

Chapter 12

“I’m your guy”: Self-promoting behaviour in a Slovenian translators’ forum

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Abstract Self-promotion and positive self-disclosure are widespread on social media. Despite their pervasiveness they have been shown to trigger negative evaluations about one’s character (e.g. bragging). When engaging in self-promotion online, therefore, participants tend to display an awareness of its potentially sensitive nature and engage in redressing activities, such as self-denigration (Dayter, 2014; cf. Matley, 2018, 2020). In this study, we examine interactions in a Slovenian online translators’ forum that provides assistance with translation queries and publicises job opportunities. In these, the participants make explicit their relevant skills and qualities for the task in hand (e.g., responding to a query, responding to job opportunities, discussing requirements and working conditions) in light of potential work opportunities. Participants promote themselves as knowledgeable subjects with relevant professional experience, linguistic skills or educational qualifications. The qualifications, however, are not in Translation related subjects. The forum thus offers an evaluation benchmark and advice opportunity for freelance translators in some largely unregulated segments of the translation market. Their contributions shed light on a hard industry where multilingualism and linguistic speed are presented as desirable assets. Self-promotion activities were observed in reactive position. They included reactions to bilingualism or multilingualism as a measurable skill, or, conversely, as a given talent, by virtue of familial connections, in which language is presented as the authentic possession of native speakers. Self-promotion activities and views on language reveal what the participants see as relevant and valuable attributes in the translation marketplace and a concomitantly measured approach to positive self-disclosure in the setting of the forum.

Keywords: self-promoting behaviour; self-praise; online community; freelance translators

1. Introduction

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This study examines self-promotional behaviour employed by individuals in front of a large and potentially unknown online audience: a translators' forum providing assistance with translation queries and publicising job opportunities. Self-promotion is, broadly conceived of here, as a form of relative self-praise whereby translators bring to the fore their formal credentials and language skills to publicize themselves or legitimate their discursive position with respect to a given forum topic. In this forum, participants position themselves as the right people for any job opportunities and attempt to gain recognition as knowledgeable people who can resolve translation queries at ease.

In previous research, self-praise has been reported as interactionally delicate as it can trigger negative evaluations about one's character, i.e. bragging (Speer, 2012). When delivered, self-praise should preferably be embedded in a third-party compliment. Rather than praising oneself