free (O’Hagan, 2012 & 2016), raise ethical issues (McDonough Dolmaya, 2012 & 2014) and have negative consequences for the precarious status of the profession (Pym, Orrego-Carmona and Torres-Simón, 2016).

At the same time some forms of non-professional translation associated with fandom (Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez, 2006), migration, humanitarian or crisis situations (Antonini et al. (eds), 2017), or benefiting NGOs or other non-profit organisations are perceived as less threatening to the profession. It is understood that in some contexts professional translation is unavailable or unaffordable, and other solutions need to be found. One example is that of activists, who can be empowered and credited for their contribution to society when undertaking translation as a way of increasing the visibility of the issues they care about (Piróth & Baker, 2019, p. 2). A very different example is the translation of talks for TED,
where volume alone precludes professional translation.¹⁵ Instead, TED relies on the enthusiasm of volunteers, keen on being involved in the creation of the TED product, and rewards them with public recognition and opportunities for collaboration and learning.

Voluntary work in online spaces might share traits with ‘ghost work’ (Gray & Suri, 2019), a feature of the platform economy where human labour is undervalued and controlled by algorithms. Some crowdsourced translation shares characteristics with ‘ghost work’ (Facebook translation and other examples based on micro-tasks). Even well-known, prestigious projects such as Translators Without Borders have been accused of exploiting volunteers. Piróth & Baker (2019, p. 13) report Translators Without Borders’ worked with forty Haitian volunteer translators after Hurricane Matthew in 2015 to improve Microsoft’s machine translation for Haitian Creole and point out that ‘a linguistic asset created collectively by volunteers in a humanitarian context was transferred to a for-profit project partner and turned into saleable intellectual property.’ [Microsoft was both on TWB’s board of advisors and a partner in that particular project].

Whilst some of these high-profile projects help raise the profile of translation, they may be doing so at the expense of translators themselves, who are viewed as incidental and replaceable. Conversely, other online volunteering projects such as Solidarités International (also discussed in Piróth & Baker, 2019, pp. 6-7) or TED Translators make learning and collaboration a priority and encourage supportive work models that include revision, feedback, mentoring and teamwork.

A critical debate is needed on the ethics of volunteer translation because, although necessary and unavoidable in many cases, its existence has important consequences for professional practices and for the livelihoods of many translators.

Finally, it is worth noting that some forms of participation in online volunteer translation may not be entirely voluntary, and that also requires consideration of the ethics of mandating volunteering. This might be the case for students participating as part of classroom activities, like the Wikipedia translation projects previously described (Szymczak, 2013; Al-Shehari, 2017; Martínez-Carrasco, 2018; McAndrew and Campbell, 2019) if there is no opting-out.

The next section reviews some of the literature published to date on the subject of online volunteer translation. Although most studies have focused on issues of quality and motivation (O’Brien and Schäler, 2010; Olohan, 2014; Câmara, 2014, 2015), some touch

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¹⁵ TED has a catalogue of 3400 TED Talks at the time of writing (https://www.ted.com/talks), and the number of TEDx talks had exceeded 100,000 by 2017 (https://blog.ted.com/achievement-unlocked-tedx-celebrates-100000-talks/).
on the learning derived from participation, one of the main areas of interest for the present study, thus beginning to identify the gap in knowledge that the present study helps fill.

2.2.4 Research on online volunteer translation and TED Translators

A small number of studies have been conducted on online volunteer translation focusing on volunteer motivation, use of technology, quality and learning. Studies that have looked at quality have argued that high-level quality can be achieved in community translation models where quality assurance has been built into the technology or embedded in the workflows (Kelly, Ray and DePalma, 2011). This is the case with the translation-review-approval model used in TED Translators, first described by O’Hagan (2012), which mimics the traditional industry translate-edit-proofread model (Kelly, et al., 2011). Technology-led, crowdsourced systems, such as those employed in the translation of Facebook, where translation proposals are made and voted on by volunteers, have also been found to compare well to professional web localization, as Jiménez-Crespo (2013) concluded in his quality assessment of the localization of Facebook into Spanish.

O’Hagan (2012) described the different models of translation quality assurance that were in use at the time in online volunteer translation projects. In the TEDT model volunteers select and complete the translation or review of a talk and are publicly credited for their work, so the emphasis is on agency, authorship and accountability. Conversely, in the Facebook model volunteers work on decontextualized terms or short strings, proposing and voting on the accuracy of translations. They have no control over the final translation, nor do they receive credit for their specific proposals, leading to feelings of frustration amongst volunteer translators, as reported by Dombek (2014). The way in which quality is managed and perceived in these contexts can therefore have a differential impact on volunteer translators and their experience of this practice.

Another factor affecting quality is the prevalence of unfinished work, as can be noted by the high number of incomplete Wikipedia entries or translated talks awaiting review in TEDT. García (2015) highlights the fact that volunteers will tend to select interesting content and might abandon tasks when they lose interest, an issue McDonough Dolmaya (2014) had already detected in her study of the quality of Wikipedia translations. Maintaining volunteer motivation is therefore critical to the success of online volunteer projects, and an aspect that some scholars have been keen to investigate. Dombek’s (2014) work on the crowdsourced translation of Facebook into Polish determined that issues with the technology provided for the translation task could negatively affect volunteer motivation.
O’Brien and Schäler (2010) found that intrinsic motivation and the search for intellectual stimulation played a key part in volunteer motivation in the Rosetta Foundation project. Intrinsic motivation is understood as interest and enjoyment in the task itself (Ryan and Deci, 2000), and in the Rosetta Foundation project it was found to cover both personal (gaining professional translation skills) and social (supporting the cause) motives. A more recent study by Dam and Zethsen (2016) also found that professional translators are surprisingly satisfied with their jobs in spite of poor working conditions and the lack of perceived status and recognition, suggesting that intrinsic motivation might be a widespread characteristic of translators’ attitudes towards their jobs. O’Brien and Schäler (2010) also realized that volunteers were strongly opposed to the introduction of financial reward or elements of competition such as leader boards or ‘translator of the month’ labels, although they were more positive about rewards that were strongly aligned to their professional development, such as free conference attendance to network with other translators or discounts on translation tools. They also strongly supported the ethos of their project and therefore expected to be provided with regular opportunities to translate, indicating to the project that providing a steady supply of work was necessary to maintain volunteer interest.

Few studies have been conducted to date on online volunteer translation in TED Translators (TEDT) specifically. Olohan (2014) and Cámar (2014, 2015) focused on volunteer motivation and found that contributing to the TED mission of disseminating ideas across languages was a key motivation for volunteers. Olohan (2014) acknowledged the sampling bias in her analysis of eleven volunteer accounts of their motivation for participating in the project, as the blog posts were published by TEDT and were likely to have been chosen precisely because they chimed with the mission of the organization. Nevertheless, the categories of motivation she described included, in addition to advancing the TED mission: ‘changing the world’; the satisfaction derived from altruistic behaviour (what she called ‘the warm glow’); the wish to connect with others and be part of a community; fun and excitement resulting from translating and understanding the content; and the learning and knowledge derived from the activity – although this was related to the content of the talks rather than to learning translation skills (pp. 25-26).

Conversely, the main motivations uncovered by Cámar (2014, 2015) did include, besides furthering the TED mission, acquiring translation skills and having intercultural exchanges

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16 Rosetta Foundation, based at the University of Limerick, Ireland, was a leading non-profit volunteer translation organization which merged with Translators without Borders in 2017.

17 Two published studies, unrelated to the present investigation, have dealt with word formation using a corpus of TED Talks (Lefer & Grabar, 2015) and strategies for translating cultural references in TEDT (Candel-Mora & González-Pastor, 2017).
in an informal learning context, as well as using free time on an enjoyable activity, akin to the fun and excitement mentioned by Olohan. What Cámara’s study also provided besides information on motivation, was a profile of TEDT volunteers. Although being self-selected they may not have been representative of the entire body of TEDT volunteers at the time, her 177 respondents, who had filled in a questionnaire posted in the main TEDT Facebook group, turned out to be mostly women, mostly professionals and in the 18-35 age group, and included 17% students, 10% teachers and 16% professional translators. Whilst a third of them had some formal translation training and about half had experience of translation from volunteer projects, the majority did not have subtitling experience, with only a few having acquired this as volunteers, which led Cámara (2014) to propose that many volunteers were using TEDT ‘as a platform for acquiring new subtitling skills’ (p. 215). The motivations for taking part in this subtitling activity were varied and ranged from altruistic to more career-oriented ones.

Since learning had been identified as a source of motivation by both Olohan and Cámara, a small-scale experimental study by Cámara and Comas-Quinn (2016) set out to find out more about the learning that participants perceived they derived from engaging with TEDT. Recent translation graduates in Spain were invited to take part in a teacher-supported activity in which they were introduced to TEDT and asked to select and complete a translation for publication. Their views on the experience were collected through a private Facebook group discussion in which they reported the perceived benefits of engaging in that activity, including: learning about translation and subtitling but also about different topics and world views, and from more experienced participants through the review process; making a contribution to society by helping disseminate knowledge across languages; and benefitting from the chance to network with professional translators. One participant was concerned that volunteering could be used to exploit the work of graduates in the manner that she considered unpaid internships do, and that volunteering could damage the profession if it reinforced the view that translation could be free. This valid concern, also raised in the wider literature (O’Hagan, 2012 & 2016), also indicated that this participant’s awareness and criticality regarding the wider implications of engaging with TEDT had been sharpened through participation in the activity. Another interesting finding of this study was that some of the participants, all of whom were speakers of Peninsular Spanish, ignored the convention of the Spanish TEDT community to only accept Global Spanish, a more neutral variant of the language designed to be understood by speakers of all variants of Spanish. This resulted in their work being returned for amendment by the reviewers, and highlighted the fact that ignoring local community conventions can be perceived as disrespectful of the community and lead to rejection and even exclusion. The study was limited to a small number of participants (6) who all worked in the same language combination (English-Spanish) making their experience of participation limited to that
language community within TEDT. Associated limitations were addressed in a follow up study (Comas-Quinn and Fuertes-Gutiérrez, 2019, described in 2.1.4) where a pedagogical design was trialled as a means of integrating work with TEDT into the advanced undergraduate language classroom.

Existing literature (Cámara, 2014, 2015) and the researcher’s own experience of TEDT suggest that those connected to professional translation, such as professional translators, students and teachers, take part in this activity. However, it would be useful to find out more about how participants perceive their participation and what it is that they learn from it, whether they take part specifically in order to learn something or perceive this instead purely as a recreational activity or hobby, in the pursuit of which they happen to learn something, making TEDT an ‘accidental training environment’ (O’Hagan, 2008). Understanding more deeply the learning aspect of participating in TEDT would be useful to educators who are considering whether and how they may incorporate online volunteer translation in their teaching.

There is increasing agreement in the literature that non-professional translation initiatives constitute suitable learning environments that could and should complement formal translation education (O’Hagan, 2008; Gambier, 2012; Orrego-Carmona, 2014; Jiménez-Crespo, 2017). It is also clear from the researcher’s observations and experiences as both a TEDT volunteer and a translation teacher, that this space has great potential as a rehearsal and practice environment where students can integrate the knowledge they develop in formal translation education whilst engaging in a meaningful activity that has impact beyond the classroom. However, learning in an online project such as TEDT and in collaboration with other volunteers entails a conception of learning as social activity, which, with the exception of Kiraly’s earlier socio-constructivist approach to translation training (2000) and his more recent work on emergentist models (2013), few existing models of translation competence development embrace.

Educators need to understand the full potential of online volunteer translation activities for translation education and everything this activity can bring to the learning process. This study considers the social aspect of learning, generally neglected in translation competence development theory, with its focus on individual cognitive processes. It does so by applying a communities of practice lens to the findings of the phenomenological investigation. The following section describes and reviews the concept of communities of practice and considers its appropriateness to discuss the learning that takes place in TEDT. The communities of practice framework, first proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991), is a well-established theoretical framework, developed and expanded by Wenger and associates over the last twenty years (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trapner and Wenger-Trapner, 2015).
2.3 Communities of practice

Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory of situated learning in communities of practice is a social theory of learning, based on the premise that learning is an inherent human characteristic inextricably tied to social activity and to participation in the world.

This section introduces the main concepts in this social theory of learning including: legitimate peripheral participation and the idea of trajectories of participation; communities and landscapes of practice; and how learning takes place in communities of practice and at the boundaries between them. It then considers whether and how TED Translators fits the definition of a community of practice and why other possible concepts such as ‘network’ or ‘affinity group’ are more or less suitable ways of understanding this community. The section closes with a brief clarification of the concepts of formal and informal learning in education and in this study.

2.3.1 Situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation

Situated learning, proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991) and developed by Wenger (1998), is a social theory of learning predicated on some basic assumptions: all human beings are social creatures; knowledge is about being competent to carry out valued enterprises; knowing requires active engagement and participation in the world to carry out these enterprises; and learning produces meaning, understood as our ability to make sense of the experience of engaging with the world. From this perspective, learning is conceived as social participation, that is, engaging in action (practice) within a space to which we belong (community) and making sense of what we are doing (meaning) and how that shapes who we are (identity) (see Figure 8 below). In this conceptualization of social learning, learning is understood as a situated experience that arises from involvement and co-participation in a social context and with the community that generates and uses that learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

![Figure 8 A social theory of learning (Wenger, 1998, p. 5)](image)
The notion of situated learning as proposed by Lave and Wenger emerged from the observation of apprenticeships and focuses on participation in groups and situations that allow newcomers to become aware of (learn) and eventually contribute to the generation of knowledge relevant to those groups. Lave and Wenger (1991) called these communities of practice and coined the term legitimate peripheral participation to refer to the trajectories of participation or learning journeys that participants engage in when they join a community.

Describing the notion of peripherality, Lave and Wenger emphasize its positive and dynamic nature, and the fact that it can refer to multiple ways of 'gaining access to sources for understanding through growing involvement' (p. 37). Equally, full participation (experienced by established members of the community) is not a single way of engaging in the community but is 'intended to do justice to the diversity of relations involved in varying forms of community membership' (p. 37).

The ways in which individuals engage with the community over time are described as trajectories of participation, and can be of different kinds (Wenger, 1998, p. 154):

- Peripheral trajectories never lead to full participation (by choice or by necessity) but the kind of access they provide to the community might be significant enough to the individual to contribute to their identity formation.

- Inbound trajectories are those where newcomers are seeking to become full participants and their identities are invested in their future participation, even if their current participation is only peripheral.

- Insider trajectories describe those of full members of the community whose identity formation does not stop with full membership but continues to develop as the practice develops.

- Boundary trajectories involve brokering work at the boundaries between different communities of practice and the work of sustaining that broker identity.

- Outbound trajectories lead out of the community of practice, the participation enables the next step and identity forms and develops in relation to leaving the community of practice.

2.3.2 Domain, community, practice

Communities of practice are central to a situated approach to learning. They are described as groups of people who share an interest in improving how they carry out an activity, whether they intentionally set out to learn or not (Wenger, 1998). They are characterized by mutual engagement (community), through building relationships over time around a joint enterprise (domain), focused on maintaining and developing a particular domain of interest. They also involve a shared repertoire (practice), which reflects the ways in which things are done in that community.
Practice offers a nexus of connection, it is a productive enterprise that members can engage in together, and negotiate and develop meaning around. In the process of engaging with the practice, members not only develop their competence, they also signal their identity and develop a sense of belonging. Sustained engagement is an essential part of being mutually accountable and identifying with the community. The shared repertoire is the way in which the evolving practice and its history is captured. It can include physical artefacts, in which case Wenger talks about it being reified (in rules or guidelines, forms or manuals, for example) or it can be just shared understandings, such as accepted ways of doing things.

### 2.3.3 TEDT as a community of practice

Based on my own participation as a TEDT volunteer over several years and my reading of the literature, I concluded that TEDT seemed to display the three main features of a community of practice: joined enterprise, mutual engagement and a shared repertoire. It shares a very specific domain of interest (a joint enterprise), the translation of subtitles for TED. Many of its members interact (mutual engagement) and support each other through the associated Facebook groups and some local events, as well as through the review system where more experienced volunteers (including language coordinators) review and approve the work of others. And it has developed local rules and customs (a shared repertoire), consisting of explicit and implicit ways of doing things, some of these reified as shared resources such as the OTPedia wiki or the tutorial videos on YouTube. However, whether or not all those who take part in TEDT activities belong to a community of practice or even share a sense of community (McMillan, 1996) is debatable ‘because communities of practice define themselves through engagement in practice, [so] they are essentially informal’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 118).

Two other concepts were considered and ultimately discarded as unsuitable to fully describe this community: networks and affinity spaces. Networks are too restricted a concept to be helpful for this study. They refer to ‘the set of relationships, personal interactions, and connections among participants who have personal reasons to connect’ (Wenger, Trayner and DeLaat, 2011, p. 9). Although networks are created amongst TEDT participants, this is only one aspect of the relationships and practices of that community.

In a social learning context where digital participatory cultures are increasingly prevalent and could potentially constitute ‘ideal learning environments’ (Jenkins, 2006, p. 9), the concepts of affinity groups and affinity spaces put forward by Gee (2005) were also considered. These are semiotic social spaces where participants produce and consume content around a shared interest or passion, use smart tools, share and access knowledge that is distributed and dispersed, and engage in proactive, supported learning, as novices and experts who mentor and are mentored by others. Gee believed that the concept of community of practice had limited utility to describe the kinds of communities that have
emerged around common online endeavours such as gaming, and felt that the notions of membership and belonging might be too restrictive to describe the relationships that are established in these new spaces.

However, some features of affinity spaces are not a good fit for TED Translators. For example, individuals in TEDT do not participate under pseudonyms or anonymously, rather their own external identity is important to their standing in the community. Indeed, through their TED profile, participants can indicate their professional and educational credentials, state whether they are professional translators, and can include whether they hold or are studying towards a translation qualification. There are also categories of membership which are signalled through the profile, such as TED Translator or Language Coordinator, and contribution is quantified as number of talks published, which is another marker of status within the community.

During the data gathering phase of the pilot investigation, it became clear that the concept of community of practice resonated strongly with the stories offered by participants, and could provide a suitable framework to describe how this community operates and how learning takes place in it.

2.3.4 Landscapes of practice

Communities of practice interact with each other in full 'landscapes of practice', a metaphor used to describe 'a complex system of communities of practice and the boundaries between them' (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 13). Professional occupations fit well into this description with their many communities of practitioners, researchers, managers, associations, educators, etc. who are linked in different ways to the profession. It is not uncommon for people to belong to different communities of practice in their lives, some of which are interconnected, others unrelated. Landscapes of practice are dynamic and contested, as different communities compete for power and the control of resources, legitimate discourse and gatekeeping, for example. Still, landscapes are diverse, and each practice has its own culture and its own knowledge, although '[w]hether the competence of a community is recognized as knowledge depends on its position in the politics of the landscape.' (p. 16).

There are boundaries, more or less visible and reified, between communities where it is clear whether certain practices are or are not part of the community, and who belongs to the community. These boundaries signal connection as well as difference, as practices are linked but different, each requiring its own set of competences. In this way '[b]oundaries simultaneously suggest a sameness and continuity in the sense that within discontinuity two or more sites are relevant to one another in a particular way.' (Akkerman and Bakker, 2011, p. 133)
There can be conflict and misunderstanding at the boundaries between the practices of communities, but this conflict can also trigger reflection and generate innovation, progress and valuable opportunities for learning. Wenger (1998, p. 256) also argues that boundary crossing and the learning that can derive from it is necessary to keep communities dynamic and prevent them from becoming too inward-looking and stale. It can generate learning through increased understanding of other practices and long-term coordination and exchanges between practitioners, to develop knowledgeability of practices outside one’s own community. And through reflection on one’s own practice it can lead to a more contextualised understanding of it. Boundary crossing and boundary work forces members to make explicit their understanding and ‘results in an expanded set of perspectives and thus a new construction of identity that informs future practice’ (Akkerman and Bakker, 2011, p. 146). It can be thus transformative.

Members who belong to more than one community may act as brokers and connect different communities bringing new perspectives, but their role is a finely balanced one and requires reconciling different aspects of their identity. They need sufficient engagement to command legitimacy in each community so that they are accepted and listened to. In relation to the landscape of practice Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) develop the notion of knowledgeability, which is the counterpart to competence in a community of practice. For individuals who are members of a community of practice, being knowledgeable (if not competent) about the practices of the related communities in that landscape of practice is a valuable asset which can empower them to act as brokers between communities, enabling coordination and learning. Furthermore, it can help them develop greater critical insight into their own practice and a better understanding of how it sits in relation to other related forms of practice (Akkerman and Bakker, 2011).

### 2.3.5 Learning in communities of practice

Learning in a community of practice is a dynamic concept linked to relations within the community, to identity and to the process of membership (in its varying forms) of that community. Learning and practice go hand in hand, although within the community learning may not be recognised as such and be viewed instead simply as the process of acquiring the practice of the community. However, learning is much more, because practice is an emerging structure, it is not fixed, it evolves as members engage with it and change it through the process of making sense of it. So, there are elements of acquisition, generation and transformation in the learning of a practice, all enabled by participation.

Underlying this notion of learning in communities of practice is a particular conception of cognition that downplays the reification of knowledge and the notion of the individual as an autonomous agent who just happens to be contained in a specific situation. Knowledge is
understood to be distributed rather than residing inside the individual mind or having an independent existence as an abstract or general concept.

An enactivist theory of cognition proposes that ‘cognition does not occur in minds or brains, but in the possibility for shared action’ (Davis and Sumara, 1997), and posits, instead, that both individual and context are integrally and inextricably interrelated in an ecology of relations, and that thought is ‘dynamic and always in flux (…) always caught up in new learning’ (p. 106). Knowledge results from interaction with others, including the mediating tools, but also with the situation or the content; hence learning emerges from ‘the complex fabric of relations’ of which individuals are part. Consequently, as Wenger (1998, p. 229) indicates ‘learning cannot be designed: it can only be designed for’.

Two further concepts related to learning in communities of practice will be important in this investigation: access and identity. Newcomers need access to the community in order to be exposed to the practice, so there need to be ways for them to participate, to undertake tasks that are low-risk and allow them to work out the ways in which the practice of that community works. In order to do this, they need to get enough attention from other community members, to establish relationships and be mentored as they learn. Achieving access to the practice and to the members of the community implies that the newcomer is a legitimate peripheral member of the community. The opposite means the individual is marginalised or ignored, unable to learn in that community.

Identity work and identity transformation are inevitable aspects of learning because the learner engages with the community and its practice in order ‘to become a certain person or, conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 215). Identity is a fundamental part of learning and of practice, and each learner’s journey and positioning within and outside the community will be unique, as are their individual life histories, goals and dispositions (Billett and Somerville, 2004).

There have been many critiques of Wenger’s theory of social learning since it was put forward in the 1990s. One concerns its apparent dismissal of the role that teaching and formal education play in the process of learning (Fuller et al., 2005; Evans et al., 2006), although the model of formal education that Wenger was responding to was the instructivist paradigm prevalent at the time the theory was developed and pedagogy has considerably evolved since (see 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 above). Eraut (2004) also defended the importance of ‘personal knowledge’ (p. 202) alongside knowledge that was socially situated and constructed, and stressed that ‘members of a group acquire only part of the knowledge present in that group, and interpret it within a personal context and history that has been shaped by their experiences in other groups, both prior and contemporary’ (p. 203). This point is made again by Evans et al. (2006) who feel that Wenger tends to treat newcomers as a tabula rasa when, in fact, newcomers often bring extensive experience of other practices, which can benefit other community members, including oldtimers (Fuller et al.,
One more criticism of Wenger’s theory is that it does not accord sufficient importance to the wider context and the external pressures that originate either in institutional arrangements, or in the social, cultural and political setting, for example (Fuller et al., 2005).

Adopting a phenomenological approach in this investigation can go some way towards addressing some of these criticisms. By selecting a global sample of participants from a wide range of countries and hearing their stories, this study focuses on how individuals engage with an online volunteer translation initiative and construct their own meanings in unique ways, as part of their personal trajectoires of participation. However, although personal experience takes centre stage, the social, political and cultural contexts in which participants operate inevitably form the context for their experiences.

2.3.6 Formal and informal learning

Wenger’s social theory of learning recognises that learning is an inextricable part of human activity and therefore happens anywhere and at any time as we engage in various activities in our everyday lives. Nevertheless, making a distinction between formal and informal learning is useful from an educational point of view and for the purpose of this investigation, because it separates learning that takes place within educational contexts – that which occupies educators as they design curricula and learning activities for their students – from learning that happens outside educational contexts.

Informal learning can be defined as ‘all forms of intentional or tacit learning in which we engage either individually or collectively without direct reliance on a teacher or externally organized curriculum’ (Livingstone, 2006, p. 204). Conversely formal learning is characterized by having a prescribed curriculum, being led by a teacher or trainer, including some form of evaluation and leading to certification (Eraut, 2000; Livingstone, 2006).

Vavoula (2004) offers a useful typology of learning (see Figure 9 below), which distinguishes various types of learning according to who, teacher or learner, determines goals and processes, whether they are determined at all, and includes learning that is deliberately planned by the individual and that which results unexpectedly from another activity (Eraut, 2000). The present study looks at the intentional and unintentional informal learning derived from participation in an open online volunteer translation community, and refers to university level courses when formal learning is mentioned.
Capitalising on the opportunities and challenges of blending formal and informal learning has been acknowledged for some years as one of the challenges facing higher education (Adams Becker et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2016; Sharples et al., 2015). Still hampered in many cases by traditional structures, roles and practices, institutions and educators need to find ways of connecting student learning with their day to day lives to provide them with richer, practical experiences through which they can develop critical thinking, collaboration, problem-solving, self-regulation and digital literacies, as well as subject knowledge and skills.

One of the characteristics of formal education is that learners become cut off from it once they leave their course, and this is particularly the case for digital resources and the educational community itself. Learners should be made aware of the long-term learning benefits of participating in sites of learning and communities that will be accessible to them beyond their formal education, providing some continuity to their learning. Open resources, tools and communities are ideal environments for informal learning beyond the classroom, and universities and educators are in a key position to help students locate beneficial informal learning opportunities (Adams Becker et al., 2017, p. 22).

This synergy between formal and informal learning is ‘hindered by a lack of consensus on what constitutes credible informal learning’ (Johnson et al., 2016). Ways of determining the usefulness of informal learning tools and environments, such as the evaluation framework for mobile language learning apps developed by Rosell-Aguilar (2017), or Benson’s (2011) framework for analysing participation in ‘learning beyond the classroom’ activities are steps in the right direction. However, attention needs to be paid also to helping learners recognize and articulate this learning as part of their educational journey.
2.4 Research questions

The review of the literature has focused so far on the under-researched intersection between two areas of practice: translation education and online volunteer translation. Current engagement with open resources, tools and practices in translation education is still very limited. In González-Davies and Enríquez-Raido’s introduction to a special issue on situated learning, they lamented the fact that they had ‘received almost no contributions addressing the role of ICT and/or translation/interpreting technologies in Situated Learning – specially in relation to new, digital work placements and schemes facilitated by crowdsourcing technologies and global social media platforms’ (2016, p. 4). Likewise, in his account of using Wikipedia in a collaborative translation project, Al-Shehari (2017, p. 363) noted the potential of TED and Wikipedia for translator education, but deplored the ‘little interest in academia in studying the efficiency and significance of using online translation initiatives like TED’s in teaching translation’.

Previous research conducted on online volunteer translation has focused mainly on the topic of volunteer motivation (McDonough Dolmaya, 2012 on Wikipedia; Olohan, 2014 and Câmara, 2014 on TED Translators; and Dombek, 2014 on Facebook Translation), so there appeared to be a gap in the literature relating to how participants made sense of their experiences of participation in online volunteer translation activities. Small-scale experimental studies conducted by the researcher (Câmara and Comas-Quinn, 2016; Comas-Quinn and Fuertes Gutiérrez, 2019) had focused on perceptions of the learning derived from engagement in volunteer translation activities. The experiences studied were those of students engaged in a teacher-facilitated task, albeit a voluntary one, so those experimental studies were linked to a formal educational context. The conclusion of those studies was that a considerable amount of learning, both conscious and tacit, was taking place in the course of engaging with TEDT, and that it would be useful to determine how that learning was perceived to fit in with participants’ learning and professional trajectories, for example, and whether it was considered to have equal value or was perceived as being of a different nature than the learning that could be acquired in a formal educational context.

The present study aims to understand how learning takes place through participation in an online volunteer community that is focused on the practice of translation. Understanding whether and how this new form of practice, online volunteer translation, can support learning and the development of translation competence is a necessary pre-step to encouraging translation educators to consider whether and how they might use it as part of an open, authentic and situated pedagogy.

Therefore, to address this gap in knowledge about online volunteer translation, this investigation asked the following three research questions:
1. What are the experiences of participation in TEDT of those TEDT contributors who plan to work as professional translators?
2. How do these contributors perceive their participation in TEDT in relation to their educational aspirations?
3. How do these contributors perceive their participation in TEDT in relation to their professional aspirations?

No research of this kind had been carried out on the experiences of those who had decided to participate in online volunteer translation voluntarily rather than as part of a teacher-facilitated activity. Hence, the present study sought to reach out directly to TEDT volunteers from across the world, focusing on those who wanted to work as professional translators, with the aim of hearing their own accounts of how and why they engaged with this community, and what they felt they were gaining from this experience. In this way this investigation responds to a call from translation studies for qualitative case study research that involves ‘the observation of learning that occurs in naturalistic settings—as authentic as possible’ (Kiraly, 2017, p. 26), and to a need to research further the field of amateur translation and its possible integration into translation training (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017).

The knowledge gained by answering the first three research questions listed above is then used to address the second part of this investigation, namely, assessing whether and how online volunteer translation might be used in translation education. For this purpose, a fourth and final research question was posed:

4. What are the opportunities and challenges of using online volunteer translation in translation education?

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented translation competence as a complex, problem solving activity and has posited that learners can develop knowledge, skills and attributes, and their capacity to solve translation problems by being exposed to translation tasks, through deliberate practice and by receiving feedback on their performance from others. Online volunteer translation can provide opportunities for learners to engage with authentic content in established communities and experience the full complexity of a situated activity. Educational practice is evolving to embrace these opportunities to work with real content in open spaces in spite of the challenges they pose.

Technology has significantly transformed translation practice and given rise to a new form of practice: online volunteer translation. Examining the scarce research on online volunteer translation communities and their use in translation teaching has uncovered a clear gap in the literature regarding how participants in these communities experience their participation in relation to their educational and professional journeys and aspirations towards professional translation. To fill this gap three research questions have been posed to
investigate the experiences in TEDT of those contributors who plan to work as professional translators and their perceptions of those experiences in relation to their educational and professional aspirations.

The final section of the literature review briefly presented Wenger’s (1998) social theory of learning and the conceptual framework of situated learning in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) as a suitable tool to discuss the learning that takes place in TED Translators and how participants make sense of their experience in this community. Key concepts included practice, community, access, meaning, identity, trajectories of participation, boundary crossing and knowledgeability. These concepts will be used when relating the knowledge gained from answering the three initial research questions to a final research question aimed at exploring the opportunities and challenges of incorporating online volunteer translation in translation education.

Having completed the literature review and presented the research questions that this study is intended to answer, the next chapter discusses the methodology and research design employed to answer the first three research questions. The findings of this qualitative study are presented in chapter 4 and then discussed in chapter 5 in relation to the literature and the researcher’s own professional experience as a practitioner researcher, in order to answer the fourth and final research question.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter contains a description and discussion of the choices made regarding research design and the paradigm that underpins these choices. It presents the procedures used for recruiting participants and the ethical implications of these procedures, the sample recruited, including a description of the instruments and procedures for data collection, and the data analysis. It concludes with a reflection on how to ensure quality and standards of trustworthiness in a qualitative study and a clarification of the role of the researcher in the study.

3.1 Paradigm

Research paradigms comprise assumptions and choices, ontological (regarding the nature of being), epistemological (regarding the nature of knowledge) and methodological (regarding the way in which we go about knowing), that underpin every research inquiry. Guba and Lincoln (1994) point out the philosophical nature of research paradigms, which they consider human constructions, and claim that ‘advocates of any particular construction must rely on persuasiveness and utility rather than proof in arguing their position’ (p. 108, italics in original). Hammersley (2011, p. 35), nonetheless, cautions against focusing excessively on philosophical considerations on the nature of being, knowledge and knowing, and entreats researchers to focus on the research problem at hand, since ‘we must believe that there are facts about the phenomena we are investigating that can be discovered, and that this knowledge is worthwhile. If we do not, then there is no point in pursuing the activity.’

This research is grounded in a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, based on a view of reality and knowledge as embodied and enacted in both individual and context, and therefore constantly changing, as the individuals and the complex ecology of relations they are part of also change (Davis and Sumara, 1997). An exploratory approach is therefore appropriate to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon under examination, and a constructivist paradigm, with its acknowledgement of the existence of multiple realities, fits well with a phenomenological approach to qualitative research, which draws on subjective experience.

In a constructivist paradigm the research endeavour is about understanding and reconstructing, so ‘the “findings” are literally created as the investigation proceeds.’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 111, italics in original). Crotty (1998) considers it possible to reconcile a constructivist/interpretative epistemology with a subtle realist ontology (Hammersley, 1992) by accepting that reality exists outside the mind but only acquires meaning through individual perception. Knowledge therefore becomes a construction around areas of
consensus where individuals’ accounts coalesce, although multiple meanings can also coexist. Both the researcher and the researched bring their own values and beliefs to the research inquiry, which must be acknowledged to enable readers to assess the validity of the research.

Although from a phenomenological philosophical perspective it is argued that there is no objective, independent reality that exists outside of individual interpretations, Hammersley (2008, p. 12) cautions against confusing philosophy with what are ‘investigative strategies that offer evidence to inform judgments, not techniques that provide guaranteed truth or completeness’. Hence for this study a subtle realist ontological stance has been adopted in a constructivist/interpretative paradigm. Figure 10 below summarises the philosophical underpinnings of this project, following the framework developed by Crotty (1998).

![Figure 10 Research paradigm for the study](image)

### 3.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Phenomenology is regarded as a suitable method to study a single phenomenon of which little is known (Creswell, 1998), in this case, participation in TED Translators by those who are planning to work as professional translators. It allows us to learn directly from those who experience the phenomenon because it seeks to uncover the insider view rather than
imposing an outsider/researcher view (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). It has even been hailed as ‘the ideal method for experiential work within an interpretative paradigm’ (Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie, 2015, p. 93).

The phenomenological approach used in this study is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) first presented by Smith (1996). IPA synthesizes ideas from phenomenology and hermeneutics resulting in a method that aims to combine description, because it is concerned with how things appear, and interpretation, because it recognizes there is no such thing as an uninterpreted phenomenon (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014, p. 8).

The choice of IPA is congruent with the ontological and epistemological stance of the research. It focuses on the particular, and thus attends to context, and treats participants as experiential experts (Smith and Osborn, 2003). It regards individuals as meaning-making creatures, and is concerned with the interpretation of experience, being aware that this entails a ‘double hermeneutic’: the researcher tries to make sense of the participants’ accounts of making sense of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher needs to undertake this interpretation ‘more consciously and systematically’ (p. 3) by engaging in reflexivity to stay alert to the impact that her presuppositions and biases might have on the analysis (Rodham, Fox and Doran, 2015).

Although presented as a flexible and creative process that does not prescribe a rigid method, IPA nevertheless calls for the use of appropriate theoretical principles, research questions, research design, and data collection and analysis. It often works with small purposively selected samples, preferably homogeneous, either in socio-demographic terms or in relation to the experience under investigation. IPA is a widely used phenomenological approach developed for psychology (Langdridge, 2007, p. 107), but increasingly used for qualitative work in education.¹⁸

IPA has been criticised for resulting in studies that are too descriptive (Smith et al., 2009) and, with its emphasis on the uniqueness of the individual, for neglecting the social context (Todorova, 2011; Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie, 2015) or treating it more superficially than other approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 183). A further criticism is that it provides ‘no way of identifying which phenomenon is most relevant to an individual or group of individuals’ (Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie, 2015, p. 93). None of these criticisms would disqualify IPA as a method for the present study: the initial drivers for the research dictate the choice of phenomenon; and social context, though important, will remain secondary to individual experience, given the huge variations expected in contexts in a global community.

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¹⁸ A search of the Ethos thesis database in October 2017 revealed that 1613 doctoral theses since 1998 used IPA, 255 of them since 2003 in the field of education.
A qualitative IPA research design provides an in-depth exploration of the experiences of a small number of participants, and does not claim that its findings are generalizable in the way this term is understood in a positivist paradigm. In common with other phenomenological approaches, IPA is idiographic, that is, concerned with the particular, with the richness of detail, rather than with making claims for whole groups or establishing laws of behaviour (Smith et al., 2009). However, the generalizability of an IPA study comes from the fact that “the detail of the individual also brings us closer to significant aspects of the general” (p. 32) together with the notion of theoretical generalizability “where the reader of the report is able to assess the evidence in relation to their existing professional and experiential knowledge” (p. 4).

3.3 Consideration of alternative approaches

An experimental methodology has been used elsewhere to study the experiences of graduates in translation (Cámara and Comas-Quinn, 2016) and languages (Comas-Quinn and Fuertes Gutiérrez, 2019) who have been engaged with TEDT as part of a teacher-led activity. The focus on understanding ‘real world’ behaviours and how participants make sense of their own voluntary participation precludes the use of an experimental approach.

Grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) is a suitable approach to generate theory, but requires that the researcher have some initial insights into what might be relevant or significant to the population studied. Given the lack of previous research in this context, formulating and testing theory seems premature, although the method could be employed subsequently once an IPA approach has uncovered participants’ interpretations of the phenomenon.

Virtual ethnography (Hine, 2000) would be useful to study a community or group, but there is no evidence to suggest that participants in TEDT see themselves or should be regarded as a cultural group. In fact, there may be many different groupings within TEDT (language-based, language coordinators, those who are active in the Facebook groups, etc.). There may also be many participants who work independently of these groupings, engaging only with the content and tools, and who are therefore not visible in the online spaces (Facebook groups, for example). However, although not considered a suitable methodology for the overall project, the key ethnographic method of participant observation is relevant to this study. My own participation as a TEDT volunteer and language coordinator provides me with access to this community and its practice, and the background knowledge I have developed helps me to make sense of the context in which the participants’ experiences unfold. This insider status, experienced alongside the external role as researcher, requires the adoption of a reflexive approach during the study, and this is explained more fully in section 3.12.
3.4 Research design

The phenomenological study is designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of participation in TEDT of those TEDT contributors who plan to work as professional translators?
2. How do these contributors perceive their participation in TEDT in relation to their educational aspirations?
3. How do these contributors perceive their participation in TEDT in relation to their professional aspirations?

IPA requires that information be gathered directly from participants who have experience of a phenomenon, in this case participation in TEDT by those who are planning to work as professional translators. The most common method of generating suitable data in an IPA study is to collect narratives of experience through in-depth interviews.

A qualitative survey containing several open-ended questions was deemed the most effective way to identify suitable participants from whom information on experiences of participation could be gathered. To help with the selection of the sample, a question was included in the survey that prompted respondents to recount good and bad experiences of participation in TEDT, and these narratives, alongside the demographic and background information gathered in the survey, were used to select candidates for interview. Thus, the study used a qual > PHEN design (Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie, 2015) in which the results of the preliminary qualitative survey were used to orient the research in the more substantial phenomenological interview phase.

A pilot study was conducted to test the viability of the research design and to find out some preliminary information about participants in TEDT. A web survey was constructed to gather basic demographic data and information on participation including motivation to start and continue in TEDT. The survey, placed in four TEDT language Facebook groups, specifically targeted students.

The pilot survey received 21 responses, and, amongst them, three respondents reported participating in TEDT as part of a class activity. The majority of respondents were in the 18-25 age bracket, unsurprisingly since students had been targeted, with more females than males. Respondents were largely studying undergraduate and postgraduate taught degrees, split three ways across translation, languages and other disciplines. It also confirmed that some participants in TEDT were there as part of their formal studies, and that most of the respondents had participated for fewer than six months although a substantial number had been involved much longer. Five of the eleven participants who indicated they would be available for an interview were selected for interview based on the information they had provided in the survey and their availability during the pilot study period. Three interviews took place on Skype and two were conducted via email to test whether
epistolary interviewing (Debenham, 2007) was a viable way of conducting the interviews. The Skype interviews were transcribed, and all five interview transcripts were analysed using IPA.

The pilot study showed that eliciting a significant event, example or anecdote was a useful way of generating rich data that contained sufficient detail to make it suitable for phenomenological analysis. It also led to the decision that all interviews should be conducted in the same medium, online videoconferencing using Skype, because an ‘interview is often longer and thus richer in terms of nuances and depth’ (Englander, 2012, p. 27) than a written account and further details or clarifications can be elicited immediately in an interview, whereas to do so in writing requires the participant to engage in correspondence with the researcher over time and is therefore more onerous. The pilot study showed that the proposed research design was effective in locating participants for the research, and in generating interesting and appropriate data for analysis to answer the research questions in the main study.

The three interviews conducted on Skype were transcribed by the researcher. No speech recognition software was employed in this step as this kind of software is designed to learn and adapt to the user’s voice over time rather than adapting to multiple voices. Given the global nature of the sample and the fact that participants spoke English as an additional language with a variety of accents, training speech recognition software was not a viable option. A simple, free transcription software tool (Express Scribe) was used which allowed playback to be slowed down. In fact, although transcription was a time-consuming step in the process, it proved to be a good investment in terms of becoming familiar with the content of the conversations and beginning to identify themes that were significant to the participants. Listening to recordings multiple times was also useful in revisiting how participants talked about certain topics (tone of voice, exclamations, laughter), information that would not be recorded in the kind of transcription required by IPA (with its focus on content rather than form).

The analysis of the data generated in the pilot study was carried out using NVivo, a widely used software tool for qualitative data analysis. Part of the remit of the pilot study was to trial this tool to determine whether it would be useful to the researcher. Opinions tend to be split amongst qualitative researchers on the usefulness of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (Braun & Clarke, 2014, p. 219). Whilst NVivo offers many interesting features for data coding and data management, it is not particularly user-friendly, and it was found to be less than helpful in allowing the researcher to grasp the big picture of how themes related to one another. In the interest of determining whether it was the tool itself that constituted the barrier or the use of a technological solution for data analysis more generally, a second data analysis tool, Dedoose, was trialled. It was then concluded that a manual form of analysis would be preferable, as it allowed the data to be manipulated and
physically arranged to surface connections and meaning relations between themes and examples. The manual theme developed was supported by lists of quotes arranged under themes and frequency tables compiled by the researcher.

Data collected from the interviews and the survey have been interpreted in relation to other contextual information gathered through my own observations as a participant and familiarization with information on TEDT available to the researcher. Approaching a research question from different perspectives, using different methodologies or data collection instruments, is all part of triangulation. In this study the decision to use a survey alongside phenomenological interviews stems from an understanding of triangulation as a way of seeking complementary information, not a way of validating that the truth has been ‘discovered’ about a phenomenon (Hammersley, 2008). Section 3.11 below details how research quality was approached in this investigation.

3.5 Recruitment of participants

For an IPA study, the sampling needs to be purposive or criterion-based to ensure that all participants have experienced the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 1998). Relying on self-selection of respondents is a common technique for online surveys, and particularly suitable for exploratory investigations where other research tools, interviews in this case, take care of the main data collection (Fricker, 2008, p. 20).

Purposive sampling requires critical thinking about the criteria for selection of participants (Silverman, 2000). In this study, the criteria for potential inclusion were:

- that respondents were participating in TEDT;
- that they were over 18 years of age;
- that they had filled in the questionnaire and self-identified as planning to work as professional translators\(^\text{19}\) or were already working as such; and
- that they were willing to take part in the interview.

IPA recommends a homogenous sample from which patterns of recurrent and significant themes can be identified and interpreted. However, within this group there may be variations, for example, whether the participant has or is planning to be engaged in education to accomplish the aim of becoming a professional translator, or not, as may be the case.

\(^{19}\) I have used in this study Pym’s (2011) definition of professional translators as ‘those who make a living from translation’.
Interview participants were recruited from those who completed a survey introduced through a call for participants posted in some of the TEDT Facebook groups in November 2017. Although not all TEDT participants engage with the Facebook groups, there is no evidence to suggest that the characteristics of those who engage versus those who do not engage in the Facebook groups are different.

The call for participants was initially posted to the general Facebook group, ‘I Translate TED Talks’ (with over 23,000 members at the time), but after one week only 6 responses had been received to the questionnaire. After further negotiations with the gatekeepers, the same call for participants was posted to twenty TEDT individual language groups. The criteria for selecting the language groups was that they had more than 100 members (25 groups) and were either public or allowed the researcher to post the call for participants (5 of the groups contacted did not approve my request). At the time the call for participants was posted, the targeted language groups ranged in size from 133 members (Swedish) to 6983 (Arabic).

IPA studies are normally carried out with a small number of participants (Smith et al., 2009). During the month that the survey was available, 32 responses were received but only 22 of the respondents agreed to being contacted for an interview. The selection of potential interviewees was based on two criteria: the richness or interest of their narratives in response to the open-ended question that elicited examples of good or bad experiences of participation in TEDT, and the need to ensure that the final sample for interview reflected the overall distribution of responses in terms of age, length of involvement in TEDT, and situation in relation to translation education (see Table 2 under 3.7.4). Eventually, twelve online interviews were conducted using Skype with participants located across the globe. Unfortunately, problems with connection and sound quality made the transcription of one of the interviews impracticable, resulting in eleven usable interviews.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Researching online groups poses many issues that the general guidelines for educational research used at the time this study was prepared (BERA, 2011) did not fully address. The Association of Internet Researchers provides useful guiding questions to evaluate the additional challenges of this context (Markham and Buchanan, 2012, pp. 8-11), such as issues of privacy and confidentiality where online data may be traceable to individuals.

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20 The full list of language groups where the call for participants was posted is: Arabic, Bahasa Indonesian, Chinese – Simplified, Chinese – Traditional, Czech, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Persian (Farsi), Polish, Portuguese – Brazil, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Spanish, Swedish and Ukrainian.
considerations of whether online spaces should be treated as public or private, and the appropriation of the discourse of others (Pihlaja, 2015).

Since Facebook groups were used to access participants, care had to be taken to comply with Facebook’s Terms particularly point 7 in section 5, which requires that potential participants are informed about the research in comprehensible language, and that their consent is obtained before participating in the research (see Appendix A for a copy of Facebook Terms at the time the research was undertaken). The survey posted in Facebook contained a clear explanation of the research project, the means to express consent and information on participants’ right to withdraw from the research (see Appendix B).

Permission to post an invitation to the survey in the TEDT Facebook groups was obtained from the owner of the group (TEDT) after submission of a project schedule, description of the research and draft of the research instruments. The fact that some of the Facebook groups involved are closed rather than public made it even more crucial to secure this permission from gatekeepers. This research study did not involve collecting data from postings made by participants in either public or closed groups, but even using these postings to locate suitable participants for the interviews could be ethically problematic because the intention of contributors to these spaces was not to become part of research (Markham and Buchanan, 2012; Pihlaja, 2015). The requirement to obtain informed consent prior to any data collection addressed this issue in the present study.

Permission to carry out this research project was obtained from The Open University’s Human Research Ethics Committee in January 2016 (HREC/2015/2184). The gatekeeper (TEDT) stipulated that no data could be collected from underage participants, and this requirement was addressed in the survey design by including a skip-pattern that took those who selected an age below 18 in response to the relevant question directly to the end of the survey (see Appendix B). Information on ways of dealing with the ethical issues that arose from the researcher being a volunteer member of TEDT are addressed in section 3.12.

3.7 Data gathering: Instruments and procedures

Using online research methods is an appropriate and convenient way of studying this global, distributed, highly digitally literate online community. Its global nature and the status of English as the common language of this community, as well as the language in which the thesis had to be written, led to the decision to use English for the whole data collection process including those interviews in which researcher and interviewees had another common language (Spanish in two cases).

The main instrument of data collection in this study is the conversational semi-structured interview. To enable the selection of a suitable sample of interviewees, a preliminary qualitative survey was posted in some TEDT Facebook groups (see 3.5 above for the
criteria for selection of Facebook groups) to gather information on the profile and experiences of TEDT participants who met the criteria for this study.

3.7.1 Web survey

The survey remained open for one month and received 32 responses. Given that the survey was aimed at a particular subsection of TEDT participants (those who aim to work as professional translators) and that there was no prior information regarding what proportion of TEDT participants fit this description, a high response rate was neither expected nor required.

The survey (see Appendix B) contained questions on demographics, experience of participation in TEDT, and motivation for initial and continued participation, and allowed respondents to indicate whether they were willing to be interviewed. Most questions were open-ended to allow respondents to convey their own experiences without the constraints of imposed categorisations. Where categories were given, space was provided to allow respondents to add further information, and many of them did. The survey also included a question asking for an account of an example of a good or bad experience the respondent had had while participating in TEDT.

3.7.2 Survey results

The results of the survey were used to locate potential interviewees and to learn more about the self-selected group of TEDT participants who are planning to work as professional translators. The descriptive question was useful to identify possible interesting stories that could be followed up at interview. Only 22 out of the 32 respondents indicated that they would be willing to take part in an interview. Only one respondent indicated that their participation in TED was part of their studies (set up by a teacher or which could be counted towards class work), but unfortunately this person was not willing to be interviewed.

The snapshot obtained from this small survey pointed towards a fairly young group of respondents, with the majority in the 18-25 and 26-35 age categories (see Figure 11 below). This distribution in terms of age partly mirrors data obtained by Cámar (2014) in an online survey (n=177) advertised to TEDT Facebook groups during a period of just over a year. Amongst Cámar’s respondents, the 26-35 group, with 39% of respondents, was larger than the 18-25 age group, which only had 32%. The older age groups had much smaller populations, 17% for those 36-45, and 11% for those 46-60. Only 1% of respondents to Cámar’s survey were over 60 years old and fewer than 1% were under 18.
The slightly younger profile of the respondents to the survey used in this investigation, compared to those who responded to Cámara’s survey, may be due to the focus of the survey. Cámara aimed to uncover ‘key motivational factors for becoming volunteer translators’ (2014, p. 197), whereas the present study had a focus on volunteers who wanted to work as professional translators. Appealing to a group who were planning their professional career was likely to elicit more responses from younger participants, although career changers did also fit the profile requested.

However, the gender breakdown of 26 females versus 6 males in the present study was more polarised than in Cámara’s results, which gave roughly equal numbers of female and male participants (54% to 46%). Combining age and gender, Cámara had uncovered a dominance of male respondents in the 18-25 age bracket, with a majority of them describing their profession as students, and a preponderance of female respondents in the 26-35 age group in particular (and to a lesser extent the 18-25 and 36-45 categories) most of whom indicated that their profession was that of translator.

Respondents were based in 22 countries across four continents. Three participants gave the UK as their country of residence and two each gave France, Tunisia, Egypt, Canada, Ukraine and Sweden. In several cases the working languages did not correspond with the place where the respondent lived, for example, a Chinese language volunteer gave her country of residence as Canada and a German language volunteer reported that she lived in Peru. All respondents had English as one of their languages, but in addition, a wide range of other languages was reported, with French, Arabic and Spanish the most frequent, followed by Russian and German.

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21 Countries of origin given by respondents were: UK with three respondents; France, Tunisia, Egypt, Canada, Ukraine, Sweden with two respondents; and with one each, Taiwan, Romania, Tanzania, Czech Republic, Peru, Spain, Sudan, Russia, Brazil, Syria, Belarus, Trinidad and Tobago, Greece, Indonesia and Lebanon.

22 Languages with at least two respondents: Swedish, Greek, Japanese and Ukrainian; with one respondent Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese, Chinese, Italian, Czech, Indonesian, Persian, Swahili and Romanian.
Respondents were asked to indicate how long they had been participating in the project. The biggest group (14 respondents) had participated for less than 3 months, and some for as little as one week. 3 respondents had participated for a period of 3 to 6 months, another 5 had participated between 6 months and a year, 5 more between 1 and 2 years, and the last 5 for 3 years or more.

Almost all respondents engaged in translation activities, but many also carried out transcriptions. Only 15% undertook reviewing of other people’s work, which is not surprising as many of the respondents had not been participating in the project for a long period of time. Amongst those who reported the longer periods of participation were three respondents that stated they carried out the role of language coordinator, that is, they were more experienced volunteers appointed by TEDT to approve work for publication, and mentor and support others in their language communities (see Figure 12 below).

Figure 12 Activities undertaken by respondents

Over three quarters of respondents (25) stated that they were planning to become professional translators, whilst the remainder (7) indicated that they already worked professionally as translators.

In response to the question on their educational status (see Appendix B), only a quarter of respondents (8) were enrolled at the time in formal studies to prepare them for a career in translation. However, a similar number (7) had already completed translation studies at university and the same number (7) planned to start them in future. A majority of respondents therefore included formal education in translation in their journeys to become professional translators. A further three respondents reported that they were studying at the time but that their studies were unrelated to the field of translation.

Three respondents indicated that they were planning to become professional translators but had not completed studies for that purpose nor did they have plans to do so in the future and two said that they already worked as professional translators without having done any studies for that purpose, although one of them said she was interested in doing such studies in the future ‘to brush up her skills’. A further two respondents chose the ‘Other’ option and in the free text comment box requested information on how to become a professional translator.

The survey results showed a wide range of profiles and experiences that reflected participants combining TEDT with both the translation profession and translation education in a variety of ways. The sample for interview was selected to try to mirror this profile.
3.7.3 Interview

Interviews are research encounters where meaning is constructed in dialogue between the researcher and the respondent (Kvale, 1996). Within a constructivist paradigm, it is important to remember that the narrative constructed in the interview does not constitute the only meaning or experience, and that alternative meanings for the same experience may be generated by the respondent when interacting with others, such as peers, teachers, friends or family (Silverman, 2000).

The type of interview used in phenomenology to gather experiential narrations from participants is the semi-structured (or sometimes unstructured) conversational interview (Van Manen, 1990). In this case the semi-structured interview was chosen to ensure that, in addition to concentrating on the phenomenon studied and eliciting concrete experiences in the form of anecdotes or stories, the conversation would be focused on learning and hence generate suitable data for an investigation that forms the basis for an education doctorate.

The interview schedule included open-ended questions (see Appendix C) to encourage interviewees to talk at length, and whilst aiming for as natural a conversation as possible, this list of questions served to focus the interview and as a prompt for the researcher when responses were limited (Kvale, 1996; Langdrige, 2007; Smith et al., 2009).

Videoconferencing makes it possible to talk to ‘otherwise inaccessible participants’ (Deakin and Wakefield, 2013, p. 5). This was a key consideration in this study given the global nature of the group. As the phenomenon studied takes place online, high levels of digital literacy could be assumed from participants. The choice of videoconferencing tool, Skype, proved viable, although one of the participants had to set up a new account, and two of the younger participants were more familiar with other alternatives (Google Hangouts and Viber).

There are some limitations and constraints in using online interviewing. In this study the main problems were technical, related to sound quality and connection reliability and resulted in one interview having to be discarded. Sound quality also made unfamiliar accents harder to understand and much more challenging to transcribe. A potential loss of intimacy and flow to the conversation can result from this type of problem (Seitz, 2015), and was indeed an issue for the conversation that was eventually discarded.

Difficulties in establishing rapport have also been raised as a potential challenge in online interviews. However, the choice of video conferencing (rather than audio only) and the communications carried out through email and Facebook private messaging prior to the interview made it easier to create a good rapport, conducive to the generation of rich narratives of experience. The advantages and disadvantages of online interviews are summarized in Table 1 below.
### Table 1 Advantages and disadvantages of online interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Cost effective (no travel, reduced time commitment)</td>
<td>• Dependent on reliability of service / connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enables global reach (suitable for studying a global phenomenon)</td>
<td>• Sound quality varies, can compound difficulties in understanding unfamiliar accents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Flexibility, easier to fit into busy schedules or reschedule</td>
<td>• Potential distractions in the participant setting (typing noises, having other windows open on screen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Congruent with online nature of the phenomenon studied</td>
<td>• Could be harder to build rapport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The setting is familiar to the participant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An invitation to take part in the interviews was sent to 18 of the 22 respondents who had indicated a willingness to be interviewed (see Appendix D). Some of those who had been participating for a very short period of time, set at less than three months, were not contacted, although others were, whose narratives or profiles were particularly interesting or whose selection helped balance the profile of the group of interviewees to more closely match the overall profile of survey respondents. An information sheet describing the research project and a consent form were attached to the invitation (see Appendix E). Signed consent forms were collected from all participants who were interviewed.

Interviews were conducted with twelve participants between November and December 2017. All interviews were conducted in English as this was the shared language of all TEDT participants, including the researcher, and the language in which the research was being conducted. Whilst all participants were sufficiently competent in English to take part in the interview, English was not the first language for any of the participants (or for the researcher) and that may have curtailed their narratives. While some had a high level of competence and fluency in the language, others started the interview by warning me that their spoken English was not as good as their comprehension, or struggled at times to find the right word or expression during the interview.

### 3.7.4 Participant characteristics

The twelve participants interviewed covered a wide range of languages and locations, and included all age groups represented in the survey results, in an effort to ensure the sample mirrored the demographic composition of those who had responded to the survey. The length of participation in TEDT ranged from one month to over three years. In terms of
involvement in translation education, most participants were either currently enrolled in translation-related education or considering doing this in the near future. One participant’s translation education was based on independent study and non-formal courses, and two others expressed an interest in undertaking translation education but had no concrete plans for the moment.

A summary of the basic information for the twelve participants is presented in Table 2 below. The names used are pseudonyms to preserve participants’ anonymity, and male participants are indicated with (M) after their name. Full profiles were created for the eleven participants included in the study and are provided in Appendix H. These profiles, validated by participants themselves, convey a summary of each participant’s story, preserving their voice and bringing them closer to the reader (see sections 3.9 and 3.11 below).

### Table 2 Basic information for interviewed participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location/From</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Languages (+English)</th>
<th>In TEDT</th>
<th>Translation education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salima</td>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>Arabic, French</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>In progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susana</td>
<td>UK / Argentina</td>
<td>56-65</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>In progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexei (M)</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>Ukrainian, Russian</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Self-directed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan (M)</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>Swahili</td>
<td>+3 years</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleni</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashad (M)</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>+3 years</td>
<td>Offer accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>In progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>Canada / China</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>Considering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alejandra</td>
<td>UK / Argentina</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>Spanish, Italian, French, Portuguese</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Considering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martina (*)</td>
<td>Peru / Germany</td>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>In progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camille</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>In progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keiko</td>
<td>Caribbean / Japan</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Considering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.8 Data preparation

IPA requires a recording and a transcription of the individual interview. As the analysis focuses on content, what is required is a semantic record and therefore a transcription into plain language is sufficient. It is not necessary to record the linguistic and extra-linguistic features (length of pauses, overlaps, gestures, volume) that other types of analysis such as conversation or discourse analysis require. Nor is it necessary to transcribe information that will not be analysed (Smith et al., 2009).

Personally transcribing the data was a good way to become acquainted with it and to start to identify themes and patterns. Doing so within 24-48 hours of the interview ensured that the content of the conversation was fresh in the researcher’s mind. Although IPA works from the transcript of the interview, the original recordings were preserved to be revisited, if necessary, during analysis to provide context for the data and to enable others to audit the research. For ethical reasons the transcripts will not be made openly available as they contain information that is very personal and specific, and would make it possible for individuals to be traced.

The eleven interviews transcribed amounted to some 50,000 words. Interviews ranged from 24 to 64 minutes and their transcriptions from 2700 to 9000 words.

The transcripts were anonymised and references that could lead to the identification of the participant removed (names of institutions and companies or roles in TEDT that are too specific). These were replaced by <name>, <role> or similar. Long pauses or unfinished sentences were indicated by ‘…’.

Where comprehension of the audio was impossible owing to poor sound quality, the missing word or phrase was replaced by ‘xxx’. For one interview a native speaker of the interviewee’s first language was enlisted to help complete the transcription beyond what the researcher was able to transcribe. As mentioned in 2.5 above, the transcription of one interview had to be abandoned as the quality of the recording, caused by an unstable Internet connection during the interview, made it impossible to generate a good enough transcript for meaningful analysis.

Once transcription had been completed, transcripts were used to create individual profiles for each participant, and these are discussed in the next section.

3.9 Participants’ voices

Phenomenological studies should be attentive to preserving the voices of participants. Although phenomenology is idiographic, IPA advocates a thematic approach as an expedient way of presenting systematically the various facets of the phenomenon studied.
With that comes the danger of reducing and fragmenting the individual narratives and obscuring the idiosyncrasy of each lived experience.

A common approach in phenomenology is working with reconstructed life stories (Van Manen, 1990; Langdridge, 2007). These are ‘rich, condensed renditions of the participants’ experiences’ that ‘bring participants and readers directly together’ and ‘provide a more engaging and convincing account of experience’ (Laycock, 2017, p. 65). Presenting full, reconstructed life stories for such a high number of participants is unfeasible within the constraints of this thesis. However, in an effort to preserve the individual voices of participants and inspired by the poetic representations used by Guihen (2017), I decided to create a ‘profile’ for each participant that captured the most salient points of their experience using their own words, which I selected and sequenced. A sample audit trail of how the profiles were constructed is provided in Appendix F.

Seidman (2006) points out the need to be transparent on the criteria for selecting what is included in the narrations, in this case: the basic information needed to preserve an overall picture of the participant’s lived experience in relation to the phenomenon studied; avoiding duplication and specific details that could lead to identification of the participant; and keeping stories under 500 words.

Participants were sent their profiles alongside information on the criteria and process for constructing them and were invited to comment and approve them (see Appendix G). They were also informed that they could request the full transcript, which only one participant did. A number of participants commented positively on their profile:

   Wow! I love Susana! She does remind me of someone I know. I think the script pretty much captured what was said. I definitely recognise that girl! (Susana)

One participant requested one small change to further protect her anonymity and in two cases participants provided some additional wording, which was added to the profile, to clarify the meaning of particular statements. One participant provided some additional text to reflect things she had thought about after the interview but in this case the additional content was not incorporated into the profile to preserve its integrity as a record of what had been communicated during the interview.

One of the reasons for asking participants to check their profiles and, if they so requested, their full transcripts, was to enable them to take the lead in identifying language errors and requesting linguistic corrections. Only in one case did a participant bring up this issue in her reply, but she did not ask for any changes to be made to the script, she merely noted that there were issues of linguistic accuracy in her words:

   I have read my profile and it looks ok apart from the grammar mistakes that I have made <laughter emoji>. (Lisa)
A decision was made not to edit or correct the language in the transcripts. Oral language naturally contains inaccuracies, ambiguities and incomplete sentences, for example, so it would be very difficult to determine how far to take any such ‘correction’ of the transcripts. Although the quotes used in chapters 4 and 5 might occasionally contain language that is not grammatically correct, it is hoped that the content and meaning of what participants convey is sufficiently clear to illustrate the interpretations made by the researcher.

Whilst not essential for the purpose of this thesis, the profiles have been included in Appendix H as a way of honouring the voices of the participants and the stories which they so generously shared with the researcher. The heading contains the pseudonym given to the participant, their place of residence and, in brackets if different from the former, their country of origin, and their age bracket. Words which are underlined in the profiles have been added by the researcher to ensure the coherence of the text, otherwise all sentences used in these profiles were in the transcriptions of interviews with the participants.

3.10 Data analysis

IPA provides an established method of analysis that follows a hermeneutic, interpretative process, working with people’s accounts of their experiences, elucidating how they make sense of those experiences through their own process of interpretation, and acknowledging that the researcher also brings her own interpretation to the process.

IPA is an inductive approach grounded in the data, not theory-driven, which uses thematic analysis as its main analytical tool. However it is important to emphasize that whilst thematic analysis is a qualitative analytical tool, IPA is a whole methodology, an approach to qualitative research which requires ‘guiding theoretical principles, appropriate research questions and study designs, ideal methods of data collection, as well as analytic procedures’ (Braun & Clarke, 2014, p. 180).

IPA uses thematic analysis to identify the main themes present in the data, first for one individual, and subsequently for the others in the sample. The process of selecting themes is a process of interpretation and requires a set of criteria to determine what is and what is not to be included in the selection. In this case the criteria used were frequency, saliency and pertinence. Following these criteria I included aspects that were mentioned by several participants or by one participant several times, aspects that one or more participants focused on extensively in their narrative, and also those that may have not been mentioned recurrently but appeared to me to be strongly linked to the aim of the investigation.

It is important to note that phenomenology is not based on quantitative data. Hence, applying a criterion of frequency does not mean that findings will be reported in quantitative terms. Determining frequency, however, is one of a range of ways in which the researcher might work with the data to look for patterns and connections, and determine what is significant and relevant to the participants. Smith et al. (2009, p. 98) make a distinction
between numeration (‘the frequency with which emergent themes appear throughout the transcript’ for one participant) and recurrence, which indicates whether the theme appears in the accounts of several participants (pp. 106-7). These are part of a range of suggested ways to help researchers make sense of the data. Still, frequency is not to be equated with importance – a theme that is very significant and illuminating of the phenomenon may only be mentioned by one participant or be mentioned just briefly but in several participants’ accounts. In this investigation, frequency tables were compiled after stage 5 of the coding process described below as a visual aid to help me make sense of what was relevant to participants and what recurrent themes appeared more frequently in their accounts (see Appendix I).

For this analysis I used the manual coding process described in Smith et al. (2009, pp. 82-103), but I adapted it to cope with multiple transcripts, which meant swapping steps 4 and 5 as described by Smith et al. to ensure that ‘one identifies emergent themes at case level but holds off the search for patterns and connections until one is examining all the cases together’ (p. 106). Working on print outs of the transcripts, which had been formatted to leave wide margins for annotations on both sides of the text, my own process therefore followed these five steps:

**Step 1: Reading and re-reading.**

I read the transcript to re-familiarise myself with the data. Having transcribed the interview myself, I had already listened to the data closely many times.

**Step 2: Initial noting**

As I read, I underlined the content that was relevant to the research questions, and made exploratory notes on the right margin summarising the information (descriptive notes), identifying recurrent or striking words and expressions (linguistic notes, often in the form of circling) and adding any interpretations or connections to theory or other participants’ accounts prompted by the data (conceptual notes). These three levels of notation were carried out simultaneously, and further notes and interpretations were added with each iteration of analysis I undertook. I carried out this stage of the analysis at least twice for each complete transcript, and several times for particular passages that were rich in content.

**Step 3: Developing emergent themes**

During the second and subsequent loops of analysis, I started to note down on the left margin the more general labels that could describe or identify the notes I’d made on the right margin. IPA uses the word ‘emergent’ for these themes, however Braun and Clarke (2006) caution against researchers supposing that themes appear from the data itself as if they had been there waiting to be discovered. Both their thematic analysis method and IPA
accord the researcher an active role in the construction of meaning by deciding which of the themes are significant and worth reporting.

As I was carrying out this labelling stage, I was mindful of staying close to my research questions and to the notions that I had identified as potentially relevant in my literature review, such as community, experiential and authentic learning, identity, etc. At the same time, I was also cautious not to shoehorn the data into my pre-existing assumptions, and intent on maintaining an open mind to unexpected themes as part of the phenomenological attitude.

An important challenge at this stage of the analysis is slowing down the process to avoid jumping to conclusions. I adopted Dahlberg, Dahlberg and Nyström’s (2008) proposed concept of ‘bridling’, which together with ‘openness’ are the bases for their ‘reflective lifeworld research’ methodology (very close to IPA in approach). Bridling involves the researcher adopting a scientific attitude to problematize her everyday attitude and proceed at a more disciplined pace. I preferred this variation of Husserl’s ‘bracketing’ as it acknowledges that, whilst we can consciously adopt a critical and reflexive approach, we cannot set aside our assumptions, because we cannot know what these are before we commence the investigation.

*Step 4: Moving to the next case*

I repeated the process above for each transcript.

*Step 5: Searching for connections across emergent themes and patterns across cases*

I subsumed steps 4, searching for connections across emergent themes, and 6, looking for patterns across cases, of Smith et al.’s (2009) process of analysis into a single step. To make the process more manageable, I decided to take each topic in turn so I grouped the data into three topics mapped against my research questions and colour-coded them: 1) characteristics of the experience of contributing to TEDT (yellow); 2) TEDT and learning/education (green); and 3) TEDT and the translation profession (red).

Having first transferred all the themes for each participant to a single page to create a representation of that individual’s overall experience, I then focused on one topic at a time and transferred the themes for that topic to colour-coded post-it notes which included the name of the participant, the label I had given to that theme and the specific quote from the transcript, including page number for easy location (see Figure 13).
Once I had all the themes and related quotes for one topic for all participants, I sorted them into common themes and tweaked the labels until I ended up with the final themes for that topic. I then wrote those labels on bigger post-it notes to see how all those themes fitted together. The process I followed involved arranging the post-it notes in various configurations, which was laborious and time consuming but helped me explore different ways of grouping and making sense of the information (see Figure 14).
As I carried out this process of making sense of the data, the configuration of themes changed and some of the labels were renamed and moved until I was satisfied with the way I could construct a narrative for that topic.

At this point I also generated a table of themes to see where they came up in several participants’ accounts. Using frequency in this way helped me identify recurrent themes that would be integral to the description of this experience (Smith et al., 2009, p. 98). I was aware that the same theme could be experienced in very different ways by different participants because ‘[d]oing IPA with numbers of participants constantly involves negotiating this relationship between convergence and divergence, commonality and individuality’ (p. 107).

Van Manen (1990) accords the writing process a key role in the interpretation and sense-making carried out by the researcher. To prepare for the stage of writing out my findings, I took each subordinate theme in turn and arranged all its aspects and relevant quotes to help me construct the more detailed narrative. In undertaking this process, I inevitably re-evaluated some of the earlier decisions, and performed some final adjustments to the labels and groupings I had created previously (see Figure 15).

![Image of notes]

Figure 15 Arranging the narrative for the theme ‘Benefits of TEDT’

Before undertaking the process of writing up the results, I created a table with all the quotes under each subordinate theme. Even at this point, and during the writing, I still adjusted some of the earlier decisions, moving a couple of quotes to different themes and changing the order in which some of the themes would be presented in the final write-up.
3.11 Ensuring quality

The quality of qualitative research conducted within a constructivist / interpretivist paradigm cannot be assessed using the traditional measures of scientific rigour - internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity, or the parallel criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability developed by Guba and Lincoln (1994). The latter have been criticized for still being anchored in a positivist approach and constituting an attempt ‘to make qualitative research more acceptable to conventional audiences’ (Morrow, 2005, p. 251).

There are plenty of guidelines for the evaluation of qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Silverman, 2000; Harvey, 2012-17) but experts caution against applying them rigidly, recommending instead that qualitative research ‘should be assessed on its ‘own terms’ within premises that are central to its purpose, nature and conduct’ (Spencer et al., 2003).

Within phenomenology, the notion of validity is concerned with making sure that the researcher’s interpretation matches the meaning constructed by the subjects. Reliability, a concept that in positivist research deals with consistency and replicability of data collection, is not considered relevant to phenomenological research (Harvey, 2012-17), in which data is generated by a participant and a researcher in a unique interaction.

When assessing IPA studies Smith et al. (2009) favour Yardley’s (2000) four principles: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance. However, in this study the three aspects put forward by Harvey (2012-17) are used as they provide clearer descriptions of what validity in phenomenological and other qualitative research means. These aspects are:

- **Plausibility**: The weight of evidence shown in the density of connections between the details of the data, and the persuasiveness of the description of the researcher’s engagement with that data.

- **Credibility**: Clarity and transparency in the line of reasoning of the researcher, and authenticity of the interpretation, confirmed by the researcher or by checking with the subjects themselves.

- **Trustworthiness**: Careful handling of the data to ensure descriptive accuracy, but acknowledging that the description is not exclusive (different researchers might focus on different aspects) and may contain contradictions.

There are several ways in which research quality can be established in phenomenological and other qualitative studies:

1. **Époché or bracketing**. Husserl advocated setting aside the researcher’s presuppositions in a conscious effort to reduce their impact on the interpretation of the data. However, the feasibility of bracketing in phenomenological analysis has been questioned, particularly as
the researcher might not even be aware of what presuppositions will be relevant. Heidegger (1962/1927) had already pointed out that “an interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us” (p. 192, quoted in Smith et al., 2009, p. 25). For that reason, as explained in section 3.10 above, I chose to use the concept of ‘bridling’ (Dahlberg, Dahlberg and Nyström, 2008), which recommends slowing down the interpretation process, using a scientific attitude to question one’s values and predispositions and remaining open to new and different interpretations. As part of a constructivist paradigm it is important to acknowledge that the researcher plays a role in the construction of the data and the findings, to ‘explain the factors that may have shaped the interpretation’ (Rodham et al., 2015, p. 61) and to ensure that the researcher remains curious and actively engages in reflexivity (p. 62).

2. Participant verification. Representing the participants’ voice fairly and seeing them ‘as the authorities on their lives’ (Morrow, 2005, p. 254) might be achieved by giving them an opportunity to see the transcripts, or to check and clarify sections of the analysis or findings (Langdridge, 2007). In this study, the profiles created from the transcriptions were sent to participants for verification, as explained in section 3.9 above. Caution needs to be exercised to avoid privileging one interpretation over another, given that IPA is premised on the double hermeneutic (as explained in section 3.2 above).

3. Peer critique or independent audit. Trustworthiness and credibility can be increased if the researcher arranges all research data so that others can trace the chain of decisions from inception to final reporting (Yin, 1989). To this end, the extensive use of quotes in the presentation of the findings in chapter 4 is designed to expose the interpretation process to the reader. Demonstrating the trustworthiness of the findings in IPA is particularly important and challenging given that its proponents claim that ‘there is no clear right or wrong way of conducting this sort of analysis’ (Smith et al., 2009, p. 80). However, they caution against treating an independent audit as a form of inter-rater reliability because its purpose in IPA (be it conducted by a colleague, reviewer or supervisor) is not to establish that the interpretation is correct or true, but that it has been generated in a systematic and transparent way. In this study this critique was largely carried out by the supervisors.

3.12 Position of the researcher

As a volunteer with TEDT and a language coordinator for Catalan, I am an insider to the context of study, and my own experiences are likely to both inform and colour my interpretation of the participants’ narratives. Furthermore, my insider status allows me to observe this community, but demands that, as I continue to participate in TEDT alongside

23 https://www.ted.com/profiles/3291230/translator
conducting my research, I carefully manage the switches in role and communicate clearly to other participants when interactions are guided by research intentions. As a precaution, I chose early on not to include in this project the Catalan language group, where I am most active.

The previous section has suggested several ways in which, as a researcher, I can ensure the quality of my work: involving participants in checking the transcripts and clarifying the data, noting down the initial interpretations during the analysis process through pen and paper journaling, challenging them ‘through a process of critical self-reflection’ (King, 2014, p. 171) and exposing the interpretation process to the reader through the use of extensive quotes. My use of the first person in my account of the analysis process renders visible my personal involvement as interpreter of the data. Including this ‘Position of the researcher’ section is also a way of being upfront about the effect of the researcher as instrument.

3.13 Chapter summary

This chapter described the methodological considerations that led to the choice of phenomenology and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) for the present study. It presented and justified the research design and described in considerable detail the method used to gather and analyse the data. Ethical considerations were covered in relation to the research design and the recruitment of participants. The chapter closed with a consideration of the ways in which the quality of the research can be ensured in a qualitative phenomenological investigation, reviewing different approaches to quality and outlining the systems adopted for this study. A final reminder of the position of the researcher in relation to the context studied and the research process ended the chapter.
4 Chapter 4: Findings

In the previous chapter the methodology employed to answer the first three research questions was described and the participants included in the qualitative study introduced. The findings from the data collected in the interviews are presented here. The analytical process of creating a thematic structure, described in detail in section 3.10, involved the selection of information in participants’ narratives according to the criteria of frequency, saliency and pertinence. It is essential to acknowledge that this was a subjective and interpretative process guided by the researcher’s own focus on the goals of this investigation. A different interpretation of the data might have been generated by applying a different lens or if another researcher with other interests or objectives had carried out the analysis.

In an effort to honour the focus on individuals’ lived experience required in a phenomenological approach, extensive use has been made of quotes in this chapter to ensure that the voices of participants come through in the account of the findings. Illustrating the researcher’s own interpretation with the specific quotes on which it is based reinforces the credibility of the process and supports the descriptive and illuminative nature of the study. The profiles included in Appendix H can be used to understand the experiences of participants as narrated to the researcher and give access to the complete stories of each individual, which can be easily lost in the thematic presentation of findings in this chapter.

The findings have been organised around three main topic areas mapped to the first three research questions as follows:

- **Experience of TEDT**, relating to the first research question: What are the experiences of participation in TEDT of those TEDT contributors who plan to work as professional translators?
- **TEDT and learning**, relating to the second research question: How do these contributors perceive their participation in TEDT in relation to their educational aspirations?
- **TEDT and professional translation**, relating to the third research question: How do these contributors perceive their participation in TEDT in relation to their professional aspirations?

Figure 16 below summarises the three topic areas and the main super-ordinate themes within each topic area. Each of these super-ordinate themes contains in turn subordinate themes, which are detailed in Tables 3, 4 and 5 and described in the sections below.
A discussion of the implications of these findings for learners, translation education, and the wider context of translation follows in Chapter 5.

4.1 Experience of TEDT

The findings relating to ‘Experience of TEDT’ are grouped under two separate super-ordinate themes: Characteristics and Community. These are shown in Table 3 below with their associated subordinate themes.

Table 3 Experience of TEDT

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience of TEDT</th>
<th>Super-ordinate theme</th>
<th>Subordinate themes</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Characteristics</td>
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<td>Reward</td>
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<td>Commitment</td>
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4.1.1 Characteristics

Participants were asked to describe their experiences of participating in TEDT, how they got started, how they found the activity initially and subsequently, and how they felt while engaging in it. They were also asked to provide examples of good and bad experiences they had had in order to tease out the common features of this phenomenon. From their descriptions the following characteristics of the experience of participating in TEDT by those who aim to work as professional translators were identified.

4.1.1.1 Enjoyment

Enjoyment featured prominently in most descriptions of the experience of participating in TEDT. The language used to convey these feelings describes pleasure and positive affect: ‘excited’, ‘fun’, ‘enjoyable’, ‘liking’, ‘loving’. In this respect, participants are intrinsically motivated to carry out the tasks as they find satisfaction in the activity itself, what Gina refers to as ‘the translating kind of pleasure’.

Alejandra, Eleni and Gina value the sense of achievement, satisfaction, intellectual challenge and stimulation, and the positive feelings that this activity, found to be both relaxing and invigorating, generates. Gina goes as far as considering it ‘therapeutic’.

I'm feeling amazing, it feels like a game to me, it's like playing, you have to find the right word, I feel that I'm playing with words, it's very stimulating, because when there is some free time at work, just surfing the Facebook and the internet is making me more tired, I feel sleepy, I feel tired, but doing this keeps me this moment alive, I feel fresh when I finish this task, I don't feel tired, maybe my neck may be stiff from facing the screen for so many hours, but psychologically I feel great. Very satisfying, finding the perfect, for me, translation is very satisfying for me. (Eleni)

...audience reaction and the speech of the presenter gives you a kind of lifting feelings, I think it's good. Actually when I'm doing TED it's not my best time, I'm doing TED when I'm tired. I don't feel I'm tired, I feel I'm relaxed – it's like therapeutic. (Gina)

The enjoyment can also derive from the content of the talks, which was found by Salima and several other participants to be ‘inspirational’. The inspiration was so powerful and felt so deeply by Keiko that it caused a physical response that drove her to want to produce the translation.

I hear the talk and if the talk has a powerful message, I get kind of like a... what to say, kind of energy, like coming up from the bottom of my body, I feel, oh, I really need to do this translation. I think, once I get that energy going I kind of have to real focus on the translation... (Keiko)
Camille describes a similar experience, where a talk she translated generated such a strong reaction in her that it almost moved her to physical action.

I remember it well, because it was the first one to be published. It was one about the fact that great apes had feelings and how it was just insane that we still put them in cages, and I remember finishing translating it, and just, you know, feeling like I had to go to every zoo and just break down the whole thing. It was quite an experience. (Camille)

4.1.1.2 Challenges

Some aspects of the activity are recognized to be particularly difficult, frustrating or tiresome. The limited space available in the subtitles is a source of frustration but also an inescapable feature of the task. Encountering a speaker who talks very fast made the task harder than expected for Camille, who found she ‘had quite a rough time’ with that particular translation.

The challenge of learning to use the technological tools and procedures involved in the task is not a problem for Alexei, who has a technical background, or Salima, who reports that her university teachers expect them to get to grips with technology by themselves. However, Eleni found synchronising the subtitles very challenging, and reports feeling almost defeated by this aspect of the task, in spite of all the information she found in the TEDT resources.

The worse experience was this Wednesday when I had to do the synchronising at some points, and I found it extremely difficult, extremely frustrating, and I was afraid that I might not be able to continue doing this (...) it made me quite worried (...) I found it almost impossible, and there was lots of instructions in TED, I couldn't understand anything. And this is on the one hand, I thought this is very challenging, and on the other I found that I must do it, I must learn to do it. (Eleni)

Eleni’s fear that she would be unable to continue with the project contrasts with her strong determination to overcome this obstacle by seeking help in the resources provided by TED and eventually from the technical support team.

Delays in the reviewing and publication process are a strong source of frustration for all participants. Camille mentions the ‘thousands of videos waiting to be reviewed’ for the French-English language pair and Alejandra points out the stress caused by these delays:

the thing is the delays, the stress… you translate and you have to wait for review, and approval, sometimes if nobody picks it up it could be there, stuck. (Alejandra)

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24 Synchronizing subtitles to the video ensures that they appear on screen at the same time as the sound they represent.
The word ‘stuck’ reflects how participants feel who, having completed a translation have no way of moving it along the process to publication, as the system is entirely dependent on volunteers choosing what they work on next. This situation leaves participants bewildered, as Keiko explains below, or may lead to demotivation and even abandoning the project, as in the second example below by Alejandra.

when it didn't happen so soon, I don't know why but it didn't happen, I waited a month or something, so I was like oh, I'm not… I don't know what's wrong, because it was my first translation and nobody reviewed it so I didn't know what was, what went wrong with it. (Keiko)

I was honestly, thinking, oh, what's the point? And I remember at the time there was a guy, you may have seen the post in the Facebook group, who stood down, he said, you know, what's the point? I'm leaving the programme because nobody reviews me, and I was thinking, no, I don't want to do that, that would be a shame. (Alejandra)

For Eleni, the thought that her work ‘will be in vain’ leaves her sad and disappointed, a sentiment echoed by Nathan, a more experienced volunteer, who after three years of participation still feels ‘not actually bad, but disappointed’ and wishes ‘things to go, to move further (...) to move much faster’.

Finally, another issue that causes considerable frustration results from the fact that there are no checks on language competence, for example, when joining the project and volunteers can claim knowledge of as many languages as they want, and that can lead to variable quality in the initial translation, as Alexei and Susana had occasionally found when reviewing:

Sometimes they are really good and you need to make just some minor changes, but sometimes they're very bad and I have to decline them. (Alexei)

when I picked up stuff to review, it was so hard, because you could see that people had used machine translation, the level of English was perhaps really, really poor, people who spoke Spanish and they thought that their English was really good but clearly wasn't natural. (Susana)

Likewise, the system at present allows inexperienced translators to pick up reviewing tasks to the great frustration of those who see their translations changed for the worse, as in the case Alejandra describes below.

she had only just joined, she didn't have the credits to review and I started looking at the changes she was making, and she was basically just changing all the ustedes into vosotros, and it was ‘You don't even know the rules!’ (...) I think people just don't read the guides (...) It is a bit pot luck, once the talk is out there you don't know who
is going to pick it up, it may be a good reviewer, or it may not be a good reviewer.
(Alejandra)

4.1.1.3 Reward

Participants find the activity rewarding in ways that are both tangible and intangible. Eleni finds satisfaction in the problem-solving aspect of translation and in the positive feedback she gets from reviewers.

It's like a small success, every challenge I face and I overcome is a success, it's like a reward, it's very rewarding, yes, that's the... it's very rewarding. (Eleni)

Susana talks about how much joy the talks give her personally and how rewarding she finds it ‘to allow someone else to share that joy (…) it sounds really corny but it is such a fantastic feeling’. Now retired from her main job, she also derives a sense of purpose from this activity:

you can imagine, having a coffee and actually having a purpose, you know, what am I going to find out today? Actually you have a purpose, you have a task that has a purpose. (Susana)

For Lisa, seeing her work published is rewarding in itself (‘That's something I get out of it, I get to see my name.’) and Gina values being able to show off what she has done (‘I can show it to my friends. Look! This is what I did!’).

Knowing the impact of their work and how much those it is intended for appreciate it is also a source of satisfaction, motivation and reward. For Nathan it was not until he met people in his community who had viewed TED Talks that he understood ‘how impactful this translation project was’ and Susana came to the same realisation after hearing from those who had accessed her translations:

someone actually watches it and they send you a note saying ‘I loved it so much’. Gosh! This is wonderful. So feedback, positive feedback is fantastic, because it encourages you to keep going, I had two or three messages, there was another one saying ‘Thank you so much, my family are now going to be able to see this, and I wanted to show it, so thank you for doing this work’. (Susana)

The considerable investment of time and effort made by some participants is sometimes rewarded materially, with opportunities to attend TED events (which might include the costly ticket for the event as well as travel and accommodations expenses covered by TEDT). Susana is excited about having been invited to attend a TED conference, whilst Rashad feels the value of the opportunity of attending a TED conference more than makes up for the unpaid nature of the activity.

I thought ‘wow! this is fantastic’, so I’m actually going to have the whole day listening to the lectures, I don’t know, it's just fantastic, so what am I getting out of this? This
is just like, Yeah! How cool is this? That the people that are doing it… I’m actually going to get to see that. (Susana)

three or four months ago, I attended the TEDGlobal in Tanzania, and TED paid my ticket, they paid like 6000 dollar for me to travel from here to Tanzania and to attend the event, and they paid my home rent and they paid for everything, so for me, this work is unpaid, but somehow they pay you money to enrich your experience. (Rashad)

Rashad’s words imply that these more material rewards were largely perceived as developmental and networking opportunities rather than any form of ‘payment’ for their commitment to the project. In this the data echoed that reported by O’Brien and Schäler (2010), which showed that their volunteers were not interested in monetary rewards, but were keen on work-related rewards like training or discounts on translation tools.

4.1.1.4 Volunteering

There is a clear shared view that volunteering is a good thing in itself, not surprising amongst a group of committed volunteers.

it’s volunteering and I think everyone needs a little experience of volunteering in their life because it adds so much to you as a person (Salima)

Participants see the sharing of knowledge through translation, supporting TED’s mission of ‘spreading ideas’, as something they want to be part of and, in fact, some of them undertake other translation activities with a similar aim outside the TED project: Rashad translates content about Sudan into English for a culture website that aims to promote a less stereotypical image of his country; Nathan writes a blog in which he shares his knowledge of mobile technologies with Swahili-speakers; and Eleni translates psychology content into Greek for a Facebook group. The motivations for undertaking these activities include ‘giving back’ (‘I can’t stop giving back to my community’ says Rashad) and supporting their local or national community (‘reach out to the community, I actually found some schools’, mentions Nathan) or their linguistic community (‘to share this knowledge with Greeks’ says Eleni, and ‘to help speakers of Swedish’ according to Lisa).

Most participants were familiar with and appreciative of TED Talks before they started contributing to the translation project. From their participation they derive a sense of alignment with something important and far-reaching, a feeling of being privileged to be part of an organisation that has a high reputation and which they describe in remarkably similar

25 Sponsored conference attendance was not unusual amongst the interviewees, who represented a fairly committed group of volunteers. Some of them had already been the recipients of this reward at the time of the interviews, and others have since.
terms: professional, serious, well organized, huge, one of the best, global, breadth, scale, massive, high level, famous. The well-known names TED attracts can be an additional draw and source of motivation, as Susana explained.

it was Deepak Chopra, and it was Oh my god! This is a guru, I love this guy and I’m translating his words! So it was so really exciting! That was really brilliant (…) this is almost like getting close to… film stars (Susana)

The positive feelings expressed about volunteering need to be considered in the context of the power dynamics of the interview situation. As a TEDT volunteer, the researcher would have been seen as insider of the organisation, and this may have deterred participants from putting forward negative opinions about TEDT.

4.1.1.5 Commitment

In spite of their positive feelings about the voluntary nature of the activity and the rewards they derive from it, the length of time and amount of effort that participants devote to TEDT may be surprising. Participants are aware that it takes time to produce a high-quality translation. Eleni explains how time-consuming it is to generate something good, unlike the machine translations that can be accessed online.

it's amazing how many hours it requires, you have to translate, a minute of speech may take half an hour or more to translate, it's unbelievable how long it takes, I want to give a very good translation, something that is not mechanical, like Google translation. (Eleni)

Aiming for a very high-quality translation takes time and Susana, an experienced professional translator, recognizes that there has to be a balance between time and quality.

any terminology that I need to look up and I tend to do that before I start (…) if you look everything up it can be time consuming, on the other hand that would be absolutely the right thing to do. So you could do it but then that would be… that would take a long time. (Susana)

For some participants who are heavily committed to the project the time investment can be very high, and the flexibility of being able to do this work anytime and anywhere is highly appreciated.

this is one of the best things about this project, that you are not restricted to a specific time or to a specific place, you can do it on your own pace, whether you are on transportation, on the office, at home, late at night, you can translate 2 hours, 3

26 At the time of the interviews the researcher had been a volunteer for several years but had not taken on the role of Language Coordinator for the Catalan group.
hours, 4 hours, whatever you want, this is one of the things I love about this project. I translate approximately between 2 and 4 hours daily, except Friday. Here in Sudan, the weekend is on Friday. (Rashad)

To fit this activity in with their other commitments they appreciate the long deadline of thirty days that volunteers are given to complete each task. However, there is also a sense that at times their enthusiasm for this translation activity can override other demands on their time. Camille describes the excitement of starting in the project and doing nothing but translation for the first few days.

I was really excited at first, I think I did my first video like in one day and a half, I don't think I did anything else for those maybe 36 hours, I was just on my computer... working on the translation and that's it. (Camille)

Those studying translation report finding themselves so engrossed in this activity, as Camille described above, that they would ‘cut from my study hours to do it’ (Salima) or as Susana admits below, preferred it to their studies.

it has sparked an enormous amount of interest for me, it has offered for me an opportunity to get involved in something that is giving me a lot of pleasure unbeknown to me and almost at the expense of the actual course itself, you know, I've done my [assignment], I don't want to finish this chapter, I just want to carry on, I've got a few talks that I've got lined up and I really want to start doing those, and I just want to do that. (Susana)

This suggests that, for some participants, there might be a danger that this passion for contributing to TEDT becomes almost an obsession or an addiction, and distracts them from other calls on their time.

4.1.1.6 Overview of characteristics

In summary, the salient characteristics of the experience are: enjoyment, intellectual challenge and satisfaction; some frustration with the technical challenges and the delays in reviewing, which can lead to a sense that the work is in vain; an appreciation of the flexibility provided by the long deadlines since the tasks are considered time-consuming, particularly to achieve a high quality translation; and the many rewards participants obtain from engaging in the tasks, ranging from satisfaction with the task itself, to doing something meaningful and purposeful, or the more material rewards of being invited and even sponsored to attend TED events. A further characteristic is that volunteering in itself is regarded as a good thing by all participants, and there is strong interest in sharing knowledge through translation. Being associated with TED, which they regard as a trusted, globally recognised brand, is perceived as an additional benefit.
4.1.2 Community

The concept of community was used by participants in a variety of ways during the interviews: in relation to the TEDT project; to participants’ own language groups within TED Translators; and to their local, national or linguistic communities. Two aspects that are integral to the concept of community came across particularly strongly during the interviews: belonging and support.

4.1.2.1 Belonging

There was amongst some participants a strong sense of belonging to a global group of like-minded individuals who choose to take part in the project for altruistic reasons and from whom they could learn and gain support. This sense of belonging was linked to the TEDT community at large, of which their language groups were sub-sets.

I liked the feeling that you are… that you belong to some community, to some group of people who share the same ideas, the same devotion, and share that not for the money but for fun (Alexei)

Given the reputation of TED, having access to this global group was important for Rashad, who particularly valued international friendships with interesting people.

They are wonderful, you know, they are distinguished, they are well-educated, they are different and every day they are doing something different and something useful for their communities, and for the world, and this is one of the best things that happened for me in this project, is one of the best things, to have wonderful friends. (Rashad)

For Gina the focus was more strictly on her language community within TEDT and she regarded her involvement in the project as a way of maintaining her cultural identity after moving to another country.

one reason I want to do this is because I feel I'm losing connection with my home culture. It's the language, you know, to consolidate my identity. (Gina)

Similarly, Keiko valued the opportunity of working closely with other Japanese people and, for her, belonging to a community required frequent and sustained engagement. She recounted how Japanese translators located outside Japan had set up virtual meetings to strengthen this personal connection and ‘to share knowledge and experiences’ in the way that those located in Japan did through face-to-face meetings held in major cities.

that's what I enjoy working with TED Talks because sometimes when you don't know this person at all, but that once you work with them you get very close, I really enjoy that, because.... in this country that I live, I don't really see Japanese people, so for me, like, it's one of the few ways to, like, be connected with someone so close, so yeah, I do enjoy it like that. (Keiko)
Keiko highlighted that the community could be hard for newcomers to access and explained the difficulties she encountered to get her work reviewed in the early days, before she had made herself known to the Japanese community.

it's like this, kind of a, very tight, close community, so at first for me, to find someone that I can closely work with, that will be difficult cos I've never met anyone like at a meeting and stuff, so... Luckily I found a few people that I can ask my tasks to be reviewed, so now I feel ok but at the beginning, I thought… at first I'm not too sure like how I can find someone to review my talk (Keiko)

Mutual engagement and commitment to the project seem to be also strengthened through the TED conferences, attended by a select group of volunteers either by invitation or through an application process. Nathan and Rashad had attended an international TED conference and Susana had been invited to a local one at the time of the interview. She reflected on how attending the conference face-to-face helped her to connect more strongly with the activity. Meeting those associated with TED in person made a difference to her and brought this virtual community closer to her everyday life, strengthening her sense of connection to the project.

There's something really bizarre because they're not real to me, I don't know anybody from TED, now I'm talking to you and you're involved in TED and I'm going to London and I'm going to be meeting some of the coordinators there, so again, it may bring it a kind of a stage closer, that there are people behind this, maybe. (Susana)

4.1.2.2 Support

The other valued aspect of the community was support, which members give and receive through the reviewing process and the Facebook groups. The quality and manner in which this support is given can seriously impact participant motivation. Susana, a professional translator with decades of experience, was distressed by a short critical comment from a reviewer, which made her feel ‘so ashamed and so embarrassed’. The criticism was not unfounded and Susana was aware of the problem, but the manner in which the feedback had been phrased made Susana ‘feel really told off’ and upset. She wondered ‘what the experience would be like for others if they faced rejection at the beginning and abandoned’ and reflected that some mentoring should be in place for those who start in the project to ‘look out for you and encourage you and guide you through’.

Two participants held the role of language coordinators for their language communities. Language coordinators, who provide the final check on quality, have a key task in ensuring that the review has been conducted properly and that the quality of the final product is acceptable. Nathan felt that this placed a huge burden on them, more so when the work had been done badly or by someone inexperienced.
I feel responsible, but sometimes I feel my responsibility is out of reach because I won’t be the only one who’s doing the review, I won’t review all the talks, someone else will do as well and what if that someone in some part wouldn’t perform as well as he’s supposed to be (Nathan)

Language coordinators also have an important support role mentoring newcomers, mediating when there are disagreements between translators and reviewers, approving work, and supporting and engaging participants through the Facebook group to keep them motivated, as Rashad explained:

we have a huge community of volunteer translators, so to keep them encouraged, to keep them active, and to keep them attached to the project, you have to approve and to publish their translated or reviewed talks (Rashad)

In addition, support is available from the TEDT team and the technical support team in Amara, and from the reference resources in the project wiki, OTPedia, and their YouTube channel, and these resources were deemed to be very comprehensive by Gina, who found them ‘professional’ and ‘sophisticated’ because they include video tutorials. However, Alejandra thought that the large amount of information could be better organized and made easier to navigate:

I think there’s lots, and I read loads. I keep finding more stuff, I think maybe it could be organised a little better, but there’s just so much stuff there, it’s hard work, there is a lot, a lot of good stuff, a lot of good links, (…) It could be more organised, it’s quite bitty sometimes, but you know, it takes work and it’s all volunteers. (Alejandra)

4.1.2.3 Overview of community

In summary, the first aspect of community identified is belonging, whether this means belonging to a global group of like-minded people or to a language and cultural online group that keeps participants’ linguistic and cultural identities alive. These relationships are strengthened by the second aspect, support, which is provided in support spaces (Facebook, Amara, the wiki, conferences) and by other members of the community and is highly valued by participants. There can also be a negative side as groups can become exclusive and hard for newcomers to join.

4.1.3 Experience of TEDT: summary

Section 4.1 presented the analysis of the findings on the experience of TEDT and provided answers to the first Research Question: What are the experiences of participation in TEDT of those TEDT contributors who plan to work as professional translators?

Some key characteristics of their experience emerged strongly across the accounts: enjoyment and satisfaction; challenge, both intellectual and technical; frustration with the technology, but more often caused by delays in the review process which could lead to
demotivation; competing demands (or priorities) around time and quality, and the convenience and flexibility of working online to a long deadline; and the rewards derived from engaging in this activity, ranging from small personal intellectual triumphs to valuable development opportunities involving sponsored attendance at TED events. Volunteering one’s time for a worthwhile cause, in this case sharing knowledge and spreading ideas across languages, was considered a valuable and rewarding part of the experience, and participants felt that they benefited from the connection with TED, which they perceive as a prestigious global organisation.

The importance of community came through strongly and seemed a key aspect of most participants’ experiences. Community was considered a source of support and a reinforcer of identity (cultural, linguistic, being a volunteer). Belonging to a community was seen as something positive, but joining the community was recognised to be difficult for newcomers until they had acquired some command of the ways of working.

### 4.2 TEDT and learning

On the relationship between TEDT and learning the information provided by the participants has been organized into three superordinate themes: What they learn, How they learn and the link between TEDT and formal education. Table 4 below shows these three superordinate themes and the subordinate themes under each.

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Continuous learning

4.2.1 What they learn

Asked what they gained from their participation in TEDT, most participants spontaneously listed what they learnt, and used the word ‘learning’ in their descriptions. Their accounts were clustered around the four subordinate themes of translation and subtitling, language(s), subject knowledge and transferable skills.

4.2.1.1 Translation and subtitling

Participants stated that they joined the project to acquire, improve or practise their translation skills. Examples included: focusing on message over form (the type of translation required by TEDT), preserving text coherence, avoiding undue influence of the source language (‘you still need to find the correct Swedish way of saying things’, Lisa), researching the topic and using appropriate terminology. Keiko explained how she learnt the importance of terminology after a psychologist reviewed one of her translations.

there's one time that I did translation about psychology, and at the time I wasn't really sure that there's a lot of like proper like terminology that's used in psychology but after I get reviews from someone who is in psychology profession, I realised that there's something that I have to do, like there's a lot of research I need to do (…) so that's what I learnt. (Keiko)

Most participants had no previous knowledge or experience of subtitling and had to learn ‘to break the lines, to do the timing, to work the software’ (Alejandra), as Rashad describes below.

It was actually my first experience with audiovisual translation so at that time I lacked all basic of audiovisual translation, I didn't know how to break the lines, how to adjust timing, and all this stuff. (Rashad)

Subtitling was new even to those studying translation formally at university, like Camille who ‘had always thought of translation as only texts’, Salima who had learnt through the project that audiovisual translation ‘[i]s different from translating a text which is written on a sheet of paper’ or Lisa who appreciated the chance to learn about the translation of subtitles as it was not covered in her university course where ‘it's just non-fictional [written] texts, on different topics’.

Even though subtitling is a very specific type of translation, the learning was found to be useful more generally and transferable to other types of translation. Gina described the need to condense the message in a set number of characters with the metaphor ‘dancing with a chain on your ankle’, a notion which is applicable to most kinds of translation.
I found that because it's like doing the translation, how to say, (...) dancing with a chain on your ankle (...) you know you can dance but you don't have enough freedom to dance whatever we want (...) you have a liberty to translate but your liberty is limited to the faithfulness which is the duration of the time. (Gina)

4.2.1.2 Language(s)

Although not all participants come to the project to learn languages, they all agree that the chance to improve or maintain their language skills is a benefit of the project, be it their English, their first language or other languages they have a knowledge of. Aspects of language improvement that are mentioned include acquiring or updating vocabulary in English (‘a few words, of course, that I didn't know before’, Camille) or their native language (‘it would actually allow my Spanish to remain superfresh’, Susana), or refining their grammar (‘I find myself consulting grammar (...) there's always something that you didn't know’, Alejandra).

4.2.1.3 Subject knowledge

A benefit of the activity mentioned by many participants was the subject knowledge derived from listening to the talks and then working on the translations. Lisa found working on the talks beneficial because ‘as a translator you have to know a lot of things, so that's a way of learning about other topics that I'm not familiar with’. Both Salima and Rashad appreciated the variety of knowledge they acquired from translating the talks, and Susana highlighted the passion of the speakers and the inspirational nature of the talks, which had prompted her to become interested in many topics (‘I learnt so much about the technicalities of spider silk or bread and the protein and, you know, it's seeing that passion’). For Eleni and Rashad, an additional bonus was that this knowledge offered them insights into other cultures.

Translating the talks meant participants engaged with the topics in a more thorough way than if they simply listened to them. Camille and Alejandra found that the need to really understand all the nuances of the content meant they might need to find out more on the topic resulting in further learning. Whilst translating a talk on African history Nathan was surprised by what he learnt and this prompted him to undertake further research.

So it really intrigued me to seek further, and it really intrigued me to feel such an awe experience from doing the translation because I was translating while learning new things at the time. (Nathan)

Gina reflected on the quality of the learning that she derived from translating, which she found to be different from the learning one would normally gain from just listening to a talk. She valued the fact that engaging deeply with the text and its content led her to a learning that was more fully integrated with her previous experiences and therefore more lasting.
when you're really doing this kind of job, translation, you're putting your thoughts deeper into what you are doing, so you are actually, you are thinking about analysing the content not just the language, you're analysing how it's, you know, why are ideas valid, why it makes sense, you know, you have to digest these kind of ideas, and thinking why these ideas come to be about, it becomes part of your knowledge, so I like this. (Gina)

4.2.1.4 Transferable skills

Participants recognized that they acquired or practised a number of skills by engaging in this activity, which Eleni, a Psychology graduate, considered a good thing in itself.

I also use new skills that I did not use up till now. That is good for my brain, for the brain activity, to use new skills, to sharpen some of my skills. (Eleni)

Amongst the specific skills mentioned, Rashad referred to group management of his language Facebook group and mentoring others in his language coordinator role, and also public speaking, something he claimed to have learned from working on so many talks. Salima mentioned having had to improve her time management to fit this activity with her other academic commitments. Keiko reported acquiring what she considers a crucial skill in relation to translation: reflexivity or the ability to review and ‘to be critical about your own work’. For Nathan it was a whole host of skills including problem solving, teamwork and interacting with people from different cultures.

More specifically, Alejandra reported having to develop online collaboration skills to interact and negotiate remotely with this global, distributed group of participants.

it's about the collaboration and interactions with remotely… with a big diverse group of people, that's not easy always. It's a skill, it's not the same, it's a skill that has to be learned. (...) When you have to do that, interact like that with people who are so far away, and you're never going to see, and you don't know them, you need to learn how to manage that relationship, it's not easy. (Alejandra)

4.2.1.5 Overview of what they learn

In summary, participants identified four areas of learning in their accounts: translation and subtitling, the latter being completely new to most participants; improving their language knowledge and skills (including of their own language); subject knowledge; and transferable skills such as problem solving or online intercultural collaboration and communication skills, amongst others.

4.2.2 How they learn

Three main themes were apparent in terms of the way in which participants learned whilst engaging in this activity: learning by doing, learning by themselves and learning from (more expert) others.
4.2.2.1 Learning by doing

Participants accepted that learning would take place in the process of engaging in the activity, and used words such as ‘discover’, ‘figure out’ or ‘work out’ to explain how they initially engaged in the activity. There was a sense that the learning curve was steep at the beginning and that perseverance was needed to understand the system, particularly as there was a large amount of guidance material that participants were supposed to familiarize themselves with in order to undertake the activity and produce a correct translation (both technically and linguistically).

Some reported making mistakes in the early tasks, such as translating a talk that was already translated or submitting a talk with lots of spelling errors because the participant, in spite of being aware of the errors, could not work out how to use the tool to make the changes before submitting. Encountering problems spurred individuals to find ways to overcome these problems, as Susana explained:

it’s almost that you need to make the mistakes first before you got the rule book back. (Susana)

Most participants accepted that they would have to go through this familiarisation stage to become more experienced and expert, something that Gina considered just part of the learning process:

the more you do, the more you become sophisticated, so you know everything, you just get familiar with every step, (...) when you have more experience, you know where you go, is that right? so that is not a problem, so just familiarity. (Gina)

Even so, Nathan found it boring to start with, as he felt that having to work everything out made for very slow progress.

during my first time it was a bit tedious, because even for just a five minutes, a five minutes talk it would be very much hard for me to get it translated in a few days, I will spend some weeks, just working it out, you know, I was just, in learning it… a hard time. Not having a hard time in the translating the words, but just typing and making sure that everything was going all right, and understanding how to access and reading those guidelines and such things… So the experience was a bit tedious when I started. (Nathan)

There was a tension between understanding the necessity of going through these initial stages of familiarisation with the tools and processes, and the frustration it generated amongst participants. It could be speculated that, for many who initiate involvement in this project, the latter could be strong enough to cause them to abandon the project.
4.2.2.2 Learning by themselves

Participants had to work out the system independently using the extensive resources available, which include the tutorials on the YouTube channel and the textual resources on the OTPedia wiki.

I did watch that before getting started on the very first video. I watched a lot of videos of how to transcribe, how to transcribe the visual supports, and the clapping and every sound… (Salima)

because it's volunteers, so that means, you have to do a lot of self-study, all right? there is nobody sitting in here to tell you what you should do step by step, you have to explore everything yourself. (Gina)

This stage of learning alone was tackled more or less methodically by participants, with some doing a lot of preparation and learning before tackling a task, whilst others powered ahead and looked up the resources as and when new information was needed to allow them to progress the task. Alejandra displayed high levels of self-regulation and her approach seemed remarkably systematic and thorough. She first tackled a transcription to learn how to use the system, then moved on to translation, and was careful to document her learning, creating a reference resource for herself that helped her navigate the resources available.

at first I did an English transcription thinking well to work with the system so there's no language challenge (...) I'm making myself my own guide, the links that I use most often, the comments I've had from previous reviews that I need to remember... so I'm building my own little database of links, but there's a lot of stuff on the Wikipedia [OTpedia]... yeah, there's quite a lot, you can't say that it's not there. (...) You just need to learn how to navigate the system, otherwise, you don't go anywhere. (Alejandra)

Although participants talked about having to work through the tasks alone in fact they were interacting with materials (the guidelines, the training videos) prepared by more expert others. In fact, Eleni had to end up enlisting help from peers and technical support to be able to get the synchronization done, as she was aware that it was an essential step in the activity she wanted to engage in ('on the one hand, I thought this is very challenging, and on the other, I found that I must do it, I must learn to do it'). She did as much as she could alone but, at some point, her learning could not proceed unless she mustered help from others.

4.2.2.3 Learning from (more expert) others

A distinctive feature of TEDT, which sets it apart from other volunteer translation projects, is its peer review system (see Figure 1 in section 1.2). This quality control mechanism
includes a first review by another translator, who should be a more experienced volunteer who has had 90 minutes of their talks reviewed and published, before a final check by a language coordinator.

Participants found in the reviewing process the opportunity to learn from feedback. Keiko appreciated having things pointed out that she could improve, as did Rashad and Alexei, although how they viewed this process varied from one participant to another. Camille valued the dialogue between translator and reviewer as a source of learning and conceived the process as one of collaboration.

The reviewer really helped me and I liked the idea of working as a team because I corrected some things, sent them back, then he sent them back again to me, helping me, giving me some advice, and in the end I felt like I mastered a bit more the translating process. (Camille)

Conversely, Keiko considered the feedback from reviewers and language coordinators a form of teaching (‘another reviewer's like kind of taught me what's a good way to minimise the words’). She was thankful for the time reviewers dedicated to her and was very strategic in the way she interacted with them. For example, by disclosing that she aimed to work professionally as a translator and was there to learn, she elicited further help from more experienced volunteers.

I told this lady that ‘Oh, ok, I was very happy to work with you and because you’re very attentive to me, and as a person who wants to be a translator one day, I really appreciated your help’, and that's how I wrote, and then she wrote me back saying like ‘Oh, I was very happy to help you and if you want to be a translator there's some people that I know within this TED… Japanese TED community that you can work with, because I work with them before and they are very good at translation’. (Keiko)

Keiko recounted in detail an anecdote that illustrates the difficulties involved in determining who is ‘more expert’ and who can legitimately provide feedback to other volunteers. In one of the first reviews she did of someone else’s translation, she found that the other translator did not accept her corrections.

I found this translation. When I saw the translation it was very, very bad, like, there were a lot of typos, and lots of like grammatical mistakes and stuff, so I had to do a very heavy editing for that talk and then I give back to the translator, and then after that, she wrote me back, saying like that it seems that we have a lot of disagreements (…) When I saw it, a lot of the stuff that I corrected was back to original, which was sort of mess.

She sought advice from the language coordinator who, interestingly, recommended that she showed ‘respect’ for the other translator, even at the expense of not correcting some of the errors she had identified.
I had to talk with the language coordinator that I work with and I explained the situation: Oh, this lady, she doesn't understand what I'm trying to say and she's mad at me right now and I don't know what to do. So she said that, oh, ok, so this translator, I know that she makes a lot of mistakes, but she's kind of senior, like at the experience, so that you might wanna be like... what to say... at least show her some kind of respect. I did that, I tried to be nice about this, I tried to show my respect to her as much as possible, and I made some correction if it's very obvious.

When the corrections Keiko had previously made came from the language coordinator, the other translator accepted them.

(…) later on we had this language coordinator get involved and she and her both worked together and then at the time, she... this language coordinator pointed out some faults that I also found xxx and then, this time, this translator, once the language coordinator like explained why, she was like, oh ok I understand why and I know that this is wrong, blah, blah, blah.

A different kind of hierarchy seemed to be in operation here, not based on translation competence but on seniority. Asked by the interviewer to clarify what she meant by this other volunteer being more ‘senior’, Keiko explained:

…she is done like almost 100 TED talks so far… and so far I did like 20 TED talks, so in TED talk situation she's senior, and also, like... the way she write the email, I could tell that she's definitely older than me, maybe in her 50s or 40s…

This example shows that ‘expertise’ may be framed in ways that are not solely related to competence and may differ from one community to another within TEDT, and could be linked to the cultural norms of different groups.

The style and tone of feedback provided by reviewers can make a strong impression on participants, and increase or decrease their motivation. Having received some complimentary comments, Eleni felt very encouraged to continue translating because

[the comments were] from someone who is much more experienced that me, I don’t know what is his profession, maybe he translates for a living, I don’t know, maybe he’s a student, but he’s more experienced. (Eleni)

Conversely, Susana’s experience of receiving a harsh review (see 4.1.2.2) made her uneasy about acting as a reviewer, in spite of the wealth of translation and teaching experience she could bring to the task. Having found some poor quality translations when she took on reviewing tasks, she wondered whether she could be ‘a kind reviewer that would be supportive, when what I really wanted to say was don’t do that again, this isn’t really for you’.  

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Eleni assumed that the person providing the feedback was qualified to assess her work, whereas Alejandra reported that she always checked the profiles of other volunteers who reviewed her work, to see whether they were professional translators. For Alejandra it was important to establish the legitimacy of the reviewer and the TED Translator profile helped her identify participants’ professions (as long as they had entered this information).

… a lot of them are translators, I think some of them are, if you look at their profiles; I have, because it's the one thing I did. Do these people work as translators? Where do they work? What do they do? (Alejandra)

4.2.2.4 Overview of how they learn

In conclusion, participants learn by doing, by making mistakes and persevering until they overcome the difficulties of the initial learning stage. A lot of this process is done alone, using the resources and reference materials provided. The review process provides opportunities to learn from others, but it is not without challenges: reviewers are not always more expert and hierarchy may be based on factors that are unrelated to competence such as length of engagement or cultural values; and giving tactful and constructive feedback is also a skill that needs to be developed, as harsh comments can negatively affect volunteer motivation.

4.2.3 Link to formal education

Participants link their TEDT experience to formal education in four ways: acknowledging that TEDT alone is not enough and that further learning, through training or education, is required to become a professional translator; conceiving TEDT as preparation and a way to support access to education; using TEDT as a place where they can apply and practise what they have learnt in formal translation courses; and treating TEDT as a resource for continuous learning.

4.2.3.1 TEDT is not enough

In spite of being able to articulate the many things they could learn from their engagement in this activity, most participants acknowledge that, if they wanted to work professionally as translators, TEDT could only fulfil a part of their training needs, particularly in areas beyond subtitling.

When I do this TED Talk I only get to improve my subtitle skills but if I wanna be professional translator I think I need to know more about... I need to know more... I need to study more than subtitles, if I wanna translate some contracts, or business papers, I still need to get that training. (Keiko)

Even Alexei, someone who became a professional translator largely on the back of his TEDT experience without first having completed any formal translator education, pointed out the value of qualifications and certificates when seeking work.
I took a series of seminars which were organised by a Russian translation agency. It was an international course, the invited lecturers were from Britain, from Spain, and I got a certificate and it did help me to work later as a professional subtitler. (Alexei)

That is why formal education seemed to figure prominently in professional development plans even for those who were not currently studying translation, such as Rashad, who had already applied to university to do a postgraduate course in translation, or Gina, who was considering it.

I think for at least 6 months I'm just going to focus on translation, TED and other kind of work I do, so I think after I got my contract, become professional translator, become stabilized, I may go back to school to study. (Gina)

4.2.3.2 Preparation and access

Another way in which TEDT was used was in preparation for joining formal education. Camille joined TEDT to practise translating to get ready for a competitive entrance examination for a translation school. She considered her TED experience:

a kind of preparation because to get into the school you have to take a few tests and they are quite hard, so I wanted to start translating a lot (…) I needed a bit of more intensive practice. (Camille)

Gina had originally planned to study translation in the US but the high tuition cost had stopped her from applying. She applied to an online translation programme, but was turned down, so she turned to TEDT to learn and practise, with a view to establishing herself as a paid translator and possibly go back to education in the future.

Rashad had used this experience in TEDT to strengthen his university application, and had received unconditional offers for their Masters in Translation from two UK institutions. He attributed these successes to his TEDT participation.

I couldn't and I wouldn't get this unconditional offer without my participation and my contribution to TED translators offer. It was a bonus for my application to be a TED Translator and to translate for three and a half years and to be a language coordinator with other responsibilities, so it was an addition, it was one of the things that strengthened my application. (Rashad)

4.2.3.3 Practice and application

Knowledge developed in TEDT and knowledge that resulted from formal translation education for those who were on a translation course were applied to both contexts. Salima explained how she used knowledge acquired in TEDT in her course.
Some talks made me discover new words or idiomatic expressions… and it’s quite beneficial for my courses. I used some of them in my presentations last year and it was good. (Salima)

Both Susana and Camille found that when tackling audiovisual translation in their respective courses, they had an advantage over other students as they could comfortably draw on their TEDT experience:

this year at school we had a project of subtitling and some people had quite a rough time to start the project, because they hadn’t been used to do it, while I had no problem with it because I always knew what you can do, what you mustn’t do, how to tackle with times things... it was really a skill that I learnt that it has proven useful. (Camille)

Susana had been made aware of the project in her translation course and although to start with she thought of this activity ‘purely as a technical exercise. Can I use the subtitling platform and this is going to be useful for the course’, she soon started trying out some of the concepts she had been learning about in her studies, like the use of machine translation or theoretical concepts of audiovisual translation. In this way Susana was using TEDT as a sandpit where she could put into practice and integrate the knowledge acquired in her translation course.

4.2.3.4 Continuous learning

There was a good awareness that translation, as a profession, requires constant learning, whether it is in relation to the technology as Alexei pointed out when talking about the subtitling platforms used in the industry, the currency of the language or the encyclopaedic knowledge that translators require.

        every translation agency (...) uses their own subtitle translation management platform (...) after a while it was just changes in editor to allow some new features, but all the experience, I worked from Amara and I used it regularly. (Alexei)

        it would actually allow my Spanish to remain super-fresh because one thing it’s going to be sort of exposing me to topics and to issues that <xxx> on a day to day basis, so it’s almost that dual purpose, almost my CPD may be attained through TED… (Susana)

The role of TEDT in providing many of these things can make it a useful part of the continuous professional development (CPD) required by translators. The Institute of Translators and Interpreters in the UK, for example, recognises voluntary translation work as part of what can be counted towards its CPD requirement.
4.2.3.5 Overview of link to formal education

To summarise, the learning that derives from participation in TEDT is linked to formal learning or education in various ways: participants understand that the competence they acquire in TEDT is only partial and may not be sufficient to become professional translators, and many of them use TEDT as a preliminary step to help them get to formal education. Those already engaged in formal education use it to practise what they have learnt or venture into subtitling if that is not covered in their translation course. TEDT is also viewed as an alternative form of continuous professional development for translators.

4.2.4 TEDT and learning: summary

Section 4.2 has presented the analysis of the findings on the relationship between TEDT and learning, and provided answers to the second Research Question: How do TEDT contributors who plan to work as professional translators perceive their participation in TEDT in relation to their educational aspirations?

The first aspect of learning and TEDT was what participants felt they were learning. Most participants identified learning about translation and subtitling; learning languages, both the language they translated from and their main language; acquiring new subject knowledge as a result of working closely on the talks to be able to translate their content; and practising and developing useful transferable skills such as problem solving, team working and online collaboration.

Learning by participants took the form of learning by doing, making mistakes and working things out by themselves were widely reported and recognised as necessary forms of learning for translators to master. TEDT offered a valued opportunity to learn from others, although there was no guarantee that other volunteers reviewing one’s work were necessarily more expert or qualified or able to provide useful feedback for learning.

Finally, their activities in TEDT were linked to formal education in various ways: most recognised that TEDT alone was unlikely to meet all their training needs and that formal qualifications were useful in the marketplace; some were using TEDT to prepare or support their access to university, or as a temporary alternative to it; others were already studying translation at university and used TEDT to practise or complement the content of their course. Some participants were aware of translators’ need to constantly expand and update their knowledge through continuous professional development and recognised that TEDT could meet this need, be it in relation to technology, language or content.

4.3 TEDT and professional translation

Relevant to the relationship between TEDT and the profession were three clear areas of content: what they understood professional translation to be; how TEDT fitted into their journey towards working as professional translators; and the employment-related benefits
they derived from participating in TEDT. These three super-ordinate themes and their subordinate themes are listed in Table 5 below.

**Table 5 TEDT and professional translation**

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### 4.3.1 Conceptions of professional translation

It is perhaps not surprising that the understanding of what it means to be a professional translator varies so widely, given the multiplicity of translator profiles that are found in the job market. Participants revealed different conceptions of what being a professional translator meant to them, and the notion that translation is not just a profession, but also a vocation and a service to the community.

#### 4.3.1.1 Professional translators

The interviews revealed different ways in which participants understood what it meant to be a professional translator. For Alexei making a living out of the activity was what made him a professional, whilst Rashad called himself a translator but felt that, in spite of translating commercially and having set up a translation business, he was not yet a professional as he had not completed formal studies in translation. For Rashad education and qualifications were required to call oneself a professional and to offer a higher quality service.

> if I get this scholarship in the UK, I will do my best to finish my master degree and will come back to Sudan and I will keep doing the professional translation. Now I can’t say I’m a professional translator. Yes, I’m a translator and I work as a paid translator sometimes but I’m not officially a translator, because I don't have the solid basic of translation but after doing my Masters degree I can say I’m a professional
translator, I can start providing services on a higher level, you can say, and this is going to be my life. (Rashad)

The idea that translation was a suitable occupation to do part-time or as a second job was widespread, as was the idea that anyone with the required language skills could become a translator with some application. Working part-time, whether out of choice or because of lack of demand, was considered intrinsic to the profession and valued by some participants, as it offered them the flexibility of starting slowly or combining translation with other professional activities.

this is something I could do on the side to begin with to start building a company perhaps, a one man show, then I don't have to depend on this straight away, so that's my plan at the moment, to start small, on the side and then perhaps, if I get busy enough, I can stop teaching. (Lisa)

I always maintained my linguistic side, just because I could, it was never a profession, I was always a very highly technical person, and my idea was that languages was something that I had, I just did it. (Susana)

I just see myself as doing some other jobs while doing the translating along the way. (Nathan)

Keiko had been told by a female relative who worked as a translator that this was a suitable profession to turn to whilst raising a family.

…asked me if I want to be a translator, because it's something that you can do at home and when... when we have children, it means I can stay at home and do work at home and at the same time I can take care of my children, so, that's how she introduced translation to me. (Keiko)

It was also clear that in some parts of the world, the profession could be accessed with minimal training and investment, as Nathan’s account of professional translation in his own country confirmed.

Let's say you want to do the translation of the government papers or government documents. You have to go to school for that, you have a certificate for that. But let's say you want to do the translations for tourists, or some hotels or some foreigner(s) who are coming in to work as contracts and such kind of people, who should want to engage you. Don't need to go to school for that, you only need to know the two languages which you have to translate for. (Nathan)

Interestingly, Eleni, who had worked as a secretary for more than two decades, did not consider herself a translator nor was she recognised as such in her job, in spite of doing translation work as part of her role.
E: I wouldn't dare try to do some professional translating at this point of my life, I'm not so confident that I can tackle any translation (…).

A: Would you say that you translate professionally? You translate professionally as part of your job, don't you?

E: Yes, that's true, you're right, yes.

A: You wouldn't call yourself a translator, but you said you do a lot of translation in your job.

E: Yes, you're very right, I didn't think it this way. Because I know the best English in my department and everyone comes to me, even my supervisor does not know good English, I have to translate everything that circulates in the company, almost everything, from instructions to presentations, I have to prepare presentations in English, and as a multinational company English is almost official. (Eleni)

In the same way that there appeared to be different ways of conceiving what being a professional translator meant, there were also contradictory understandings of what it meant to behave professionally as a translator. When asked how they chose talks to translate, Gina pointed out that she did not choose because she believed that, as a paid translator, she would not have the option of choosing what she translated.

I just pick up this one that is available, because, I assume as a translator, you're not supposed to choose, you know, the subjects. (Gina)

Conversely, Alejandra was aware of the value of specialisation within translation, and was making choices to support her plans to specialise in technical subjects.

if I go into translation I'd like to specialise in technical subjects because I have an engineering background and... so anything that's technology, engineering, non-biological sciences, that's the kind of thing I like. (Alejandra)

Both perceptions have some basis in the truth. Early on in professional practice translators may be forced by circumstance to take on any kind of work that pays. However, if translators already have a specific background (technical, medical or legal, for example), as is the case with Alejandra or Susana, or can develop their practice in a particular field or type of translation, they can become more productive (mastery of terminology and textual conventions leading to greater automaticity and speed) and attract more profitable commissions.

4.3.1.2 Vocation and service

Besides being a profession, some participants see translation as more than that: a personal calling and sometimes a civic duty to respond to a need in society or even a way to change the world. Nathan and Rashad focus on its potential to effect change in the world.
since I started to do the translations, I have seen a vast need for the proper translation (...) So many machines are coming with a manual that has been written in English or perhaps other languages, but it's ready there to see that machinery that has been exported comes with a manual that isn't in Swahili. (Nathan)

...a huge need, because even in the arts, people are debating, like, so many books aren't being translated in Swahili, and we need translators to do the work that we can have some books, which are really important books, having them in Swahili (Nathan)

translation is not just about one, it's not just a profession, it's not just a tool to make money, it's a way to change... to cross language for others who are not English or with zero English language. (Rashad)

Translation was often felt to be a vocation. After graduating in English Literature and Psychology, Gina reflected on what she wanted to do and found that translation was a good option for her. For Alejandra professional translation was something she had considered repeatedly during her career, following her science degree. The use of 'always' by both participants below suggested that this desire to translate had been there for a long time, alluding to a vocational aspect.

I put a lot of things out to see what I'm going to pick out, and then I just think of translation and it's always in me (...) you can feel it because you have that in you (...) when I'm doing TED or I'm doing other kinds of translation, because you don't do... being a translator is kind of different from doing other stuff. (Gina)

I've always had this idea of leaving consultancy and working as a translator. (Alejandra)

This vocational aspect and the pleasure that participants report deriving from the activity may be strong enough to attract some participants to a profession that is seldom the choice of those who envisage lucrative careers.

I like this niche, I'm quite comfort... feel comfortable. (...) I have enough work, I have enough money for this work. (Alexei)

if this work I'm doing for TED paid, I'd be happy, I'd be happy doing this for a living, which is not something I can say about the jobs I've had so far. (...) I really enjoy doing this and it makes me really happy. (Alejandra)

4.3.1.3 Overview of conceptions of professional translation

In summary, participants understand the translation profession as a flexible one that can accommodate various forms of participation. There is some acknowledgement that it is an unregulated job market but that is perceived as an opportunity and a way of linking the
vocational nature of the role and the evident and underserved need for translation in many parts of the world.

4.3.2 Paths to professional translation

Most participants’ accounts included narratives about career choices and career changes they had made or were considering, and TEDT was often viewed as one of the steps taken towards achieving their professional goals.

4.3.2.1 Career choice

Several participants came to translation seeking a career change, having discovered they no longer wanted to follow the profession they had originally trained for. Camille studied to be a French teacher but then decided to train as a translator. Rashad found that engineering was not his passion and, having joined TEDT as a leisure activity, realised that he loved translating.

Susana's dream was to become a literary translator. This was what she ‘always really wanted to do’, even after three decades as a part-time technical and legal translator and interpreter alongside her full-time job in the civil service:

> what I always really wanted to do, and I always worked as a scientist in a technical way, but I always had a streak on me that I wanted to write (...) my aim now, is really to get to this stage where I can translate literary work. (Susana)

Camille and Lisa, both already studying for an MA in Translation, mentioned subtitling as a specific area of translation they might want to pursue in the future, in Camille’s case, to supplement what she predicted would be low earnings in her chosen area of literary translation.

Alexei was already working professionally in subtitling and, for him, TEDT was the main path to this profession, having changed career from a technical job. After joining TEDT, Alexei discovered that he could get paid jobs through the subtitling platform Amara and, as the volume of these increased and his circumstances changed, professional subtitling became his main employment and source of income.

> I began to work for them (...) they said that they can’t pay much, it’s just, they said, it’s just coffee money (...) after a while there were some problems in my country and the currency devalued three times during one year (...) I began to search for other clients, beyond Amara, and after two years of such part-time work I have noticed that my part-time work pays much more than my main work so I quit the full-time work and began to work as a paid translator. (Alexei)

Rashad also used his participation in TEDT as a springboard to the translating profession, where he put his skills to work not only as a translator but also as an entrepreneur.
I work as a freelance translator; I provide translation services for individuals and some companies here in Sudan. So, as I told you, this project added a lot to my experience and to my journey in translation. (...) I cofounded a company (...) it's a web solutions and translation services agency. (Rashad)

**4.3.2.2 Getting started**

For many, participation in TEDT formed part of deliberate plans to achieve their objectives of working as professional translators and, for Alejandra, it was also a chance to try things out before committing to a career change.

I am researching the possibility of doing this for a living, I'm kind of in the process, working out if I need to train, what I can do, how much I could possibly earn, maybe do it part-time at the beginning... (...) it's giving me the opportunity to sample, or to try for myself what it would be like doing this. So normally you don't get to do that with a job, you pick a career and then, when you get to work you realise if you like it or not. (Alejandra)

These plans may not necessarily include formal education, although they certainly include learning. For example, Alexei undertook a whole range of activities in an autodidactic way to prepare himself for professional work.

I had to study, to learn, I began reading all the articles on this TED Translators site, then I began to search for other articles, for books, for video materials. So actually I began to study translation, and things like that. (Alexei)

Financial constraints were commonly mentioned as a barrier to accessing formal education before entering the profession and had previously thwarted Rashad’s attempt to complete a postgraduate translation course. Similarly, Gina had wanted initially to study translation in the US but the high cost of tuition and relocation put an end to that idea, and Keiko, who recently moved to the Caribbean, needed to find a profession and decided to try translation, but there was no translation school locally and she could not afford to relocate to do an MA. In these cases, there was a geographical as well as a financial barrier to formal education that prompted participants to seek alternative paths towards the profession, including TEDT.

the only way for me to do the translation training, is by just doing some distance learning or that's pretty much it, that's pretty much what I'd have to do, and I didn't have much money. (Keiko)

The need to earn was a big consideration for Keiko, so she had 'already started working with this other transsourcing website', and Gina’s approach was similar, to get paid work of any kind in order to get started.

I was looking for projects, I said, you know, if I want to making myself known I have to look for people who are looking for contract, looking for translators, so I just
searched (...) in terms of paid projects, any one is good as long as it gives me a chance. (Gina)

4.3.2.3 Overview of paths to professional translation

Having decided on a career change, participants were aware that some learning was needed to achieve their goal, but accessing formal education was not practicable for some participants due to geographical or financial constraints, or maybe not regarded as essential. However, the various trajectories taken to join the profession show participants' resourcefulness and ability to make use of what is available to them, including TEDT, which offers them opportunities to gain experience translating and to access feedback and advice from other translators, two of the benefits described in the next section, which are key to getting started in the profession.

4.3.3 Employment-related benefits of TEDT

Volunteering with TEDT provides participants with opportunities to gain experience, get advice and feedback, network with other translators and showcase their work. These are important benefits of TEDT and themes that were salient in many narratives and frequently mentioned by participants during interviews.

4.3.3.1 Gaining experience

Gaining experience was mentioned frequently as a benefit of participating in TEDT, mentioned by both those who were undertaking formal studies in translation and those who wanted to work professionally but could not access formal training. Participants were aware that gaining experience was crucial to accessing paid work and the fact that TEDT allowed anybody with the required (self-declared) skills to join was a bonus and made it, in Alexei's opinion, 'a great place for beginners to gain experience'. His own successful experience of moving to paid translation from volunteer translation led him to recommend the project to those who wanted to enter the profession.

I recommend it from time to time. When people ask how can I begin work as a translator, to translate movies, I tell them you must get some practice before you can ask for a paid job with a translation agency. So TED Translate is a good way to obtain such experience and after that you can say ‘I can certainly subtitle, I know how to do this’, so you can... you can get payment for this. (Alexei)

For those taking their first steps towards the profession by themselves, as in Gina’s or Keiko’s case, gaining translation experience helped them to develop confidence to be able to apply for paid jobs. Gaining experience was also considered useful when applying to higher education, as it showed commitment to the chosen career, which, in Rashad’s opinion, could only strengthen a university application. Still, participants were aware that
they could not develop all elements of their training through TEDT and that their knowledge would need to be extended through other means (see 4.2.3.1).

### 4.3.3.2 Networking

Looking up volunteers' professions and credentials in their TEDT profiles was important to those who wanted to network, like Alejandra or Keiko, and were interested in establishing professional connections and getting advice and feedback from professional translators.

> that's another benefit, you may make some contacts and meet someone who is already a translator and can give you advice. (Alejandra)

In Rashad’s case it came from a desire to extend his network globally, to ‘have relationship with other translators around the world’, maybe because he had set up a translation business.

Besides the networking aspect and the advice and training, Keiko believed that the translation profession could be quite lonely and that these connections were also a way of interacting with others.

> through this TED Talks translators I got to know a few good translators, so like, if I have some questions or… I could ask them (…) becoming a translator is very hard but… because you basically like work at home, you only… don't really have chance to interact with someone other than you, so I think doing the TED Talk is a good way to, like, making connections not only like getting some training. (Keiko)

### 4.3.3.3 Advice and feedback

The chance to get advice and feedback from other more experienced, or even professional, translators through the review process was a key benefit of participating in TEDT. However, there were instances in which the feedback received was not entirely reliable, and this was something that participants had experienced and were largely aware of. Alejandra had her work reviewed by a novice who made incorrect changes to her translation (see 4.1.1.2) and Keiko had difficulty having her rightful corrections accepted by another translator (see 4.2.2.3 above). This points to different ways in which expertise is established in different communities within TEDT and by different participants, and links back to the role of external credentials displayed in TEDT participants’ profiles.

Still, Keiko, whose access to formal training and educational opportunities was limited, was using TEDT as her main source of translation training.

> My expectation was to get some good advice from some senior translators, because I didn't know what can I… I didn't have any… I had no idea what was the way to translate basically, and specially for like subtitles, if it's like… if you translate sentences you just translate as it is but if you translate subtitles you have to have
idea of which... how to give the gist of the word, so I wanted to get advice of that kind of stuff. (Keiko)

Continuing her voluntary work in TEDT was really important to Keiko even though she was already getting paid jobs, because she saw it as her only way of accessing feedback on her work to improve her translation skills. Both she and Alexei valued this tremendously as, in their experience, few professional working environments provided this feedback and support.

I should continue like to work on TED Talks because I already work for an agent, a translation agent but it's very hard for me to get feedback from them (...) I've never got any feedback from my agent so it's very hard to be... it's very hard to be critical. But then when you work with TED Translation, you always get feedback from reviewers and from language coordinators so there's a lot of chance for me to like be critical about my work (...) so I think doing TED Translation is very crucial phase for me to become a translator. (Keiko)

it has great community of enthusiasts who work mostly for free and any time I can ask for help, for explanation, for revision, and it's great if you compare it with a freelancer who works alone at home and has his work either accepted without explaining or sometimes declined, also without much explaining. (Alexei)

4.3.3.4 Showcasing work

Finally, most participants recognized the value of having their translations published as a way of showcasing their work through their TED Translator profile, which acts as an online portfolio where all translation work carried out by a volunteer in the project is assembled.

if I want to become a translator it's really useful because you have, you can show a portfolio of experience before you've even started, and gives you exposure, your portfolio is online, it's published, everyone can see what you've done, that's hugely beneficial. (Alejandra)

For Gina this published work is not only evidence of her dedication and commitment to working in the field, but invaluable in her case, as her market in China values publication above qualifications.

but mainly they want to know have you published any translated work, that is the most important, if you never have that, maybe it takes a while for to get a contract (...) so I'm sending my... the work I did and it helps a lot. (Gina)

4.3.3.5 Overview of employment-related benefits

In summary, clear employment-related benefits of participating in TEDT were identified including opportunities to gain experience of translation, to network with professional translators and receive advice and feedback from more experienced volunteers, and the
valuable online profile where work was openly published, which participants could show to prospective employers.

4.3.4 TEDT and professional translation: summary

Section 4.3 has presented the analysis of the findings on the relationship between TEDT and professional translation and answered the third Research Question: How do TEDT contributors who plan to work as professional translators perceive their participation in TEDT in relation to their professional aspirations?

Participants’ accounts revealed different conceptions of who could be considered a professional translator. In many respects, their views of the profession – ranging from highly professionalised to sometimes invisible, a part-time occupation or a second job, often an open proposition to anyone with two languages – matched the realities of the translation profession but also reflected local variations in different countries. Some participants felt that translation was not just a job but a vocation, and in some cases felt compelled to translate to meet needs in their communities.

TEDT was part of a learning trajectory leading to professional translation for those who had decided on a career change or were making career choices. The variety of topics covered in the material and the fact that it was introducing participants to subtitling seemed attractive features of the experience. For some, TEDT was a key step in their journey towards professional translation and a way of overcoming access barriers to education, whether financial or geographic.

There was clear agreement on the employment-related benefits of participating in TEDT: the possibility of gaining experience to be able to enter the job market, to network with and get feedback and advice from other translators, and the value of having work published online in a portfolio that could be showcased to prospective employers.

4.4 Main findings of the analysis

This chapter presented the findings of the phenomenological investigation into the lived experiences of TEDT participants who plan to work as professional translators. The main themes and more detailed subordinate themes identified from the analysis of the data were presented and supported by using participants’ own words to provide a verifiable account of the interpretation of the data. The selection of themes was carried out by the researcher according to the criteria of frequency, saliency and pertinence, as explained in chapter 3.

The themes were mapped to the first three research questions and described to provide an account of how participants in TEDT made sense of their experiences in relation to these three aspects: experience of participation in this activity, fit with their learning and educational aspirations, and fit with their professional aspirations.
Key characteristics of the experience were identified as: enjoyment, intellectual challenge, frustration with delays in the reviewing process, range of rewards derived from the activity, positive attitude towards volunteering, flexibility of working online and the competing demands on participants’ time. Belonging to a community, the language group within TEDT, was key to success, as it was this that provided access to the practice and the support participants needed to engage successfully with the activity.

The learning that participants derived from engaging with TEDT covered different aspects: translation and subtitling, languages, new content and many transferable and self-regulatory skills such as problem solving, reflexivity and collaboration. Participants learned by doing, independently and by interacting with the resources provided. They could also draw on the community for support and feedback on their work, although the expertise of others could at times be unreliable. They understood that further training and qualifications would be needed beyond TEDT, but they came to this space to practice, apply and expand what they had learnt in other contexts, sometimes as a form of continuous professional development, or to prepare themselves for formal learning.

Their views of what being a professional translator entails differed widely, reflecting the many versions of the profession that exist in different cultures and contexts. They had all weaved their own individual trajectories of participation in this project to lead them to their goals (learning subtitling, accessing higher education, earning as a professional translator, etc.). Generally they came to the project to gain experience of translation, to network and received feedback on their work and advice, and attracted by the possibility of having work published that could be showcased to others.

The next chapter will offer a further layer of interpretation as the researcher discusses the significance of these findings in relation to what online volunteer translation can offer to participants and educators, and answers the last research question posed in this investigation: What are the opportunities and challenges of incorporating online volunteer translation into translation education?
5 Chapter 5: Discussion

The previous chapter offered a detailed presentation of the themes in participants’ accounts that were relevant to this investigation of experiences of participation in TEDT. The selection and coding of the data was guided by the researcher’s interpretation and focus, as was the sorting of the data into themes, which were then organised in response to the first three research questions, to understand better the lived experiences of TEDT participants. Following the IPA method, the findings were presented thematically but stayed close to participants’ narratives and were illustrated with extensive quotes to render visible the integrity of the researcher’s interpretation.

This chapter addresses the fourth research question. The new knowledge derived from the phenomenological investigation is considered in relation to translation education and to the opportunities and challenges that online volunteer translation initiatives present for students and educators. Three main areas are presented and discussed in this chapter: 1) development of translation competence, 2) learning as social participation, and 3) meaningful learning and motivation. The discussion closes with some further considerations and guiding principles for educators who are contemplating the incorporation of online volunteer translation activities into their practice.

5.1 Translation competence development

A key question for translation educators is whether participants can develop their translation competence by participating in TEDT. The answer, according to the findings in the study presented in chapter 4, is that they can.

This section uses two translation competence models, PACTE (2003) and NAATI (2015), to map the themes that related to learning in the phenomenological study and to determine which aspects of translation competence can be activated and developed whilst participating in TEDT. It also considers whether TEDT can be used as a rehearsal space in which to engage in deliberate practice and the extent to which this use of TEDT is effective.

5.1.1 Knowledge and skills

In order to assess what aspects of translation competence participants develop whilst engaging in the activities of TEDT, it is useful to compare the learning reported by participants to the components of translation competence described in the literature. This can help to operationalise how to integrate online volunteer translation into translation training (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017). This study has used the PACTE (2003) and the NAATI (2015) models for this purpose.

The learning reported by participants covers, to a large extent, all the sub-competences mapped in the PACTE (2003) translation competence model (described in section 2.2.1.1),
hence showing that TEDT is a suitable environment in which participants can develop their translation competence, as detailed below:

- *Bilingual sub-competence*: participants report developing their knowledge of language in terms of grammar and vocabulary but also sensitivity to context, register and function in the texts they translate. Working from a template requires consideration of word order and text cohesion in both languages, and the need to adjust line breaks.

- *Extra-linguistic sub-competence*: most participants mention the opportunity of learning about a variety of topics, access cutting-edge knowledge and the possibility of updating their knowledge of other cultures, the world in general, and of specialised fields. They point out that translating the talks often requires additional research on the topic and a deep understanding of the material, both adding to the development of this sub-competence.

- *Knowledge of translation sub-competence*: through the OTPedia wiki and the YouTube channel resources, participants have access to codified knowledge, both declarative and procedural, of translation in general and of the specific type of translation that is required in TEDT, including technical advice on how to undertake the translation and specialised knowledge about subtitling. However, this represents only a proportion of the knowledge required to perform the task, and the rest is revealed in their interactions with other volunteers, reviewers and language coordinators in the Facebook groups, where questions on how to deal with specific translation problems appear frequently, and through the review process itself. For example, Keiko only realised the importance of using specialized terminology when her work was reviewed by a psychologist who alerted her to this.

- *Instrumental sub-competence*: participants learn how to use the subtitling editor; working in a digital environment, they have opportunities to develop online communication and digital skills; they are encouraged to undertake research using a variety of tools and resources such as dictionaries, term-bases and corpora; and these and other resources for translation are also regularly shared in the Facebook groups and added to the OTPedia.

- *Strategic sub-competence*: All the above sub-competences have to be mobilised and orchestrated for each translation task to enable participants to tackle the myriad problems that arise in every translation. Knowledge, skills and attributes need to be woken up, combined and developed to tackle each translation problem (Cheng, 2017). At the earlier stages, participants’ attention is taken up with learning the technology and conventions of subtitling (Alejandra describes in 4.2.2.2 how she did this systematically at the start). As they progress and become more competent,
these aspects become automatized and learning turns to other aspects. For example, for Rashad his role as language coordinator requires him to focus on quality assurance, providing feedback and mentoring others.

Some aspects of learning that emerged in the participants’ accounts are not fully articulated in the PACTE model but are better reflected in the NAATI model. Rashad, who went through the same initial time-consuming learning process as all other volunteers, but has since translated, reviewed and approved hundreds of talks, gives great prominence in his account to developing other skills beyond translation in his role as Language Coordinator, such as online communication, moderating discussions and managing teams. These particular skills are closer to the ‘communication and interpersonal skills’ and ‘translation business (system) skills’ included under the Service Provision Competency in the NAATI (2015) model of translation competence (an area of translation competence that is not included in the PACTE model). From starting in TEDT with no knowledge of translation and subtitling, Rashad has gone on to become a paid translator and has even set up a translation business, so the skills he developed in his role as Language Coordinator greatly contributed to his development as a professional translator.

5.1.2 Attributes

The development of translation competence requires some attributes, described in the NAATI model as ‘personal characteristics required to integrate the knowledge and skills previously described in order to be an effective translator’ (2015, p. 14) (see Figure 6 in 2.1.1.1). The PACTE model is vague on these and includes them in what it calls the psycho-physiological components. The NAATI model lists these more explicitly alongside the more detailed competencies classified under knowledge and skills. The findings in the phenomenological study reported in chapter 4 echo Cheng’s (2017, p. 190) conclusion that these are crucial for the development of translation competence, but severely underplayed in some models of translation competence.

Participants mentioned the need to be ‘attentive to detail’, ‘willing to learn’, and to have a ‘desire to excel’ when tackling translation tasks, and were aware of the investment of time required to develop the necessary expertise to produce a high quality product. Eleni reported that ‘a minute of speech may take half an hour or more to translate’ but that she was determined to ‘give a very good translation, something that is not mechanical, like Google translation’.

An aspect of collaboration in this context and a desirable attribute for translators is being ‘accepting of criticism’. The anecdote narrated by Keiko illustrates how failing to develop this attribute leads to difficulties for the community and impairs the translator’s ability to improve her competence. Keiko’s corrections were not accepted by the other translator, who, without the tactful intervention of the Language Coordinator, might not have learned
anything from Keiko’s review. Even an experienced professional translator like Susana finds it useful and necessary to develop her ability to ‘accept criticism’ (see 4.2.2.3), and this prompts her to reflect on the nature of feedback and its effect on the receiver. Being ‘collaborative’ is also a necessary attribute in the TEDT environment, whether working with the reviewer as a team (which is how Camille regards the review process), whilst being taught by other volunteers (in Keiko’s account) or whilst engaging in and developing online collaboration skills, which Alejandra finds challenging when dealing with a remote and culturally diverse community.

There are also numerous examples in the findings of participants being ‘self-reflective’. The entire review and approval process is set up around reflection, and is enabled by the technology, through the comments function in Amara where reviewers can attach feedback to specific points in the translation (see Figure 2 in section 1.2) and the diffing tool that compares and displays changes across versions (Figure 3 in section 1.2). Cheng (2017, p. 189) accords self-reflection an essential role in strengthening problem-solving schemas and participants seem to be very aware that they are developing this skill of self-reflection in their TEDT activities (‘a chance for me to be critical of my work’, Keiko).

‘Problem-solving’ was mentioned repeatedly as a key skill participants were developing in TEDT. It was connected to the intellectual challenge of finding solutions to translation problems, and essential to cope with the difficulties encountered in the learning process. Because participants were exposed to a complex task, they needed to solve problems constantly, which required perseverance and commitment particularly at the early stages. Eleni had to draw on all her patience and determination and use her personal initiative to overcome her problems in understanding how to synchronize subtitles. In her proposed definition of translation competence Cheng (2017, p. 191) considers personal initiative in problem-solving crucial to the ability to orchestrate knowledge, skills and attributes.

5.1.3 A rehearsal and practice space

In a pedagogical approach that requires situated opportunities for learning with authentic materials, TEDT offers both learners and educators a space where they can access tasks that are generally simpler but sufficiently close to those they might encounter in their professional lives. Compared to most paid commissions in the audiovisual industry, the tasks participants work on in TEDT are shorter (talks of 5-20 minutes) and more uniform (talks are usually scripted and delivery follows a predictable format). In addition, an advantage of what TEDT offers is that the talks cover a very wide range of topics and often report on the latest research in the field. These are the texts that participants can use to exercise and improve their ability to orchestrate their knowledge, skills and attributes to solve translation problems.
Participants perceive TEDT as a rehearsal or practice space where they can work on real tasks, in an environment that mimics professional translation but where the stakes are lower (longer deadlines, more support from peers, possibility of discussing and correcting errors). Tools and resources are provided, as is a steady supply of ‘similar kinds of texts, in discrete domains, for similar purposes’ (Shreve, 2006, p. 30). These coupled with opportunities for feedback, repetition and error correction, provide suitable conditions to support deliberate practice and the development of translation competence. However, this is not without challenges: there are delays in the review system; instances where the expertise of those providing feedback is questionable; and the manner in which some feedback is provided can be demotivating for participants.

Still, through deliberate practice, participants report improving their translation and subtitling competence, gaining confidence and developing, through persistence and over time, the automatism and intuition that more expert translators have (‘the more you practise, the more expert you become’, says Gina). It is for this very reason that Camille joined the project, since TEDT offered her the translation material and the learning opportunities that she sought to deliberately practise and improve her performance in preparation for her entrance exam to a translation postgraduate course.

For those in the process of studying translation in formal education (Camille, Lisa, Salima, Susana) or who have done so in the past, TEDT functions as a space for deliberate practice, allowing them to continue learning in a practical way, integrating and expanding the knowledge and skills they have been exposed to in their courses. For those who come to TEDT with no background in translation (Gina, Keiko, Alexei, Nathan, Rashad, Eleni or Alejandra) the tasks they have to complete shape a sort of curriculum, and their learning develops alongside their engagement. Evidence in the data shows that this can be successful. Alexei has turned his participation in TEDT into a full-time paid job as a subtitler, Camille secured her university place to study translation and Rashad became a paid translator and translation entrepreneur.

5.1.4 Summary

One of the key findings of this study is that TEDT is a suitable environment in which participants can develop their translation competence. The data elicited in the phenomenological investigation shows that participating in TEDT, volunteers can develop the knowledge, skills and attributes required to translate. And that they have access to opportunities to mobilise and orchestrate knowledge, skills and attributes whilst tackling authentic translation tasks that are similar to those they might encounter professionally.

A mapping of the knowledge, skills and attributes identified in chapter 4 to two established models of translation competence, PACTE (2003) and NAATI (2015), has shown the extent to which these various aspects can be developed within TEDT. It has also highlighted the
key role that attributes play in successful engagement with TEDT and in the development of translation competence. Where these attributes are not present or sufficiently developed, engagement with this activity is undermined. This confirms Cheng’s proposal to consider personal initiative (p. 191) and reflexivity (p. 201) as key enablers in the development of translation competence.

The study has shown that participants use TEDT as a rehearsal and practice space in which they can develop their translation competence through deliberate practice (Shreve, 2006). Here they can take advantage of the availability of texts, tools and resources, and of a community that can provide feedback and support. When this works well, TEDT offers substantial learning opportunities. However, there are challenges that can undermine its effectiveness as a space for learning and these are mostly related to the community. TEDT relies on people who work voluntarily as part of a community, so knowing how to interact with this community is essential to gain access to and engage profitably with this activity.

The next section examines the characteristics of the TEDT community and the opportunities and challenges that participants experience as they strive to become part of it.

5.2 Learning as participation

One of the roles of education is to guide learning by scaffolding content, and curating it and packaging it for learners in more convenient and efficient formats. However, too much focus on content without meaningful experiences that expose learners to the full complexity of participation can make learning self-referential, decontextualized and hard to integrate into learners’ identities (Wenger, 1998). As shown by the findings in this study learning can and does happen without formal teaching; it can arise from experience. This suggests that education’s excessive focus on content is to the detriment of other essential parts of learning such as the experience of participation.

According to Wenger (1998), the focus of education has to be to trigger learning rather than to become a replacement for it (p. 273) and, for that, learning and education communities must use the world around them as a learning resource, they ‘cannot be a closed system' but ‘must aim to offer dense connections to communities outside [their] settings’ (p. 275). To rebalance education towards participation, according to Wenger (1998, p. 275) learners need:

- places of engagement, materials and experiences with which to build an image of the world and themselves, and ways of having an effect on the world and making their actions matter (…) Activities requiring mutual engagement, both among students and with other people involved; challenges and responsibilities that call upon the knowledge-ability of students yet encourage them to explore new territories;
- enough continuity for participants to develop shared practices and a long-term commitment to their enterprise and each other.
Since translation is becoming an increasingly collaborative activity, educators need to consider approaches to learning that recognise the key role of participation. In this section a communities of practice lens is used to examine the learning that takes place in TEDT and how participants make sense of their participation in TEDT in relation to their own goals and life histories. The themes generated through the IPA analysis are used to illuminate the four elements in Wenger’s model of social learning: 1) practice, 2) meaning, 3) community and 4) identity (see Figure 8 in section 2.3.1) and the significance of these for social learning in TEDT is discussed below.

5.2.1 Practice

TEDT offers participants a form of legitimate peripheral participation in the practice of translation and subtitling, giving them access to a rehearsal space where they can engage in tasks that mirror professional translation. Support is available from the community and deadlines are manageable, with the 30 days to complete each task comparing very favourably to the more frantic pace of commercial deadlines. And since the activity is voluntary, the consequences of making mistakes or failing to complete work on time are less severe than they would be in a professional situation, in which they could lead to not getting paid or losing a client, or in an academic context, in which an assignment or even a course could be failed.

In the process of engaging in the activities that form part of TEDT, participants learn about translation and subtitling. They do this largely by themselves, whilst interacting with the resources provided by the community and drawing support from the community of volunteers through the review process and the Facebook groups. Even if a translator has experience from outside of TEDT, as is the case with Susana, they still need to learn the conventions of this community and develop the competences associated with this practice, as being an expert in one domain of translation does not mean being an expert in other, related domains.

5.2.2 Meaning

Participants make sense of their engagement with this practice and this community in different ways and therefore the meaning they attach to this experience varies from person to person. As put forward by Eraut (2004), there is a very individual dimension to participation and the personal learning derived from engagement is heavily influenced by participants’ own histories and disposition (Billett and Sommerville, 2004).

Participants derived meaning from aligning themselves with a good cause, the TED organisation, which they perceived as a global, prestigious, high quality volunteer project. Pervading most accounts of experience was the notion that volunteering is a good thing and that ‘everyone needs a little experience of volunteering in their life because it adds so
much to you as a person’ (Salima); so as well as benefiting society, it is rewarding in itself.

Sharing knowledge through translation, the essence of the activity undertaken in this project, was considered by participants something worth doing to ‘help the world to be a better place if we can make information accessible to everyone’ (Camille).

For those who undertake this experience expressly as a way of realising their aspirations to work as professional translators (Gina or Keiko, for example), there is huge value in the opportunity to gain experience of translation and subtitling, to improve their translation competence by engaging in deliberate practice, and to prove to prospective employers that they are committed to working in the field and have already generated a portfolio of work. The TEDT profile functions in this case as a boundary object that has different meanings for different communities. In the TEDT community a TEDT profile is tangible recognition of individuals’ engagement and participation in the activity, confirming their identity as TED Translators, and rendering visible their level of engagement through the number of published talks translated and reviewed, and additional labels such as Language Coordinators or TED [conference] Attendee (see Figure 4 in section 1.2). For prospective employers, it acts as a marker of experience and an open portfolio of work they can peruse to determine the quality of the work completed by an applicant.

In many countries, as Gina, Nathan and Alexei confirm, translation is ‘an open proposition’ (Gouadec, 2007, p. 105), a job open to those who know two languages even if they do not hold any qualifications or certificates. Gaining experience can be an effective way of accessing paid jobs in these countries, and participating in TEDT can provide a means of accruing experience and taking the first steps into the profession. In other local contexts, qualifications might be necessary and in their journey to join the profession, participants may use TEDT in various ways and with different intentions: as a space to prepare for formal education (Camille), for example, or as an experience that will signal to higher education (through the TED profile) that the applicant is deeply interested and committed to the subject (Rashad). For others, TEDT may represent a space of discovery and exploration of a possible career (Alejandra). The variety of interpretations illustrates how participation can carry different meanings for individuals, depending on their goals and their perceptions of how this activity fits in with the rest of their lives.

5.2.3 Community

As shown above, participants’ learning and development of their translation competence in TEDT does not happen in isolation. It requires interaction with: a group of people, the community of practice; the joint enterprise that occupies this group (the translation of talks for TED); and the resources this group has generated. The community of practice is made up of the people with whom participants engage as they learn the practice associated with this joint enterprise, the translation of talks for TED.
In the data, participants use the term ‘community’ to refer to many different things: their national, linguistic or cultural group; the TEDT project itself; the language groups within it; and TED volunteers in general as a group of like-minded people to which they feel they belong. However, the focus of interest from a pedagogical perspective is the community of practice as this has an important function in supporting participants’ learning. Although participants talk about TEDT (often referring to it simply as TED), it is obvious from their accounts of experience that the community of practice that shapes their engagement and experience is their language group within TEDT.

Even though online volunteer translation as manifested in TEDT is a global phenomenon – the collective practice of 30,000 volunteers spread across the world – engagement takes place within language groups, which have their own specific ways of instantiating the practice that has been developed by TEDT. Participants may belong to one or several language groups depending on how many languages they work with in addition to English (Alexei works with the Russian and Ukrainian TED communities, Alejandra works mostly with Spanish, but also with French, Italian and Portuguese). Although the activity is the same – translating and subtitling – local ways of working might differ. For example, the Spanish community has formulated rules that make Global Spanish the only variant it accepts (see 2.2.4) whilst the Portuguese and French communities have split into separate communities for Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese, and French and Canadian French respectively. The Japanese community described by Keiko uses an elaborate double review process in which the Language Coordinator provides a second round of detailed feedback which is then discussed with the reviewer and translator before changes are implemented. Conversely, in the Catalan community the researcher belongs to, where volunteer numbers are very low, changes made by reviewers and Language Coordinators are published without discussion. These examples show how each language community interprets the task differently and adapts the practice to suit its culture and circumstances.

A key issue for newcomers is access to the community. Being accepted into the community is essential to access the opportunities for learning that this environment offers, and Wenger (1998, p. 99) highlights how crucial access is:

> the real problem lies in their difficulty in entering their new community of practice. (...) they have to get enough attention and create enough relationships with busy old-timers to gain access to the community and its practice. Only then can they start to become full participants.

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27 The option of messaging the Language Coordinator to challenge a decision or suggest an amendment even after publication is always available.
TEDT has an open-door policy, unlike other online volunteer translation projects which have application processes and entry tests in place (Translators without Borders, for example). However, being ignored by potential reviewers can lead to marginalisation (‘if you don’t get reviewed, you don’t go anywhere’, says Alejandra) which is not the same as peripheral participation. Peripherality gives access to practice, whereas marginalisation prevents individuals from fully engaging and becoming full participants and is outside their control. Both Keiko and Alejandra described the difficulties encountered initially and their efforts to make themselves visible and they are both examples of participants who successfully managed to gain access and sustain engagement in their communities.

Alejandra realised that she needed to be ‘proactive and go out there and find someone to review and to approve [her work]’, and that once she was in a position to review, she would be able to set up reciprocal arrangements with other volunteers (‘and I’ll soon have the 90 credits then I can start reviewing and then I suppose I can... review for people and people can review for you’). In contrast she reported that a participant in her language community had abandoned the project as he could not see the point of continuing when no one was reviewing his work (see 4.1.1.2). This other participant was evidently less successful at navigating the community than Alejandra.

Keiko also took steps to be noticed by her community, as initially her work had been ignored by reviewers. She let others in her Japanese TEDT community know that she wanted to learn and ultimately work as a professional translator, and that she needed mentoring and guidance. Still, belonging requires sustained engagement, it requires interaction, and in Keiko’s Japanese community bonds of mutual engagement are strengthened through face-to-face meetings held in major Japanese cities. Keiko was therefore delighted to discover that a virtual equivalent for Japanese TEDT volunteers who did not live in Japan had been organised and it was at that meeting, after having waited in vain for her work to be reviewed, that she was able to signal her keenness to join the Japanese community, which she described as ‘a very tight, close community’. Keiko also identified the opportunities offered in these gatherings to network with other volunteers including, for those looking to access professional practice, volunteers who were already working as professional translators.

Full participation entails being allowed in to get feedback and advice from other members of the community. However, the feedback is not always or necessarily constructive or supportive, and can have a demotivating impact on newcomers, as Susana reported in section 4.2.2.3. Participation requires being present and engaged, developing connection, mutual recognition and interaction but it does not guarantee collaboration, equality or respect (Wenger, 1998, p. 55-56). In fact, issues of hierarchy, power and legitimacy were uncovered in the data, which highlighted the challenges of determining what counts as expertise in this community. Keiko’s heartfelt anecdote of how the changes she made to a talk she reviewed were rejected by a more experienced volunteer translator, is a good
example of a situation where the legitimacy of a newcomer is called into question by an old-timer (see section 4.2.2.3). In this case, the longer period of engagement of the old-timer commanded more respect than Keiko’s more thorough and accurate work, even to the Language Coordinator, who exhorted Keiko to refrain from challenging the old-timer about her rejection of Keiko’s work. The knowledge of the newcomer was not openly accepted as legitimate by the community, even though the Language Coordinator privately agreed with Keiko and took steps to fix the translation in ways that would not openly challenge the status of the old-timer. A powerful signal was sent to Keiko, the newcomer, that in spite of her superior performance she did not yet have the legitimacy to challenge existing members and systems. In fact, her community may be influenced by other cultural aspects that determine legitimacy and power, such as age, as was implied by Keiko’s description of the other volunteer (‘she was older (…) I tried to show respect’, she said of her communication with this reviewer during this incident).

Alejandra did show a good awareness of how the wider TEDT community operated when she discussed some of the barriers encountered by newcomers, such as the difficulty mentioned above in getting one’s work reviewed, or the problems caused by inexperienced volunteers taking on reviewing tasks (see 4.1.1.2). Given her project management background, Alejandra had useful ideas on how to improve systems and processes, using technology to avoid existing problems. However, she was also aware that, as a newcomer, she did not have sufficient legitimacy to generate new knowledge and have it accepted by this community and therefore decided to adapt to the prevailing rules in order to continue participating (‘I changed my expectations’). This highlights an issue around what counts as expertise and whose knowledge commands respect in the community.

Dealing with the full complexity of collaborative tasks in an open community entails interacting with others, with the consequent likelihood of disagreements or communication breakdowns, none of it dissimilar from the experiences that learners might encounter in the workplace. Developing awareness of local hierarchies and an understanding of the unwritten rules that govern different groups has been shown here to be critical in successfully gaining access and becoming part of a community.

5.2.4 Identity

Through participation individuals develop not only their practice but also an identity that is congruent with that practice and that community. However, identity is not a state, it is a process of becoming (Wenger, 1998), hence engaging in participation in a community of practice inevitably triggers a process of transformation, of becoming something that the individual was not before they engaged in that practice. Some of the participants are fully aware of how their TEDT experience has transformed their lives and their identities: ‘I think
today I’m totally different that I was three years ago’ (Rashad); ‘It changed my life. I got a new profession and I met some interesting people’ (Alexei).

Learning in this social environment means that participants are exposed to other participants’ identities and models of participation, and these can widen their understanding and act as models to aspire to. Alexei, for example, has successfully turned his volunteering for TEDT into a full-time career as a professional subtitler. In fact, every participant in this study can offer possible identities to aspire to in the field of translation, both within TEDT and beyond. There are translation students (Camille, Lisa, Salima and Susana), professional translators (Susana, Alexei and Rashad) and aspiring professional translators, both those who are not currently planning to engage in formal education (Keiko and Gina) and those who are (Alejandra). Eleni, like the ‘invisible’ translators in Gouadec’s classification (2007, pp. 103-5), carries out daily translation work in her role as a secretary, though this goes unrecognised and unrewarded by her employer. Telling her personal story in the interview prompted her to re-evaluate her identity and recognise that what she does at work is professional translation. However, it is doubtful whether she, or Rashad (see 4.3.1.1), would call themselves professional translators. Rashad or Nathan, even though the latter’s interest in becoming a professional translator is less well-defined, can model a full participant identity in the TEDT community having become Language Coordinators after several years as TEDT volunteers.

Interacting with other members of the community exposes participants to possible future identities within and beyond this community and allows them to imagine themselves developing those identities. Lisa imagines herself starting out as a part-time professional translator, combining this activity with teaching. Keiko has been prompted by a close relative to envisage professional translation as a job done from home, one that offers women flexibility while they bring up a family (see 4.3.1.1). Like the professional translators in O’Brien and Schäler (2010), most of the participants in the present study also envisage themselves as professional translators who have a vocation and are also volunteers committed to serving their communities.

By exercising their agency as autonomous learners who solve problems and work things out for themselves in a ‘real’ context, participants are able to rehearse a ‘professional translator’ identity. And the TED Translator profile with the ‘TED Translator’ label is a public marker of that translator identity.

Identity is multiple and individuals belong to many communities of practice simultaneously. This requires them to reconcile their different identities as a means of figuring out how their engagement in each community fits in with their life, personal history and goals. Wenger (1998, p. 154) points out that ‘identities are defined with respect to the interaction of multiple convergent and divergent trajectories’. The learning paths below, what Wenger called trajectories of participation (see section 2.3.1), exemplify how participants reconcile their
TEDT experience with the rest of their lives. There are many trajectories that lead to professional translation and both formal education and informal learning in its multiple guises, including TEDT, can have a place in individual paths towards professional practice.

- **Peripheral trajectories:** Camille’s initial engagement was very significant to her as it supported her journey into higher education by helping her to prepare for her entrance exam. Later she used TEDT to explore an area of translation that the course covered only superficially but that was central to her imagined professional future. Lisa found it hard to make time for TEDT but, like Camille, was interested in adding subtitling to her professional practice and this was not included in her postgraduate qualification. These participants were using TEDT in an instrumental fashion, as one more element in their path towards professional translation and as a complement to formal education.

- **Inbound trajectories:** Both Susana and Alejandra had engaged very actively with TEDT and were on a trajectory to full participation. For Susana the sense of purpose the activity provided and her alignment with the overall project were strong motivators for continued participation, even though initially she had joined TEDT to practise what she had been learning in her postgraduate course. Conversely, Alejandra was enjoying TEDT as a hobby and that enjoyment had prompted her to explore translation as a profession. Whilst Susana had come to TEDT from formal education, Alejandra was considering a move towards formal education in the future. In both cases TEDT was playing a role in developing their identity towards professional translation and linking education and profession.

- **Insider trajectories:** Nathan and Rashad had completed inbound trajectories to full participation, coming to the project with no knowledge of translation and, over the space of some years, attaining the role of Language Coordinators. However, their identity formation did not stop with full participation. Outside the project, Rashad became a paid translator and entrepreneur (though he still resisted the label ‘professional translator’) and secured the offer of a university place to study translation. Within TEDT he maintained his role as Language Coordinator of one of the largest language groups, Arabic, and strengthened his bonds with the community through sponsored attendance at a TED conference. Conversely, and in spite of no clear plans to move to professional translation beyond TEDT in the immediate future, Nathan had developed his Language Coordinator role and had secured a meeting with the director of TEDT to discuss better ways in which the project can support volunteers to deliver its mission. These trajectories exemplify an impact on identity, with Rashad overly talking about how TEDT has transformed his live.
Outbound trajectories: Both Keiko and Gina came to TEDT with the clear goal of gaining experience and developing the competence required to become professional translators. Formal education was not an option they could access for various reasons. Keiko would not consider distance learning either, as a relative had had a bad experience with an online translation course. Gina had tried unsuccessfully to access translation education and planned to use TEDT to get started professionally and then reconsider formal education in the future. Both were using TEDT in pursuit of career aims beyond the project. The TEDT identity they forged was strongly linked to an objective beyond TEDT and there was, as with Camille and Lisa, a strong possibility that TEDT would become less of a priority once that professional objective had been attained.

Boundary trajectories: Alexei’s full participation in TEDT had sparked a profound identity transformation and career change, and he now brought to his TEDT identity his status as a professional translator. Since this transformation, he had been less engaged in TEDT, dedicating the time he had available to supporting the smaller Ukrainian community in preference to the larger Russian one. He regularly received requests for advice on how to get started in the profession and helped others by offering his experience as a successful model of transition to professional practice (‘When people ask how can I begin work as a translator, to translate movies, I tell them you must get some practice before you can ask for a paid job with a translation agency.’). Another boundary trajectory is exemplified by Camille, who was able to bring her knowledge of TEDT practice to her translation course when the students in her class decided on this activity as a class project. Camille became a boundary broker for her class, using her knowledge to support her peers and her teacher, who was not familiar with TEDT either. Camille enacted this brokering identity temporarily but did not sustain it as it was not useful to her beyond her course.

The above trajectories highlight the various ways in which participants might engage with TEDT and the opportunities this opens up for future and existing learners and professionals, as well as for teachers looking to integrate this kind of activity into their academic practice.

5.2.5 Summary

This section has used a communities of practice framework to examine the opportunities and challenges that participants in TEDT encounter whilst learning in this social environment.

It has determined that the most important community of practice to participants is the language-specific group they belong to. Since this group controls the review process and provides a high proportion of the support, it also controls access to the practice and whether participants are included or excluded. Hence it is essential for participants to possess or
develop the digital and participatory skills needed to understand and navigate this community.

The very process of being socialized into a version of translation practice allows participants to try out and develop a translator identity that is congruent (if not identical) with what they aspire to become. The community also provides access to other possible identities as modelled by other participants. Participation requires management of multiple identities as participants weave their learning paths, and this inevitably triggers a process of identity transformation.

Figure 17 below provides a summary of the section.

Figure 17 Learning in TEDT, a social learning perspective

5.3 Meaningful learning and motivation

This section of the discussion brings together two aspects that are closely linked: motivation and meaningful learning. The term ‘meaningful learning’ is not used here as the integration of new learning with previous knowledge – the opposite of ‘rote learning’ (Ausubel, 1968) – but as learning which has a meaning for the student beyond the learning itself. Other related concepts would be impact or application.

The study of participants’ experiences unavoidably touches on their motivation for engaging with TEDT, so both the survey and the interviews explored what prompted participants to join TEDT and what kept them taking part subsequently. An essential element related to positive motivation was the commitment to doing something meaningful with a clear impact in the world. On the other hand, there were aspects of the activity that led to demotivation
and could even result in disengagement. In those cases, the fact that the activity was deemed to be meaningful played a role in sustaining participants’ engagement.

5.3.1 Meaningful learning

All learning is meaningful, even if its purpose is merely to enable the student to pass a course and obtain credit. However, the kind of meaningful learning discussed here is that which has a use value, not just an exchange value (Little and Thorne, 2017, p. 28), because it can be applied immediately to one’s world, it is relevant and generates ‘the productive thrill of genuine translation’ (Szymczak, 2013, p. 63). That is why participants such as Eleni, Rashad and Nathan persevered through the tedious early steps because they wanted to be able to engage with the activity, so their learning was a gateway to something they desired. It is also the kind of learning that prompts an emotional response in learners which may even cross over into their offline lives: Nathan was moved to take a talk on African history to local schools to ensure an important message was heard; Camille reported being so moved by her translation of a talk on apes that she felt like she wanted ‘to go to every zoo and just break down the whole thing’; and Keiko talked about the ‘kind of energy, like coming up from the bottom of my body’ she felt when she was motivated by a particular talk to undertake its translation. This is learning that is meaningful because it affects the whole person, not just the brain, and because it leads to transformation of the whole person. Both Rashad and Alexei express the view that participating in TEDT has changed their lives, and their stories are testament to it.

Two decades have passed since Wenger (1998, p. 10) called for:

inventive ways of engaging students in meaningful practices, of providing access to resources that enhance their participation, of opening their horizons so they can put themselves on learning trajectories they can identify with, and of involving them in actions, discussions, and reflections that make a difference to the communities that they value

Most law schools have pro-bono projects in which students, supervised by practising lawyers can work on real cases to experience the full complexity of their professional practice, making their learning more authentically relevant and meaningful. However, besides some isolated initiatives in which universities run commercial translation companies to provide their students with real work experience, and with the exception of the isolated projects reported in sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.3, translation education continues to rely on work placements to provide students with real-world experience of translation. Increasing efforts to incorporate other authentic activities through task-based and project-based learning into classroom-based instruction have been reviewed in chapter 2. Initiatives such as TED Translators, Wikipedia Translation or other online volunteer projects can provide additional opportunities to connect students with the causes and communities they care about, and to
engage in activities that are meaningful to them and hence motivating, because they are aligned with broader and recognisable enterprises.

### 5.3.2 Motivation

Overwhelmingly, participants perceived the main activity undertaken in this community – the translation and subtitling of talks for TED – as intrinsically motivating (Ryan and Deci, 2000), echoing the findings of previous research in which online volunteer translators reported motivation related to values, reciprocity and enjoyment of free time and learning (O’Brien and Schäler, 2010; Olohan, 2014; Orrego-Carmona, 2014; Cámar, 2014, 2015).

In terms of enjoyment, participants found the activity exciting, fun and intellectually stimulating and rewarding. They found the content of the talks inspirational (‘gives you a kind of lifting feeling’, Gina) and working on TEDT translations reportedly resulted in feelings of wellbeing and accomplishment (‘therapeutic’ according to Gina and for Eleni ‘I’m feeling amazing (…) I feel fresh when I finish this task, I don’t feel tired’). Finding this activity inherently enjoyable and pleasurable meant that it could sometimes become immersive and escapist, as Salima, Camille and Susana reported in section 4.1.1.3.

There is an opportunity to capitalise on the motivating aspects of this type of activity: enjoyment, intellectual stimulation, alignment with the project aims, opportunity to showcase work and being linked to a brand with global prestige. These emerged strongly from the data presented in this study, confirming and expanding what had been reported in the literature for this and similar online volunteer translation activities (O’Brien and Schäler, 2010; Olohan, 2014; Cámar, 2014, 2015). Choice was greatly appreciated by volunteers and contributed to increasing their motivation, as they could pursue their own interests and strengths (Eleni focuses on psychology, Alejandra on science, Keiko on learning about other cultures). Another strong motivation for joining the project was the possibility of gaining experience of translation, highly valued in the job market (Optimale, 2012) as reported by Alexei and Gina, and of showcasing their work through the TED Translator profile. The possibility of having their work published, enabling them to showcase it to potential employers but also to friends and family, was also appreciated and meaningful beyond the project, as was the realisation that their work was enjoyed by others and had an impact in society.

There is pedagogical value in directing students towards an activity such as TEDT, which has been shown to be intrinsically motivating to participants, including students in those cases where it has been used as part of formal education (Orrego-Carmona, 2014; Comas-Quinn and Fuertes Gutiérrez, 2019). However, Sauro (2017) warns of the danger that, in domesticating informal learning activities for the classroom, what makes these activities highly motivating and enjoyable for participants, such as agency, flexibility or choice could
be lost. Hence the need to consider pedagogical design carefully to ensure the motivating factors are not lost when adapting this type of activity for use in formal education.

The data has shown that there are aspects of TEDT that can have a demotivating effect on participants, like the delays in the review process – the ‘thousands of videos waiting to be reviewed’, according to Camille –, the very steep learning curve they all referred to, or the impact of feedback on participants. This can lead less resourceful or less committed volunteers to abandon the project. Even those who persevere, like the participants in this study, talk about feeling stressed, frustrated and disappointed. The lack of clear, upfront information about what is in fact a structural problem of the community caused by a scarcity of reviewers, also causes confusion amongst volunteers (Keiko talks about how she could not understand why her work was not being reviewed).

When integrating this activity into the formal curriculum the delays and unpredictability in the review system can make it difficult to match volunteer work with academic timetables. However, alternative feedback steps can be incorporated to ensure that valuable peer feedback is available to learners. For example, Comas-Quinn and Fuertes Gutiérrez (2019) added a peer review step within the group of learners and allowed their participants to decide whether they wanted to submit their work to TEDT afterwards for review and eventual publication.

5.3.3 Summary

This section has discussed the aspects of participating in TEDT that affect motivation. The activity is found to be intrinsically motivating and participants derive enjoyment and rewards from it, both on a personal level (intellectual stimulation, recognising the impact of their work) and on a professional level (gaining experience and being able to showcase their work). Aspects that affect motivation negatively relate to the delays in the review process, which can lead to marginalisation and exclusion, the steep learning curve that can stop the less resourceful volunteers from successfully participating, and the negative effect that feedback can have.

Participating in TEDT can become a way of involving learners in a learning experience where they can choose to connect with activities that are important to them; an experience which is meaningful and has application and impact beyond the confines of the classroom.

5.4 Some further considerations for educators

This section of the discussion includes a number of additional reflections and considerations that are relevant to the use of online volunteer translation in education. They cover the value of openness; the connection between formal and informal learning; the importance of digital and participatory skills and of being sensitive to the cultures and customs of the communities involved; the potential use of online volunteer translation as an alternative to
work placements; and the need to engage critically with this new form of practice. These are discussed below in turn.

5.4.1 The value of openness

Because participation is key to learning, access to practice was considered by Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 84) essential for learning to take place. Access can be greatly facilitated by openness. TEDT is an open community that accepts all volunteers with the right self-reported skills, though full access to the community can be harder to attain and marginalisation can occur (as explained in 5.2.3). It offers open content and resources that participants can use to develop their translation competence. And the open subtitling tool Amara gives access not only to TED but to many other translation projects that could be of interest to learners.28

Even though open content and an online community such as TEDT might provide access to competence development in translation for those who are unable to access other formal educational opportunities, its digital nature still excludes those who cannot access the internet or do not have the digital skills or metacognitive skills (self-regulation, ability to self-direct one’s own learning) to profitably engage with the resources or opportunities by themselves. However, openness is not just about resources, and communities can play a key role in increasing engagement with open content, mediating it and supporting learners (Lane, 2009; Koseoglu and Bozhurt, 2018). It then becomes even more important to ensure that learners have or can develop the necessary participatory and digital skills to operate effectively in communities, and encouraging the development of these skills should be a priority when adopting open pedagogies and working in the real world (Beaven et al., 2014; Littlejohn et al., 2016).

In this study, the profile of participants, who are successful in engaging with the TEDT online community and practice, is that of individuals who are highly qualified (taking part in or having completed higher education at least) and who have access to technology and are highly digitally literate. So, as Lane (2009) highlighted, in addition to an existing educational divide that can be geographical, cultural, social, physical, based on lack of income or on lack of self-belief or of ability to engage with education, a digital divide (lack of access to technology or lack of skills to access it) can also prevent learners from benefitting from these open resources and communities. To engage in a translation career, which is nowadays global and digital in nature, access to open online tools and resources is

28 Projects include arte, the European culture TV channel, Mozilla or Udacity, so cover a wide range of interests, see https://amara.org/en/volunteer/, and Vic University in Spain offers an Online subtitling MOOC that uses Amara to introduce learners to subtitling.
essential to develop translation competence as needed in the workplace. In fact, the use of open tools and resources to learn with has proved instrumental to Alexei in retraining for a new profession. TEDT offers an additional benefit in providing a community that supports participants in their use of these open tools and resources.

5.4.2 Connecting formal and informal learning

Lifelong learning and continuous professional development (CPD) are integral to the practice of professional translation. Informal learning in the context of online volunteer activities such as TEDT is already recognised as an acceptable form of CPD by, for example, the Institute of Translators and Interpreters in the UK. Some of the learning derived from informal learning activities may be incidental (Sharples et al., 2015), but, although participants may not readily articulate this, there is evidence of intentional learning in their participation in online volunteer translation activities, as demonstrated by the findings of this study: Camille comes to TEDT to practise intensively for her translation entry exam; Lisa and Salima to learn about audiovisual translation, not covered in their university translation courses; and Susana to integrate and expand the learning she has done in her translation postgraduate course. They all report coming in contact with professional translators in TEDT, and some of them are professional translators themselves (Susana, Rashad or Alexei). Hence there is evidence of professionals using TEDT informally but intentionally as an environment for continuous learning.

Educators should take the lead in uncovering the potential of these kinds of learning opportunities for students, prospective students and alumni, and direct learners to informal learning activities during and after their formal studies. Furthermore, providing students with the necessary skills (digital, collaborative and intercultural) to engage with informal learning opportunities profitably is as important as making them aware of these opportunities. This necessitates that educators view informal learning positively and strive to understand it better – hence the need for more research studies like this one.

It is important to recognize the tension between academic views which see higher education as the desirable route to professional translation versus the reality of how individuals create their own paths towards this profession by combining formal and informal learning, according to their own goals, histories, dispositions and circumstances. As seen in the data, participants use their own interests and objectives to weave a unique path of participation, or learning trajectory, that serves their objectives and is congruent with their own identities and circumstances. Although for some educators ‘the suggestion that you could replace structured educational endeavor by watching videos or joining online fan blogs seems [to me] naïve and rather dangerous’ (Little and Thorne, 2017, p. 28), the reality as seen in this study is that for those who are excluded from education for whatever reason, these informal learning opportunities are extremely valuable. The kind of agency and resourcefulness
shown by some of the participants in this study in making use of what they have available in order to reach their professional goals should be respected and celebrated.

5.4.3 Digital and participatory skills

Learners require appropriate digital and participatory literacies to function in open spaces (Beaven et al., 2014). In global digital projects, online (intercultural) communication and collaboration skills are particularly important. The data showed how participants who had developed skills to navigate the resources (Alejandra), to communicate effectively and sensitively online to enlist the support of others (Keiko), or to request help (Eleni), were successful in accessing and finding their place and sustaining their engagement with the community. Those who lacked these skills could easily find themselves frustrated by the technology, confused by the plethora of reference material or marginalized if they failed to attract the attention of other more experienced volunteers (see Alejandra in 4.1.1.2). However, there is a delicate balance to be struck between supporting learners and trying to anticipate and resolve all potential problems for them, further complicated by the ‘student as consumer’ narrative that increasingly pervades Western higher education.

5.4.4 Sensitivity to local cultures and customs

An important consideration, already highlighted by Sauro (2017), is the need to respect the local cultures and customs of online volunteer communities. The analysis of the data in this study provides clear examples of how different communities (the language groups within TEDT) interpret and apply the TEDT practices in different ways (the use of Global Spanish or the double review loop used by the Japanese group). Cámara and Comas-Quinn (2016) found that the learners in their project, peninsular Spanish speakers, were resistant to adopting the Global Spanish convention of the Spanish TEDT community, and Minkel (2015) reported on the backlash that ensued when students at the University of California Berkeley broke, through ignorance, the unwritten rules of an online fan fiction site on which they had been asked to leave comments as part of a learning activity. These examples highlight the fact that learners and educators need to appreciate the importance of understanding and respecting the communities they will be joining, and to ensure that their proposed activities are not exploitative, offensive or disruptive to those communities. Participants need to familiarize themselves with local ways, and so do educators, although for TEDT in particular this may be quite a challenge for those educators who deal with multiple languages. Educators may not require a thorough knowledge of the local ways of each language community but to develop knowledgeability about the practice of TEDT to ensure their students are alert to how much being aware of local cultures and customs can affect their chances of engaging successfully with the community.
5.4.5 Alternative to work placements

One consideration for educators is where to position online volunteer translation in the translation curriculum. Projects that use online volunteer activities could be undertaken as part of teacher-facilitated project work, along the lines of the projects run by Szymczak (2013) and Al-Shehari (2017) or the class project reported by Camille in the data, or as more substantial independent projects like those developed by Martínez-Carrasco (2017) and McAndrew and Campbell (2019) (all reported in 2.1.2 and 2.1.3). In fact, in their theoretical work to support a European-funded project on work placements in translation education, Kiraly and Pietrowska (2014) proposed locating the work placement (internship) between facilitated project work and workplace experience (see Figure 18 below). Online volunteer translation activities could be suitable alternatives or replacements for work placements, particularly for students for whom life’s circumstances make the work placement option unfeasible or undesirable. Financial constraints, caring responsibilities, illness or geographical location, for example, could make an online volunteer translation experience more suitable or attractive for some students, and entirely preferable to foregoing the chance of gaining translation experience, highly valued in the job market as both the literature and the data have confirmed (Optimale, 2012).

![Figure 18 An evolutionary model of a translation studies curriculum © D. Kiraly](image)

5.4.6 Critical engagement

Alejandra’s and Keiko’s experiences described in 4.2.2.3 highlighted the fact that the notion of expertise could sometimes be unreliable, either because participants did not adhere to
the rules (like the inexperienced volunteers who took on reviewing tasks), or because cultural or community-specific conventions overruled performance-based notions of expertise. Educators can decide to manage learners’ expectations by introducing additional steps and safeguards such as peer review amongst students or guidance on feedback literacy. But they can also use these experiences productively to help their students reflect on the nature of expertise and the ownership of knowledge in particular contexts. Similar situations are likely to emerge in the workplace and developing resources to deal with them is almost more important from an educational perspective than ensuring students have a trouble-free learning experience.

What is valued in TEDT might not be the same as what is valued in academic or professional translation, and knowledgeability involves developing awareness of these differences and using them productively for learning. However, it would be unrealistic to expect this to happen automatically and this kind of critical engagement, reflection and comparison between related practices should be fostered by educators.

Finally, engaging with online volunteer communities cannot be done uncritically. Learners should be encouraged to evaluate what these communities do and the work model that is being proposed. TED itself is not without critics (see section 1.2) and volunteering can be distrusted or perceived as exploitative (O’Hagan, 2012; McDonough Dolmaya, 2012; Cámara and Comas-Quinn, 2016; Piróth and Baker, 2019). Wenger observes that alignment ‘can be blind and disempowering’ and leave learners open ‘to all kinds of delusion and abuse’ (p. 181) so ensuring that engagement is undertaken from a critical stance and that learners’ freedom and choice are respected is particularly important when involving students in voluntary activities.

5.4.7 Summary

This final section of the discussion has covered some additional considerations for educators who are planning to integrate online volunteer translation into their teaching. It has highlighted the opportunity that is afforded by the open nature of the tools, resources and communities that are often involved in these initiatives. It has explained how educators can be instrumental in linking formal and informal learning to ensure their learners benefit from the learning opportunities that are available to them beyond the classroom. It has recognised that in order to take advantage of these, learners need to possess or develop digital and participatory skills that will allow them to engage successfully. This includes understanding these communities and treading lightly as they attempt to join them. In this way, these initiatives can be linked to formal learning, even as alternatives to work placements for those students who have no access to the more traditional internships. Finally, it has noted that educators need to consider these initiatives critically and prompt the same kind of critical reflection in their students.
5.5 Some guiding principles for educators

The following principles are an effort to distil the knowledge developed from reflecting on the findings of this study and considering them alongside the researcher’s own teaching practice and experiences of integrating TEDT into formal educational contexts (Cámara & Comas-Quinn, 2016; Comas-Quinn & Fuertes Gutiérrez, 2017 & 2019; Comas-Quinn, 2019; Beaven, 2019); and the published literature that reports on examples of using online volunteer translation activities, several involving the translation of Wikipedia, in translation education (Szymczak, 2013; Orrego-Carmona, 2014; Michalak, 2015; Al-Shehari, 2017; Martínez-Carrasco, 2018; McAndrew & Campbell, 2019).

Many aspects need to be considered when planning to include online volunteer translation in a formal university course. These range from the ethics of engaging students in a practice that many in the field of translation consider a threat to the profession, to the challenge of supporting students adequately or the logistics of attempting to match the unpredictable and organic nature of a volunteer activity to the rigid schedules of formal education, with its need for deadlines, assessment, etc.

These guiding principles are intended to help educators reflect on key aspects of integrating online volunteer translation into their teaching practice:

1. **Contextualise the activity and encourage critical reflection from students.** Introduce this type of practice and place it in the landscape of practice of translation, urge students to find out more about it, to discuss the ethics of volunteering, the credentials of each project, what opportunities might be available and what might be the barriers or costs of participation.

2. **Allow routes of participation that respect students’ agency and ownership of their own work.** Students should have the right to decide whether volunteering is something they want to engage in or not. They could be offered alternatives, such as the opportunity of opting out, or the option of not sharing their work openly or donating it to whatever cause is supported by the project in question.

3. **Consider the objectives of the activity and whether these are set by the teacher or left for the students to decide.** Online volunteer translation activities can be used to develop a wide range of skills and knowledge, and the focus might vary depending on the level students are working at, their needs and abilities, interests, etc. Is the aim of the activity to learn how to subtitle, to experience collaboration in a digital environment, to practice peer review and develop feedback skills, to begin assembling a visible portfolio of work for future employers…?

4. **Preserve those aspects of the activity that make it fun, motivating and rewarding for students,** including self-direction, collaboration, choice and flexibility. Whenever
possible, allow students to choose projects they value and are interested in, to choose the content they will be translating, to decide when and how they engage.

5. **Mitigate against potential sources of frustration** such as the steep learning curve volunteers encounter when they first join a project. This can be done by introducing the project in class and providing guidance and a curated path through the reference material made available by the project.

6. **Provide support for students locally** to mitigate against the difficulties of accessing established communities and attracting the attention of the more experienced volunteers who would guide them in the initial stages. Facilitating peer support through a discussion space for all students in the group who are taking their first steps in this kind of activity goes a long way in averting some of the frustration that leads many volunteers to abandon these activities in the early stages.

7. **Promote a respectful approach towards online volunteer translation communities.** Encourage awareness of local cultures and practices that need to be learnt and understood before full participation is possible. Consider whether the planned used might be exploitative or disruptive for the communities involved.

8. **Consider whether assessment is necessary and what form of assessment is appropriate for the given objectives.** Depending on what is being assessed, assessment could take the form of a reflection piece on the experience of volunteering, teacher or peer evaluation of a translation, self-evaluation of one’s performance against set criteria, etc.

9. **Find out more about online volunteer translation opportunities and raise awareness amongst students.** Whether or not online volunteer translation activities are incorporated into formal teaching, students should be made aware of their existence and the opportunities they offer for deliberate practice and gaining experience, for example, both during and after their studies.

5.6 **Summary of main findings**

This chapter has addressed the final research question to consider the opportunities and challenges of integrating online volunteer translation into translation pedagogy.

This study has found that engaging in online volunteer translation in TEDT allows participants to develop their translation competence, understood as the knowledge, skills and attributes required to translate, and the ability to orchestrate these to solve translation problems (Cheng, 2017). This activity can offer a good environment for deliberate practice in which they complete work that presents the full complexity of real translation. They can do this within a community that provides them with support and feedback on their work. TEDT is seen by many participants as a rehearsal space for professional translation and thus, it makes a credible alternative to work placements for those whose circumstances
may preclude them from taking advantage of this valuable step between education and the workplace. Because it relies on open content, tools and spaces, it brings this opportunity both to students and learners who are outside formal education. It thus holds great potential for connecting formal learning with informal activities that learners can engage in beyond the classroom.

The language-specific community within TEDT is the community of practice to which participants belong. It mediates and controls access to the activity, providing support and learning opportunities, such as feedback on participants’ work and opportunities to network with more expert and professional translators. Understanding and navigating local hierarchies and ways of working becomes crucial in accessing and sustaining engagement with the learning opportunities provided by TEDT. Identity transformation follows from engaging in and learning from the activities undertaken as a TEDT volunteer. Participants are exposed to various possible translator identities and paths of participation, which increases their knowledgeability of the field of translation. Having the label ‘TED translator’ in their online profiles is another step in rehearsing and developing a translator identity in at least one of the communities that make up the landscape of practice of translation.

The activity carries specific meanings for each participant, who integrates it into their unique learning journeys, according to their own personal and professional goals and circumstances. There is a shared appreciation for the individual and civic value of volunteering and the activity is found to be intrinsically motivating in many ways: it is enjoyable and offers many rewards, both personal (intellectual stimulation, choice) and professional (showcasing one’s work and gaining experience). As a motivating and meaningful activity, it can be a useful addition to pedagogy. However, the challenges revealed by the data in this study (steep learning curve, delays in the reviewing process, difficulties gaining access to the community and the demotivating effect of critical or nonconstructive feedback) need to be considered when integrating online volunteer translation activities into the teaching of translation. The delays in the review system can be factored into pedagogical design and overcome through additional peer review steps, for example. Awareness can be raised amongst students of the importance of treading carefully in these communities, striving to understand local cultures and ways of working, both to avoid offending or disrupting the community and to ensure that access can be gained. And furnishing students with the appropriate digital and participatory skills required to navigate this online, multicultural environment, becomes essential, as is ensuring that they consider the activity critically.
Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

This final chapter offers a summary of the study and reflections on the contribution that this work makes to the theory and practice of education. It highlights the strengths and limitations of the study and points to further research that can be undertaken on this topic.

6.1 Overview of the study and key insights

This investigation set out to explore the phenomenon of online volunteer translation by focusing on a particular example, TED Translators. The aim was to gain a deeper understanding of this new form of practice and to consider whether and how translation education could make use of it within an open, situated pedagogy.

The methods employed included an initial qualitative survey, used to gain some understanding of the characteristics of participants, followed by phenomenological interviews that delved into the experiences of TEDT volunteers who had reported planning to work as professional translators. Using IPA, the data was analysed and used to answer the following three research questions:

1. What are the experiences of participation in TEDT of those TEDT contributors who plan to work as professional translators?
2. How do these contributors perceive their participation in TEDT in relation to their educational aspirations?
3. How do these contributors perceive their participation in TEDT in relation to their professional aspirations?

A fourth research question was posed to link the insights gained from the study of TEDT participants’ experiences with the aim of the study: to consider how translation education could make use of this kind of online volunteer translation project.

4. What are the opportunities and challenges of incorporating online volunteer translation into translation education?

The detailed knowledge gained from the life experiences of participants was discussed in relation to this final question. It was mapped to translation competence models to determine how it related to the development of translation competence, and, using a communities of practice lens, was examined to uncover opportunities and challenges related to learning in a community.

The analysis of the data showed that TEDT is a suitable learning environment in which participants can develop their translation competence through deliberate practice and can be exposed to and rehearse a translator identity. This can be achieved whilst allowing participants choice in what they translate and exposing them to what many of them consider to be an enjoyable, stimulating and motivating activity. The fact that the activity is connected
to a global and prestigious project with a social mission makes the experience meaningful beyond the learning. Though mostly used as an informal learning space, it has the potential to be integrated into the learning journey of trainee translators as a useful way of gaining experience and a possible alternative to work placements. In fact, some participants use it to replace formal education, as an informal apprenticeship and a form of learning on the job. For educators, it is a ready-made environment where learners can undertake tasks that are similar enough to those they will face as professional translators, exposing them to the complexity and unpredictability of real translation jobs.

Several challenges were identified which would affect the use of online volunteer translation in education. Delays in the review process is a problem shared by most projects that rely on volunteers’ time and choices. Issues around power and hierarchies within the project can prevent volunteers from being fully accepted into the community, hence limiting their access to the learning opportunities it offers, unless they manage to establish relations with other members of the language groups they join. Having the right participatory skills to be able to communicate and collaborate effectively in an online global community is essential to overcome this, as is being sensitive to and respectful of the local cultures and customs of the community.

6.2 **Strengths and limitations of the study**

This study has shown that phenomenology can be a powerful way of getting close to an experience, expanding our understanding through detail and nuance, so that pedagogical responses can be more considered and educators are better able to take into account the variety of ways in which learners may engage with a learning opportunity. The combination of a qualitative approach that stays close to individual experiences with a well-known model of social learning is a strength of the study and has generated evidence to confirm a view of learning in this online volunteer translation community as social, but also personal (Eraut, 2004), depending to a large extent on individuals’ life stories, goals and dispositions (Billett and Sommerville, 2004). Phenomenology claims that by getting close to the particular we can uncover much about the universal characteristics of experience. In a way, this kind of qualitative research can zoom into the larger black and white outline that other kinds of research may provide, to add colour and texture to our knowledge.

Methodologically, it has been important to ensure the quality of the study by employing some of the features described in section 3.11: getting participants’ approval of their profiles (see Appendix G) and offering them the chance to check the transcript of their interview; according participants’ voices an equal space to the researcher’s interpretation (honouring and exposing the double hermeneutic) through extensive illustrative quotes in the analysis and discussion of the findings; and adopting a bridled attitude during analysis, at times admittedly made difficult by the researcher’s involvement as a TEDT volunteer and her
concurrent pedagogical work to integrate the use of TEDT in formal education. Thus, it is hoped that the plausibility, credibility and trustworthiness (Harvey, 2012-17) of this study is sufficiently evidenced.

As with all research studies, there are limitations to what this investigation can achieve. As most qualitative studies, and phenomenological investigations in particular, the study has drawn on the experiences of a small sample of participants who self-selected based on criteria specified in the invitation to TEDT volunteers on the general Facebook group (being over 18 and planning to work as a translator). It thus does not purport to be representative of all TEDT volunteers, and clearly does not portray the experiences of those who use TEDT with other intentions in mind (pastime or language learning, for example). It is acknowledged that with idiographic, exploratory investigations it is not possible to generalise or make big claims about whole populations (Langdridge, 2007). However, the richness of detail and the insights into experience are valuable ways of gaining a more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon, and the choice of those who are planning to work as professional translators ensures the findings of the study are relevant to translation education.

Furthermore, the study has not directly considered age, gender or race beyond ensuring that the sample included a variety of ages, backgrounds, locations and places of origin, which reflected the global nature and varied demographic composition of the participants in TEDT, as uncovered by the initial qualitative survey. The wide reach of the global sample is a strength of the study, but it also means that the researcher is limited in her understanding by the limits of her own experience, hence might miss contextual details that could shed a different light on her interpretation. In the case of the Japanese language group, it seemed clear that this group’s understanding of seniority and expertise was different from the researcher’s own. In other instances, though, there could have been cultural, social or political information beyond the researcher’s experience that would have been relevant to participants’ accounts. The researcher can only provide her own interpretation and that is an inescapable feature of phenomenology.

In spite of these limitations, the study here presented has made some modest contributions to theory and practice, which are described in the following sections.

6.3 Contribution to knowledge

This thesis makes a unique contribution to translation studies and education literature by providing insights into the phenomenon of online volunteer translation, a new form of practice that has emerged in the translation landscape in the last decade. This work sheds light on how online volunteer translation works in a particular setting, TED Translators, by getting close to the specific experiences of individuals and revealing how they make sense of their participation and position it in relation to their own lives, and their educational and career aspirations. Indeed, it uncovers the experiences of online volunteer translators, a
group which, with a few exceptions (O'Brien and Schäler, 2010; Olohan, 2014; Dombek, 2014; Cámarade la Fuente, 2014 and 2015; Orrego Carmona & Lee, 2017), has received little attention from scholars. In this way, it fills a recognised need in translation studies for more research in the area of amateur translation (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017).

This investigation changes the usual focus in translation studies research from quantitative and positivist approaches towards a qualitative interpretive approach and a research design that allow a phenomenon to be studied in a naturalistic rather than an experimental way. Hence, it responds to Kiraly's recommendation to pursue research that deals with ‘the observation of learning that occurs in naturalistic settings – as authentic as possible’ (2017, p. 26).

Phenomenological studies, with their focus on the lifeworld and experiences of individuals, are not plentiful in translation studies. The idiographic approach taken in this exploratory work has uncovered a richness of detail that makes it particularly valuable to those seeking to understand the way in which online volunteers joining collaborative translation projects engage in and make sense of this practice. This includes information on what participants value and find rewarding, what attracts them to this activity, and the barriers and challenges they encounter.

Methodologically, this detailed study of participants’ lived experiences has revealed how external pressures such as the cultural norms prevalent in a language community in TEDT can affect participants’ learning experiences. It has also rendered visible how specific institutional arrangements, such as the failure to come up with a solution to address the problem of inexperienced volunteers taking on reviewing tasks, can erect barriers to participation and learning, in this case by disrupting the valuable review and feedback process that marks TEDT as an ideal learning community. In this way, this study has brought the focus more tightly on the differences in how learners shape their identities according to their trajectories and histories, and has addressed one of the strongest criticisms to Wenger’s theory of communities of practice: being too general and neglecting the individual perspective (Fuller et al., 2005, p. 65).

Existing models of translation competence (PACTE, 2003 and NAATI, 2015) have been used in this investigation to map the learning derived from participation by those who are planning to become professional translators. The fact that TEDT offers participants opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes represented in these two models, and to exercise their ability to mobilise these to solve translation problems (Cheng, 2017) is an endorsement of the suitability of this environment for deliberate practice (Shreve, 2006). In spite of the challenges uncovered by this research, participants, at least the ones interviewed in this study, are developing and integrating their translation competence by engaging with these situated, authentic translation tasks (Kiraly, 2015).
What this study cannot show is the level of expertise attained by these participants as to do this would require a different kind of investigation. However, the experiences of Rashad and Alexei suggest that this development of translation competence takes place in TEDT, and that it is sufficiently recognisable for these participants to secure paid employment in the industry.

Finally, this investigation has contributed to open education by providing concrete evidence of the role of communities in supporting learners as they engage with open content and tools (Lane, 2009). Likewise, it has highlighted that accessing such communities is not without challenges and that developing the necessary participatory skills can make the difference between being supported and being marginalised or excluded from valuable learning opportunities.

6.4 Contribution to practice

6.4.1 Implications for participants, students and translators

This investigation has shown that online volunteer translation, TEDT in this case, can be much more than an interesting way of using one’s free time. For the participants in this study, participation in TEDT can spark an interest in translation, or even be a calculated step in a journey towards education and professional translation. Participants can acquaint themselves with translation in a low-stakes situation, develop and expand their translation competence and be exposed to and try out a translator identity. In this way, TEDT allows participants to take steps to realise their goals, showing the importance of agency in the face of structural constraints (geographical and financial, for example). And it is through the use of open tools, content and resources that these possibilities are made available.

For all participants, the TEDT mission and the sense of purpose that they derive from it contribute greatly to attracting them and keeping them engaged. Those who have not had any contact with translation may be drawn by the social mission but eventually realise they want to do more with translation. As such, TEDT and other online volunteer translation projects can operate as a gateway or a stepping stone to the profession.

6.4.2 Implications for educators and educational institutions

This investigation has offered insights into online volunteer translation to further educators’ understanding of this phenomenon. This knowledge will be particularly useful to translation educators seeking to provide their learners with rich opportunities to participate in communities and settings in which they can develop their translation competence and their identity as translators.

Whilst connecting students with online volunteer translation communities like TEDT offers many learning opportunities, some ethical considerations are essential: ensuring that any pedagogical use is not exploitative or disruptive to other volunteers or to the TED community;
and respecting students’ ownership of their work and allowing them to decide whether to contribute their time and work without remuneration.

Faced with a new form of translation practice, in this case one that is freely available to learners, educators can either ignore it or explore the opportunities it offers both to their learners and to the development of their own academic practice. Lack of knowledge about new developments in the field, resulting from or aggravated by the time pressures that plague educators, often hinders innovation. This study has confirmed that online volunteer translation is a potential resource for translation education, a learning environment where participants can develop their translation competence and translator identity. As such it provides a useful space to complement translation education provided in formal settings, and can even be used as an alternative to work placements, combining volunteering and virtual placements. In this way, it can help education to fulfil the employability agenda and expand the idea of service learning (learning while serving the community, often the local community) by contributing to a global community. Furthermore, linking education with projects that have a social mission can assist universities in their efforts to make themselves more relevant to society, as Weller pointed out (2014, p. 17). It can also offer them the possibility of having a presence in spaces that attract high numbers of participants interested in particular fields, translation in this case. There are benefits to both education and online volunteer translation projects from working in partnership.

Exploring new developments in the field is an essential part of translation education, as teachers need to keep abreast of changes in the industry. If fact, translation educators often straddle professional practice and academia since many of them work or have worked as professional translators. So, the role of system convenor or broker is not new. By undertaking work at the boundary between practices (Wenger, 1998; Akkermann & Bakker, 2011) educators can explore online volunteer translation whilst developing their own knowledge alongside their students. This is also a way of ensuring their own practice (both academic and translation) does not become stale.

The view of online volunteer translation in academia seems quite restrictive of what this new form of practice constitutes: ‘an accidental training ground’ (O’Hagan, 2008), ‘a ground for playful experimentation’ or a ‘translation exercise treadmill’ for translation acquisition (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017, p. 254). However, this study has shown that it can be used in more ways than that. For those considering formal translation education, online volunteer translation can become a useful space for preparation and exploration before committing to the personal and financial investment of enrolling in formal education. For those with an aspiration to work professionally, who lack opportunities to engage with formal education, it can become a substitute for it. In this respect, this study has also highlighted the need for distance learning programmes as one of the ways of making translation education more accessible to those who are limited by geography, by lack of mobility, or by lack of funds.
6.4.3 Implications for professional translation

The development of expertise is an ongoing process and professionals seem to be already using online volunteer translation as a way of developing their expertise and their practice, encouraged no doubt by the fact that participation in volunteer activities is recognised as a form of CPD by professional associations such as ITI in the UK. Experienced professionals can still learn from peers, even from newcomers, some of whom may come with lots of experience of other valuable practices. For example, one of the TEDT participants interviewed for the pilot study was a professional audiovisual translator working on a PhD in subtitling, so her in-depth knowledge would have been useful to other participants, even very experienced translators. Equally, Susana came to the project with decades of experience as a technical and legal translator, and public service interpreter. The high proportion of professional translators who participate in online volunteer translation initiatives (up to one third in McDonough-Dolmaya’s study of Wikipedia (2012); 17% in Cámara’s (2014) survey of TEDT participants; over 80% in O’Brien and Schäler’s (2010) study of the Rosetta Foundation project) is notable.

The need for translation and translators is great across the globe and local context dictates what is an acceptable path to the profession in each setting. For some, there are forms of online volunteer translation, such as the crowdsourced translation used by Facebook, that challenge the professional status of translators, since those who start as volunteers and hope to make the transition to paid translation might flood the market with offers of cheap translation services, driving down prices and threatening the livelihoods of professionals. For many, however, online volunteer translation offers an affordable and convenient path towards professional translation, and is a complement, sometimes even a substitute, for formal training or education.

The subtitling landscape is growing and developing at vertiginous speed, with scarce input from research and academia. The fact that some of the participants (Salima, Lisa, Camille) report that the translation courses they are following dedicate little or no time to this growing market sector is worrying, and highlights a pressing need for educators to become familiar with new and evolving practices. In the field of translation, the industry appears to determine the conditions for successful access to the workplace and individuals try to meet these conditions in the ways that are available to them.

An important consideration is whether the practice of a community is recognized outside that community, and this depends very much on whether the knowledge created there and the meaning ascribed to that knowledge has currency beyond the boundaries of the community (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 16). In this study, the experiences of Alexei, who converted his hobby into a profession, or Rashad, who, having joined with no idea about translation or subtitling, went on to become a paid translator, to
set up a translation and localisation business and to secure a place on a postgraduate
translation qualification, indicate that the knowledge developed through participation in
TEDT does indeed have currency and exchange value in the translation market.

6.4.4 Implications for TEDT

TEDT is aware of the weaknesses in the system revealed in this investigation: the fact that
those who do not have the required level of experience (i.e. have not had 90 minutes of
work reviewed) are able to take on reviewing tasks; the scarcity of reviewers and
consequent delays to the review and publication system; and the damage that this inflicts
on volunteer motivation and engagement with the project. This investigation has highlighted
the extent to which these structural problems impact volunteers’ experiences and limit the
learning potential of the initiative. Although technological solutions have been discussed,
they have not been implemented so far, to the detriment of volunteers and TEDT alike.

The accounts by participants have also revealed some degree of confusion and a steep
learning curve experienced by newcomers to the project, in spite of the plethora of material
provided and the valuable work of language coordinators and project support staff. Some
form of structured training for volunteers could mitigate against these aspects that
negatively impact on motivation and engagement. For example, to avoid volunteers being
overwhelmed by the amount of information at the start, some short training tasks could be
provided to walk volunteers through the basics. These could be set up so as to ensure
participants could not take on any tasks until this initial training had been completed.
Likewise, a short module on reviewing, including feedback literacy, could be provided to be
completed before reviewing tasks could be attempted. These would mitigate against actions
that currently severely disrupt the experience of volunteers, as the data in this study has
shown.29 There is space for collaboration between translation education and online
volunteer translation initiatives such as TEDT to create training materials that are based on
robust online and distance learning pedagogy. A more structured approach to training
volunteers could increase motivation and the retention of volunteers, and make the TEDT

29 Post-viva note: Shortly after the submission of this thesis (21 October 2019), TEDT launched an
array of initiatives to improve the experience of new volunteers through more structured induction
and mentoring. These initiatives addressed some of the recommendations made in the thesis and
included: launch of a Getting started video (23 October 2019); launch of a mentoring scheme, piloted
in the Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese communities (15 November 2019); launch of a new
onboarding process that requires new volunteers to read introductory information before being
allowed to complete registration (10 December 2019); expansion of mentoring scheme to Arabic,
French and Korean (12 March 2020); and launch of a Reviewing video with guidance for new
reviewers (24 March 2020).
project more inclusive by taking into account the needs of those potential volunteers who do not come equipped with the skills required to succeed.

TEDT is currently benefitting from the contributions of many professional translators, translation students and translation educators who take part in the project.\textsuperscript{30} However, whilst the main focus of TEDT is to ensure that knowledge crosses languages and borders, little attention seems to be paid to the skills required to make this possible and to the training in translation that participation in TEDT affords to its participants. Information is provided on how to translate talks according to the project guidelines and on the basics of subtitling. However, there does not seem to be much recognition within TEDT of the use that volunteers make of it as a route to translation education and/or the translation profession. No attempt is made to situate the activity of online volunteer translation in relation to the wider field of professional translation. There is no explicit link between what is learnt in TEDT and the skills required to work professionally. And volunteers are not encouraged to go beyond the project to expand their knowledge through formal education or training courses in translation if their experience as online volunteer translators has whetted their appetite for further involvement in translation, be it professionally or otherwise.

Finally, given the evidence in this study that volunteers appreciate rewards that are developmental in nature (echoing O’Brien and Schäler, 2010), there could be room in the reward structure to offer sponsored places or some kind of financial assistance for those volunteers who want to develop their expertise in translation by accessing formal translation training or education. These could be in addition to the specific meetings for TEDT volunteers that are already included in some TED conferences, as well as occasional online seminars, which are useful opportunities to discuss issues and share practice.

### 6.5 Recommendations for further research

As an area that has received little attention from researchers, there are many aspects of online volunteer translation that still need to be explored. From an educational perspective, it would be useful to understand the experiences of teachers who have incorporated TEDT or other online volunteer translation activities into their practice. General attitudes amongst translation educators towards this phenomenon and its potential incorporation into the classroom would also merit study to find out what prevents so many teachers from making use of these valuable opportunities.

\textsuperscript{30} Post-viva note: On the 17 December 2019 TEDT advertised for new volunteers in ProZ.com, ‘an online community and workplace for language professionals’ that boasts over a million registered users, in an effort to attract more professional translators and university students to the project.
Similarly, motivational factors such as enjoyment, reward, or professional benefits, have been shown to be important in the narratives of the participants in this study, all of whom had joined TEDT voluntarily. Further research could assess whether these motivational factors carry over to the experiences of students who are completing this kind of activity as part of a class exercise. Data from such projects (Szymczak, 2013; Al-Shehari, 2017; Comas-Quinn and Fuertes-Gutiérrez, 2019) seems to suggest that this is the case, however, there is more that can be explored around the ethics of making volunteering compulsory and how that affects motivation, and any additional difficulties that students may encounter in participating in online volunteer translation if this is not done out of choice but as part of an assignment or course task.

6.6 Final reflection

Online volunteer translation is a new form of production, a new practice that has emerged in and expanded the landscape of practice of translation. As such it has also created new opportunities and spaces for learning which, for the participants involved in this study, show that ‘there are multiple paths of becoming and multiple spaces and places of belonging in a culturally diverse and digitally mediated world’ (Pedersen, Nørgaard & Köppe, 2018). However, this is not without challenges, nor does learning happen naturally or consistently for all participants. Educators can play an important part in promoting critical and reflective engagement with this practice.

The development of translation competence, understood as a problem-solving activity that can be improved through deliberate practice, is viewed as an emergent process which is complex, dynamic and unpredictable (Kiraly, 2014). Incorporating online volunteer translation into a pedagogical approach that builds on situatedness, authenticity and openness can provide learners with access to a learning environment in which they can be exposed to the full complexity of translation, cultivate their practice, rehearse and develop a translator identity, whilst being supported by others. Learners can do this whilst engaging in activities that they enjoy and find interesting, and with others who share their interest.

This thesis has explored a space for learning through participation that is freely available to all. It has shown how this constitutes a resource that can help educators rebalance formal education away from an excessive reliance on the reification of knowledge, whilst recognizing, connecting with and building on learning that happens outside its own boundaries. Online volunteer translation projects such as this can enrich a curriculum of transformative experiences, in which taking charge of one’s own learning is prioritized over providing a ‘complete’ package of content. The focus of such a curriculum will be on developing the person and their capabilities to deal with the rapidly changing field of translation. It will not be focused on training, but on education through transformation and development of the whole person.
7 References


Marco, J. (2016) ‘On the margins of the profession: the work placement as a site for the literary translator trainee’s legitimate peripheral participation’, *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 29–43.


8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Facebook Statement of Rights and Responsibilities

This is an extract of the Facebook’s Statement of Rights and Responsibilities that were available at https://www.facebook.com/legal/terms when the ethics application for this doctoral research project was being prepared. In bold, clause 5.7.

5. Protecting Other People’s Rights

We respect other people’s rights, and expect you to do the same.

5.1 You will not post content or take any action on Facebook that infringes someone else’s rights or otherwise violates the law.

5.2 We can remove any content you post on Facebook if we believe that it violates this Statement.

5.3 We will provide you with tools to help you protect your intellectual property rights. To learn more, visit our How to Report Claims of Intellectual Property Infringement page.

5.4 If we removed your content for infringing someone else’s copyright, and you believe we removed it by mistake, we will provide you with an opportunity to appeal.

5.5 If you repeatedly infringe other people’s intellectual property rights, we will disable your account when appropriate.

5.6 You will not use our copyrights or trademarks (including Facebook, the Facebook and F Logos, FB, Face, Poke, Wall and 32665) without our written permission.

5.7 If you collect information from users, you will: obtain their consent, make it clear you (and not Facebook) are the one collecting their information, and post your privacy policy.

5.8 You will not post anyone’s social security, driver’s license, credit card, debit card, or bank account numbers or other similar content on Facebook.
8.2 Appendix B – Web survey

The survey included exit points for respondents who selected ‘No’ to eligibility question 1, ‘Are you planning to become a professional translator?’, and for those who reported their age to be 17 or under in eligibility question 2 (see Figure 17 below for the survey map).

The entire survey is reproduced below.

Figure 19 Survey map
Are you planning a career as a professional translator? If the answer is yes, I'd like to hear from you, whether you are enrolled on a Translation course, already translating professionally or just planning to work in the translation industry in the future.

I am trying to locate members of the TED Translators community who plan to become professional translators, i.e. those who make a living from translation, to find out about their experiences of participating in TED Translators. If you fit this description, I’d be grateful if you could fill in this short questionnaire (it shouldn’t take more than 20 minutes). This questionnaire is aimed at participants who are 18 years old or over.

I’m a doctoral researcher investigating how people engage with TED Translators as part of their learning and career journey. You can find out more about me by visiting my TED profile or my academic profile.

If you have any questions about this questionnaire or my research project you can contact me at <email address>. If you have any concerns about the research you can contact my supervisor <email address>.

CONSENT

By clicking on the Next button below you are agreeing to participate in the study.

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to request that the information you have supplied is removed from the study. Data collected will be stored securely and will be accessible only to the researcher, her supervisors and examiners. All data will be anonymised prior to publication and participants will not be identified (or identifiable).

Eligibility (1) (p. 2)

Are you planning to become a professional translator? In this study a 'professional translator' is understood as someone who makes a living from translation (definition by Professor Anthony Pym, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona) *Required

- Yes
- No <skips to page 12>
- I already work as a professional translator

Eligibility (2) (p. 3)

What is your age? *Required

- 17 years or under <skips to page 12>
- 18-25 years
- 26-35 years
- 36-45 years
• 46-55 years
• 56-65 years
• 66-75 years
• 76 years or over
• Prefer not to say but I am 18 or over

**Studying to become a professional translator (p. 4)**

Are you currently enrolled in formal studies to become a professional translator?  *Required

• Yes
• No

**Current studies (p. 5)**

Write down the title and level of the qualification you are currently studying towards, and any other details that you think are relevant. For example: 'Final year of a University degree in Languages and Translation' or 'Part-time MA in Technical Translation'.  *Required


**Not currently studying to become a professional translator (p. 6)**

If you are not currently enrolled in formal studies to become a professional translator, which of the following options reflects your situation more accurately?  *Required

• I've already completed my studies to become a professional translator.
• My current studies are unrelated to my plans to become a professional translator.
• I'm planning to start formal studies to become a professional translator in the future.
• I'm planning to become a professional translator but I haven't completed studies and don't have plans to do so in the future.
• Other

If you have selected Other, please provide additional information here.


**Contribution to TED Translators (p. 7)**

What activities have you carried out in TED Translators?  *Required

• Translating
• Transcribing
• Reviewing
• Being a language coordinator
• Other

If you selected Other, please specify:


You can provide additional information on this question here.
What are your working languages in TED Translators? Add any information that you consider relevant. *Required

How long have you contributed to TED Translators? Add any information that you consider relevant. *Required

How many talks have you worked on? Think of all the talks you have worked on, whether your work has been published or not. It doesn't matter if you cannot remember exactly, just give an approximate number. *Required

Which of the following sentences best describes your initial motivation to contribute to TED Translators? *Required

- I am contributing to TED Translators on my own initiative.
- I am contributing to TED Translators as part of my studies (an activity set up by a teacher or which I can count towards my class work).
- Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

You can add here any additional information about your initial motivation to contribute to TED Translators.

What keeps you contributing to TED Translators? *Required

Experience of contributing to TED Translators (p. 8)

I'm interested in finding out more about your experience of contributing to TED Translators. Please write an account, as detailed as possible, of what contributing to TED Translators feels like to you. Make sure you include a specific example or anecdote that shows the positive and/or negative aspects of contributing to TED Translators.

Interviews (p. 9)

I would like to interview a small number of participants about their experiences of contributing to TED Translators. Interviews typically last between 45-60 minutes and are conducted on Skype or on the phone. Times can be arranged at your convenience, and you can change your mind later if you no longer want to be interviewed or no longer want your information to be included in the study.
Are you willing to take part in an interview? *Required
- Yes
- No

Contact details (p. 10)
You've indicated that you are willing to take part in an interview. Please enter your contact details below, so that I can get in touch with you to arrange a suitable time.

Your name *Required
<text box>
Your email address *Required
<text box>
Your Facebook profile
<text box>

General information (p. 11)
What is your gender? Optional
- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Which country do you live in?
<select from drop down>

Thank you (p. 12)
Thanks for your willingness to fill in this questionnaire.

This study focuses on TED Translators participants who are planning to become professional translators and that are 18 years old or over.

If you have indicated that you are not planning to become a professional translator or that you are under 18 years of age, you don’t need to complete the rest of the questions.

Thanks for your time!

Thank you (p. 13)
Many thanks for your participation. You can get in touch with me at <email address> if you have any questions about this questionnaire or my research.
8.3 Appendix C – Interview schedule

Information sheet and consent form – any questions

Nature of the conversational interview.

I’ll be recording the interview so that I can transcribe it later.

Putting participants at ease – Tell me a bit about yourself, your background, languages, what you do outside of volunteering in TED Translators...

Research Question 1:

- What are the experiences of participation in TEDT of those TEDT contributors who plan to become professional translators?

Tell me a bit about your experience of contributing to TED Translators.

How did you get started?

What did you expect it to be like? What did you know about it before?

How was the experience initially? How did you feel?

Had you done anything like this before? (other volunteering, other online communities or projects)

Can you describe what you do? Maybe choose a recent example and talk me through how you chose and complete a task. (What happens?)

How do you find it? How does it feel doing this?

Can you tell me a bit more about what you have done so far? (How often / how much?)

Anecdotes / stories:

Tell me about a very good experience you’ve had during your contribution to TEDT.

Tell me about a very bad experience you’ve had during your contribution to TEDT.

What is the most important or interesting thing you are getting out?

Tell me a bit more about what you think you learn by participating in TEDT.

Could you get this doing something else or in another way? How?

Have your views about TEDT changed since you started participating? In what way?

Would you recommend this to others who want to become professional translators? Students / translators? Why?
Research Question 2 & 3:

- How do these contributors perceive their participation in TEDT in relation to their educational and professional aspirations?

What are your plans for the future, education/training and professional?

How does participating in TEDT fit in with your plans for the future?

How does participating in TEDT relate to what you are doing in your training / course?

How does participating in TEDT relate to professional translation?

Closing

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience of participating in TEDT?

Are there any other people you know of who might be interested in participating in this research?
8.4 Appendix D – Sample invitation to interview

(Sent to the survey respondents selected for interview)

Dear XXX

Thank you very much for completing the questionnaire and indicating that you are available for interview. I’m really looking forward to finding out more about your experience as a TED Translator.

I’d like to arrange a time for an interview to take place between now and the end of November or early December if possible. I can be flexible so **please just suggest a couple of times that would be convenient to you** and I will try to fit in with that. Don’t forget to tell me where you will be connecting from so that we can work out any time differences.

The interview shouldn’t last more than one hour, and will be conducted online (through Skype preferably) and recorded so that I have a complete record of the conversation. Attached to this message you will find a brief information sheet about the research project and a consent form for you to consider before the interview.

If you have any questions or comments on this invitation, please don’t hesitate to contact me. For any concerns, you can contact my supervisor at The Open University, UK, Dr <name>, <email address>.

I’m very grateful for your interest and look forward to receiving your suggested times for the interview.

Best wishes

Anna

Anna Comas-Quinn
Doctoral researcher, The Open University
8.5 Appendix E – Information sheet and consent form

(Sent to those who confirmed availability for an interview)

INFORMATION SHEET

Project title:
Experiences of online volunteer translation and implications for translator education

Project leader:
Anna Comas-Quinn, Doctoral Researcher, The Open University.

Aim of the project
To identify contributors to TED Translators (TEDT) who plan to become professional translators and conduct qualitative research (in the form of an online survey and one-to-one interviews) to answer the following questions:

What are the experiences of participation in TEDT of those TEDT contributors who plan to become professional translators?

How do these contributors perceive their participation in TEDT in relation to their educational and professional aspirations?

Types of data to be collected and methods of collecting data
A qualitative survey will be placed in the Facebook TEDT groups to collect general information about contributors and their experiences of participation.

A number of survey respondents who have indicated willingness to be interviewed will be invited to an interview, which will be conducted online through skype or similar (or by phone if necessary).

Confidentiality and data protection
All data collected during the interviews will be anonymized. If necessary, any data from individuals will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research.

All data will remain strictly confidential and will be used for the sole purpose of this research project. Data will be kept for ten years following the end of the research project, and will then be destroyed.
Participants will be able to withdraw from the study at any time with no adverse consequences.

Participants will have the opportunity to request that data they have supplied be destroyed at any time during the research project (up to the end of January 2018).

Risks

The researcher on this project is unaware of any potential risk associated with the research.

Contact

If you wish to contact the researcher of this project, please email Anna Comas-Quinn at <email address>. If you have any concerns about the project, you can contact the research supervisor, <name> at <email address>.

Dissemination

The information gathered as part of this research project will be analysed and findings will be available on request. The anonymised data will be used for educational and research purposes, and will be included in publications arising from this project.
CONSENT FORM

Project title:
Experiences of online volunteer translation and implications for translator education

Agreement to Participate:

I, ………………… agree to take part in this research project.

I have received an information sheet and have had the purpose of the research project explained to me.

I have agreed to take part in the interview and I understand that the interview will be recorded.

I have been informed that I may refuse to participate at any point by simply saying so, and that I can request that any information I have provided be destroyed by simply contacting the researcher before the end of January 2018.

I have been assured that my confidentiality will be protected as specified in the information sheet and that the information I will provide during the interview will be strictly used for the sole purpose of this research project.

I agree that the information that I will provide can be used for educational or research purposes, including publication. All data provided will be treated anonymously.

I assign the copyright for my contribution to The Open University, for use in education, research and publication.

I understand that if I have any concerns or difficulties I can contact <email address> who is supervising this research.

Signed: ……………………

Date: ………………………
8.6 Appendix F – Audit trail for individual profiles

This is an example of the process followed to create the short profiles of each participant. In blue are the phrases from the transcription that were used in the short profile.

Alexei, Ukraine, 46-55

I: Good, fantastic. To start with can you tell me a bit about yourself, your background, languages, what you do outside of TED Translation?

A: First of all, I don't have any linguistic education, as a student I studied Avionics at <name> Institute, we had some basic English classes, but... So for some time English was just my hobby. When the Soviet Union collapsed and we got access to movies, books, papers in English it was xxxx to understand all this information so I studied English on my own, and as a result my knowledge of English is lopsided, I can understand it but I'm not so good at speaking. So afterwards when I was able to understand English, I had some desire to use some knowledge in a way, because I don't like to be a passive consumer for information. So and the simplest way to do so was in fansub because to translate some long text isn't so good for xxxxx. I had some fansubbing communities but I didn't like what was going on there because it was like chaos, I couldn't understand why the translator of this subtitle said xxx so the result of my work xxx the quality of most of the translations was done horrible, to put it mildly. And then I found the TED community and I liked it for all the translation there it was ok. So for about three years I translate subtitles there just for fun, and then after a while the TED Translation is based, it works in Amara subtitling platform... xxxxxx, from time to time they sent messages that they require some translators for certain languages, I applied a couple of times and after all my application was reviewed and was included by <name> and I began to work for them. And from the beginning they said that they can't pay much, it's just, they said, it's just coffee money, but then it was quite suitable for me. And after a while there were some problems in my country and my currency devalued three times during one year, so it was time to find some part-time work, and I began to search for other clients, beyond Amara, and after two years of such part-time work I have noticed that my part-time work pays much more than my main work so I quit the full time work and began to work as a paid translator. So it's almost a year and a half...

I: Say that again, sorry?

A: I work as a free-lance translator for a year and a half.
8.7 Appendix G – Profile and transcript check

Dear XXX

Thank you very much for taking part in the interview for my doctoral research project on the experiences of ‘TED Translators’ participants who plan to become professional translators.

I’ve completed the transcription of your interview and have created a short profile for you, which will be included in my thesis under a pseudonym. The profile has been written using your own words from the interview transcription (full sentences and paragraphs mostly), which I have selected and sequenced to create a short summary of your experience. Where I’ve had to add text to ensure coherence, my words are in red.

The criteria I’ve used to select the content of this short profile is as follows:

- contains basic information needed to preserve an overall picture of the participant’s lived experience in relation to the phenomenon studied;
- avoids specific details that could lead to identification of the participant (name of employers or educational institutions or specific roles, for example);
- avoids duplication and keeps profile at around 500 words.

I would be very grateful if you could read your profile (attached) and let me know by Friday 29th December whether you’re happy with it as a reasonable representation of your experience of participating in TED Translators.

The profile will be included in the thesis to give an idea of the individual experiences, and the full interview transcriptions will be analysed to identify common themes and differences that can address the research questions.

If you want to check the whole transcript, please let me know and I will be happy to send it to you. Transcripts are very long and more time consuming to check so there is no expectation that you check yours unless you actually want to.

Once again, I’m very grateful for your time and for your willingness to take part in this research project.

With best wishes

Anna Comas-Quinn

Doctoral researcher, The Open University
Appendix H – Participants’ profiles

Salima, Tunisia, 18-25

I'm a student, I major in English, it's a teacher training course, but you can also do translation. I'm planning to do both. I also do some volunteering teaching, I have organised events, I do a blog, a youth-oriented space online.

I started with English subtitling. For someone who doesn't know much about technology, like myself, I found it very easy to do. It's very good that they give you the whole month as a deadline, because people think it's easy but it's not.

The talk I started with was a speech delivered by a Tunisian activist, and I attended one of her speeches here in the country and when I was doing my research about what she does and what her organisation does, I found her video, so I went to translate that.

It was a 15 minutes talk and it took me 3 to 4 day to transcribe it. I wanted to make it good from the start. I watched a lot of videos of how to transcribe, how to transcribe the visual supports, and the clapping and every sound…

I was very excited; I would cut from my study hours to do it. But then I submitted two or three videos but I got no feedback. They were not approved and they haven't got any feedback. I did enjoy it very much, except the experience of getting no answers to my emails, and no credit to my videos. So now I feel a little discouraged to continue.

I still want to do it because there are so many inspirational talks that I want to transcribe or translate, and some talks made me discover new words or idiomatic expressions… and it's quite beneficial for my courses. I used some of them in my presentations. You can learn something from every video, and that contributed a lot to me as a person and to my studies, I could learn at the same time.

The most beneficial part is that it's volunteering and I think everyone needs a little experience of volunteering in their life because it adds so much to you as a person and then as a professional maybe.

I didn't know that there were volunteer translators before, I thought that in TED it was only professionals. I saw the amount of people involved. It was huge, people from all over the globe. Some people need those translations so bad and they cannot access them because of their language. Sometimes there are Japanese and Korean videos that we need in my classes.

We mainly translate literature texts, journalistic texts; sometimes we include famous speeches. Because we deal with technology on a daily basis, we learn such things [technology] by ourselves, I don't think we will have a whole class for that, we would need extra hours.
If one day I work with a company to transcribe their talks, I wouldn't have the trouble of someone who is a beginner or who has never done something like transcribing on TED.

8.8.2 Susana, UK (Argentina), 56-65

I have been in the UK for nearly 40 years. I'm Argentinian and I came when I was just 20. In Argentina, I studied chemistry and in the UK I studied sciences and mathematics.

In addition to the work that I did, I did lots of technical translations for a couple of agencies, highly technical stuff. I started doing some court interpreting and later I actually took part in training and tutoring. I loved interpreting. I absolutely thrived on the adrenaline.

In time the world changed very significantly, agencies took over; they wanted to reduce the amount that they paid. I valued my profession; I didn't want to devalue what I did, so I didn't want to work for peanuts.

All of this coincided with the fact that I'd turned the magic age where I could actually retire from local government. I had a career in local government, I sort of provided advice and support to politicians.

I always had a streak on me that I wanted to write. I found the Master in Translation and I thought this is really my aim now, to get to this stage where I can translate literary work. I had been a translator for many years, but what I want to do now is absolutely totally new to me.

I was just about to start writing my final assignment and thought, ok, whatever I had learnt, I want to put that into practice. When I applied for TED I immediately got accepted.

I actually knew TED because many years ago I remember coming across a TED talk by a chap called Joshua Prager. I was totally inspired by this guy, so much so that I actually dropped him a note and he responded. It was wonderful. So, when the opportunity came for me to actually do it... immediately it was ‘Oh, yes, I love this!’

It's really exciting to know that other people are watching the videos and can access that information; it's so much joy for me. They send you a note saying ‘I loved it so much’. Positive feedback encourages you to keep going. I know it sounds really corny but it is such a fantastic feeling.

It has actually given me a sense of purpose. I see it as a brilliant opportunity. Because it has a label, because it's a set of such interesting material, you feel that you are part of it.

I've been invited by TED to a talk in London, they sent it to me as a reward for having been active and I thought: ‘Wow! This is fantastic!’ I think there's a kudos, this is almost like getting close to... film stars.
TED has helped me focus. When I come to select the books that I’m going to be translating, my brain has already been switched on to a new mode, a new mode for learning and doing more research and looking at the different voices and getting to understand the speakers and what motivates them to stand there.

I’m nearly 60, I’m doing this for fun, the study that I’m doing is for fun. I’m doing this for me.

8.8.3 Alexei, Ukraine, 46-55

I don’t have any linguistic education; I studied Avionics. When the Soviet Union collapsed and we got access to movies, books, papers, in English, I studied English on my own. I don’t like to be a passive consumer for information, the simplest way to do so was in fansub… but I didn’t like what was going on there because it was like chaos… the quality of most of the translations was horrible.

I found the TED community and I liked it, so for about three years I translate subtitles there just for fun. In the Amara subtitling platform from time to time they sent messages that they require some translators for certain languages, I applied and I began to work for them. From the beginning they said that they can’t pay much, they said it’s just coffee money.

After a while there were some problems in my country and my currency devalued three times during one year, so it was time to find some part-time work. I began to search for other clients, beyond Amara, and after two years of such part-time work I have noticed that my part-time work pays much more than my main work so I quit the full time work and began to work as a paid translator. I work as a free-lance translator for a year and a half. I translate subtitles.

When I started I had to study, to learn, I began reading all the articles on this TED Translators site, then I began to search for other articles, for books, for video materials, so actually I began to study translation. In 2015 I took a series of seminars, which were organised by a Russian translation agency, and I got a certificate and it did help me to work later as a professional subtitler. In this profession one has to learn practically all your life.

Now as a full-time translator I don’t have much time for this job, unfortunately. I tend to find time for transcribing TED Talks in Ukrainian, as the Ukrainian community isn’t as big as Russian one.

Our life attends mostly around money, and after that we are mostly on our own. I liked the feeling that I belong to some community, to some group of people who share the same ideas, the same devotion, and share that not for the money but for fun.

When people ask how can I begin work as a translator, to translate movies, I tell them you must get some practice before you can ask for a paid job with a translation agency. TED is
a great place for beginners to gain experience. It changed my life, I got a new profession and I met some interesting people.

8.8.4 Nathan, Tanzania, 18-25

I finished college last year and right now I'm doing entrepreneurship. I pursued the diploma in electrical and electronics engineering.

I started to do the TED translations in 2015. During my first time it was a bit tedious, because even for just a five minutes talk it would be very much hard for me to get it translated in a few days, just typing and making sure that everything was going all right, and understanding and reading those guidelines and such things.

It's something very fabulous. Some people are getting interested in TED because the language isn't a barrier anymore, they can watch the talk and understand what is being said through the subtitles, which are in Swahili. For me it feels really good because I'm seeing my work is paying more, what my community is doing.

I attended this TED Global 2017 conference, which was held here in Tanzania, and it was really fascinating. There are really fascinating talks from that conference, and so far I've done two translations. My recent work was a talk about African history. I learnt some things that I didn't know and it intrigued me. I said to myself that I should share this in my community. I actually find some schools to spread this talk, because it's a talk about the things which are very important but seems to be forgotten.

I'm trying to look for all the things that my society needs, like talks which are insighting about technology, talks which are insighting about women rights, talks which are insighting for poverty. I started a blog for non-profit reasons and I was writing in my native language, Swahili, to share knowledge about technology, especially mobile technology.

TED exposes me into a learning platform, learning by meeting different kind of people, learning by facing challenges, learning how to cope with teamwork, and also learning about different cultures. I've done a translation of a talk and I'm expecting perhaps I'll get someone to review it within two or three days, but then you find it's not possible. Makes you feel, not actually bad, but disappointed - I can say that I wish things to go much faster.

I'm trying to split my time between my personal works and the TED Translators programme. I think considerably about the time that's available to TED Translators work because I can see the impact, I can see the need of it.

Since I started to do the translations, I have seen a vast need for the proper translation. I can talk about the field of engineering; so many machines are coming with a manual that has been written in English or perhaps other languages. Maybe some day I can find a means to learn, a deeper understanding of how to do the translations, like getting these
manuals into Swahili, like someone who doesn't have the English can perhaps do the maintenance.

I had a conference call a month ago with the deputy director of TED Translators. We were speaking about some ideas on how we can engage our Swahili community with this translation project. I'm just seeing the big need for this kind of a thing, and perhaps TED themselves hadn't thought about it. In this way they are putting on TEDx conferences, they could reconsider and put the same investment in the TED Translators programme.

8.8.5 Eleni, Greece, 46-55

I'm 51 years old, married with children, working as a secretary for 27 years now in a multinational company.

My dream from adolescence was to become a psychologist, but I had to start working full time. But this dream never left me and when I was 42 I started psychology. It was a marvellous experience. It took me 9 years to get the bachelor because I had my family, I was working and studying at the same time.

I was following a page in Facebook that published psychology articles. I saw they have volunteering team that does the translation of psychology articles from English to Greek, I thought it would be a good idea to do it, to practice my English, fill my free time in a constructive way, and I would also help to spread the knowledge.

I started also with TED, it's about two months now, and it's so very challenging, sometimes I have to stop cos I feel I can't, my mind does not proceed with the work, I have to take a break and start this task a few minutes later with a relaxed mind.

It's amazing how many hours it requires, a minute of speech may take half an hour or more to translate. I want to give a very good translation, something that is not mechanical, like Google translation. I daren't do it hastily and very quickly.

It feels like a game to me, I feel that I'm playing with words, it's very stimulating, because when there is some free time at work, just surfing the internet is making me more tired, I feel sleepy, but doing this keeps me alive, I feel fresh when I finish this task.

I had to do the synchronising and I found it extremely difficult, extremely frustrating. There was lots of instructions in TED, I couldn't understand anything. I was afraid that I might not be able to continue if I fail to do it.

I thought at the beginning that as soon as I ask for someone to review my video, immediately it will happen but I see that this is not the case. This gives me some anxiety and worry. I'm afraid that my choices will not like to others, and they will remain unreviewed so my work will be in vain.
It helps my English, I meet new people, I might even learn new things from Psychology. I also use new skills that I did not use up til now. I get a glimpse in other societies. It's interesting for me as a psychologist, to see how other societies work.

I appreciate knowledge very much but I don't think at the moment I'll do any more education, because of the cost. Maybe some day I will be able to afford it, a course for a very low price, maybe in translating. If I continue doing this translation maybe some time I will have so much experience that maybe I'll be able to do it professional, when I retire maybe, but these are just vague thoughts, it's not a plan.

8.8.6 Rashad, Sudan, 26-35

I studied engineering, leather industries. I graduated in 2011. I found that engineering is not my passion, so I started digging within myself and finally found that I love translation. I read a lot of books; I enrolled in workshops here in Sudan.

I found TED. I started in 2014 and I have been active since that time. I translate approximately between two and four hours daily, except Friday – here in Sudan, the weekend is on Friday –, at office, at home, at transportation sometimes, whenever I have free time.

Some of my friends keep asking: Why do you do this? You can make huge amount of money if you translate four hours every day in a big project. I attended the TEDGlobal in Tanzania, and TED paid my ticket, so for me, this work is unpaid, but somehow they pay you money to enrich your experience.

I feel this project added a lot to me, improved my translation skills very much, even I learned how to stand on the stage and speak. I really enjoy it. Every TED Talk I work on is just like a live lecture for me. I think today I'm totally different that I was three years ago. It is one of the best things that happened to me.

Now I have friends in Saudi Arabia, in Syria, in Morocco, in Sudan, in US, in Europe… they are distinguished, they are well educated and every day they are doing something different and something useful for their communities, and for the world.

I started my professional diploma in Media and Literary Translation in Cairo, but due to financial problems I was forced to come back to Sudan. I felt really lost, but I turned this negative feeling into a positive one, a website project. We take materials on the history, on Sudanese songs… and articles from Sudanese writers and we translate them from Arabic into English and post them online.

I applied for a student scholarship in UK and I got my first unconditional offer from <name> University to study Translation Studies. In my personal statement I spoke a lot about the
TED Translators project. I have good experience in translation, in reviewing. I have a considerable number of talks published.

I work as a freelance translator. I cofounded a company in Sudan, a web solutions and translation services agency. When I get back from my Master degree, I plan to devote my time to the agency, to make it bigger, and to have other Sudanese people working through this agency, you can say to make money.

I'm a translator and I work as a paid translator sometimes but I'm not officially a translator, because I don't have the solid basic of translation, but after doing my Masters degree I can say I'm a professional translator.

8.8.7 Lisa, Sweden, 36-45

I'm a teacher, I teach English at the adult education. I study at the same time to become a translator.

I have used TED Talks in my teaching, then I sort of stumbled into the translating part, and I thought it was interesting and this was after I started studying to become a translator. I decided to give it a try, because there's so many talks on TED Talks and not that many that are translated into Swedish.

I also liked the fact that somebody was going to review my translations before they were published. It was a way to test myself as well, to just get some practice translating. You want everything to be correct from the beginning and then I had a few mistakes, but on the other hand I've learnt from them. Of course, then someone criticising your work is always a bit difficult but I chose to see it as an opportunity to learn something.

I enjoyed it. It is a challenge. Sometimes it's kind of frustrating. That's also what I like about it that you have to use your brain. Recently I haven't had time, I feel a bit sad because I enjoy it. I would like to have time to do it.

I get a lot of practice and I think subtitles is something I would like to do when I become a translator. We don't do any subtitling in the course; it's just non-fictional texts.

I learn something from the different topics. Also expanding my vocabulary in English and different topics, because as a translator you have to know a lot of things. I also get my name there. I thought of this as a way to show what I can do, like a portfolio.

I enjoy doing it and I think it's a good thing, cos there's so many good talks. I'm able to help speakers of Swedish enjoy these talks as well. I told my colleagues if they find something in English that they want translated into Swedish, I can help them.

Because I work part-time, this is something I could do on the side to begin with, to start building a company perhaps, a one man show, then I don't have to depend on this straight
away, so that's my plan at the moment, to start small, on the side and then perhaps if I get busy enough I can stop teaching

I see it as practice and a way of having something to show what I've done.

8.8.8 Gina, Canada (China), 36-45

I came to Canada six, almost seven years ago. My home country is China. I did a university study, English Literature and Psychology, it took me about five years. Some people said I should continue to pursue a Master programme but I think I may need a break, this is a new country and everything is different.

I put a lot of things out to see what I'm going to pick out, and then I just think of translation. I actually enjoy this. It has been one month I'm doing this kind of practice, not just on TED.

When I came to Canada my first goal was to study at Monterrey University, because that's the place where you study translation, so I wanted to go to United States, but it seems not so easy because the tuition is high and I'd have to be there I don't know for how long.

While I was looking for the subjects I'm going to translate, I found it's not so easy, because you want something that is interesting and they're not so academically difficult, and are so long, and because at the start you need something encouraging and also inspiring. I remembered that when I was taking psychology class, the professor always showed us the TED Talks. I always thought I should translate that and share that with my friends.

Basically, my experience is positive. Because it's a volunteer job, it's pure pleasure you know? There isn't any pressure, so it gives actually the translating kind of pleasure. Also it gives you positive feeling, that's what I feel when I'm doing TED. The audience reaction and the speech of the presenter gives you a kind of lifting feeling. Actually, when I'm doing TED it's not my best time. I'm doing TED when I'm tired. I don't feel I'm tired, I feel I'm relaxed. It's like therapeutic.

One reason I want to do this is because I feel I'm losing connection with my home culture, it's the language, you know, to consolidate my identity, so doing this translation actually helps. I can see a lot of concepts, ideas, I can relate them to my own Chinese culture, and I enjoy it.

It's very professional even if it's volunteer platform. I think this shows that people are taking it very seriously. I think it's very sophisticated because it has a tutorial, and because it's volunteers, you have to do a lot of self-study, you have to explore everything yourself.

It shows my commitment to doing a thing, it's very important for me to give me a kind of confidence that I can do a thing and stick to it. I can show it to my friends, look, this is what I did! If you are going to give some water you have to have a well, and you don't even notice
where the well is and how you contributed to the well, but... that's what I feel, nothing comes easy but if you're just dedicated to one thing... you will become yourself.

I think for at least 6 months I'm just going to focus on translation, TED and other kind of work I do, so I think after I got my contract, become professional translator, become stabilized, I may go back to school to study. Because I think learning is a lifelong thing, and I just want to be in the kind of environment and learn something.

8.8.9 Alejandra, UK (Argentina), 36-45

I'm from Argentina. I've lived in London for 13 years. I trained as an engineer, but I've always worked in management consultancy. I've always had this idea of leaving consultancy and working as a translator, or maybe doing both on a freelance basis. I am researching the possibility, working out if I need to train, how much I could possibly earn.

I came across the TED project and started translating some talks. You translate and you have to wait for review, and you don't get reviewed, you don't go anywhere. At first I did an English transcription to work with the system, learning to break the lines, to do the timing, to work the software. It got reviewed eventually but it's still waiting for approval. Then I did another Spanish transcription and then two translations. And still nothing happening. Then one day, one of the coordinators reviewed and approved one of my talks. Now I have a profile online, so that changed everything, because before that I was honestly thinking, oh, what's the point?

I changed my expectations. I know that if you pick a talk nobody is interested in, nobody is going to review it, but at least I'm kind of there and I'll soon start reviewing and then I suppose I can review for people and people can review for you.

I make notes on the titles, things that could be debatable, where I got the source from, if it's a translation from a literary quote, which translation I used. I'm making myself my own guide, the links that I use most often, the comments I've had from previous reviews that I need to remember.

Up until now I've tried to pick tasks in subjects that I'm interested in, because if I go into translation I'd like to specialise in technical subjects, although I suspect when you start reviewing or if I become a coordinator one day you need to approve tasks, it won't always be the ones I'd pick.

The second talk I translated, it was picked up by someone. I checked her and she had only just joined. I think people just don't read the guides. It is a bit pot luck. Once the talk is out there you don't know who is going to pick it up

If this work I'm doing for TED paid, I'd be happy doing this for a living. It makes me really happy. I find it challenging, stimulating, fun. I love it. I learn some different subjects, I keep
up my language skills. It's about the collaboration and interactions remotely with a big diverse group of people. That's not easy, it's a skill that has to be learned.

It's really useful because you can show a portfolio of experience; it's published and gives you exposure. When I apply for a course, I can also support my application saying that I have some experience, this is how I work.

The thing about TED is the breadth, it's so global, and the scale, it's just massive.

It's nice to say that you're part of such a huge project, and it's actually really cool.

8.8.10 Keiko, Caribbean (Japan), 26-35

I'm Japanese. I live in the Caribbean. When I got here, I didn't have any work, I didn't have friends, I didn't really know this country. My mother in law knew that I was interested in language so she asked me if I want to be a translator.

I always liked learning English, but I didn't have a proper translation training. I was Googling what can I do to improve my translation skill and then someone told me that TED Talks is always looking for volunteer translators.

My expectation was to get some good advice from some senior translators, because I had no idea what was the way to translate, basically. I'm very happy because in Japanese TED communities, once you get reviewed from someone else, after that, you get reviewed by language coordinator.

I was kind of expecting that someone would take my talk and review it for me. I waited a month, it was my first translation, and nobody reviewed it so I didn't know what went wrong with it. In Japanese TED communities they usually have meetings like in Tokyo, Osaka, some big cities, so that TED Translators get together and they share their knowledge and experiences, but there's a lot of Japanese TED Translators abroad. I think a lot of people work together quite often; it's like this very tight, close community. Luckily I was able to meet some reviewers on the online meeting for Japanese translators and a few days later my first translation was approved to be published.

One good thing about working with TED Talks is that you make connections with other translators. I met this lady who did my review; she was very attentive to me. After we finished the review process I told this lady 'as a person who wants to be a translator one day, I really appreciated your help'. She sent me a list of all the translators she worked with. That's what I enjoy working with TED Talks because in this country that I live I don't really see Japanese people, so for me it's one of the few ways to be connected with someone so close.

I think what is the most important thing about TED translation is to review your work. Working with reviewers I realised that I tend to miss some grammatical nuance, that there's
a lot of research I need to do, that I also need to be careful about any professional word I would use in the context.

I should continue to work on TED Talks because I already work for a translation agent but I've never got any feedback from my agent, so it's very hard to be critical but when you work with TED Translation, you always get feedback from reviewers and from language coordinators. I think doing TED Translation is very crucial phase for me to become a translator.

If I wanna be professional translator I think I need to know more, I need to study more than subtitles. I was thinking of doing a translation masters, but for me to achieve that goal is very difficult because I live in the Caribbean and there's no school of translation, so I have to go somewhere else. I don't have much money, so I'm still trying to figure what's the best thing for me to do.

8.8.11 Camille, France, 18-25

I'm 23. I grew up in Paris. I've studied Literature for five years and now I'm doing Translation Studies. I speak French, English, Spanish and I'm learning Swedish.

I decided that I wouldn't become a French teacher that I wanted to become a translator. French options to become a translator are quite small; we have two schools in the whole country. To get into the school you have to take a few tests and they are quite hard, so I wanted to start translating a lot. I translated a play and one of my best friends did the play with his theatre group in my translation. Sometimes I found interesting English movies without French subtitles, so I made them myself. I downloaded the English subtitles in a document and translated the whole thing and then made a DVD for my father.

I had to find different ways to try and practice translating and one day I was watching a TED Talk and I just discovered the project. I really like TED talks, so I thought it was a good way to practice translation. It felt really good because I like the idea to be able to help people to access information they couldn't access if they hadn't the translation. I really felt useful by doing this.

I was really excited at first, I think I did my first video in one day and a half, I don't think I did anything else for those 36 hours. The first one to be published was about the fact that great apes had feelings and how it was just insane that we still put them in cages and I remember finishing translating it, and feeling like I had to go to every zoo and just break down the whole thing.

For English to French translations there are thousands of videos waiting to be reviewed and it took such a long time for me to have 3 or 4 talks published that I was already on something else and I never returned to review videos.
It was quite interesting to learn how to work with the video, because I had always thought of translation as only texts. This year at school we had a project on subtitling and some people had quite a rough time to start the project while I had no problem with it.

I'd like to translate but not only in the technical field, I'd like to translate books, and I'd also like to get to subtitles a bit more. You can't really have decent earnings when you just translate books and subtitles are a way to translate and be able to just eat and pay rent.

I don't think it can be the only way you train, but I think it can be a great way to practice your skills. TED is still a way to keep practicing because sometimes you don't get a job when you want, and if you don't keep up and practice in between, you just lose your habits and your skill.
8.9 Appendix I – Frequency tables for each theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency table / data analysis - Experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of the experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camille</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual stimulation / Challenging and hard</td>
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<tr>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to do / Hard to get going, to work out the system</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content is inspirational</td>
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<tr>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards, perceived and tangible</td>
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<tr>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dedication / Time aspect</td>
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<td>Flexibility</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality (wanting to do a good job)</td>
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<td>Inclusive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support</td>
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<td>Belonging / like-minded people</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>Cliquey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human connection / relatedness</td>
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<tr>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
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<td>Role of LCs</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connection with identity / culture / language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Codified knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteering and TED</td>
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<td>TED is a good cause</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharing knowledge through translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purpose a sense of</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowing the impact (maybe under rewards?)</td>
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<td>TED reputation</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Familiar with TED</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passion for the project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kudos / star-struck</td>
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<td>Is TED committed enough to translation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reviewing</td>
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<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration / delays</td>
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<tr>
<td>Everybody can be a reviewer / quality issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reviewing is unique to TED</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online / offline connection</td>
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<tr>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>conferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take TED to schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offline experience leads to TED</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offered colleagues the service if needed</td>
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<td>Connection with the speakers</td>
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### Frequency Table / Data Analysis - Learning

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<tr>
<th>Camille</th>
<th>Lisa</th>
<th>Eleni</th>
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<th>Alexei</th>
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### Frequency Table / Data Analysis - Profession

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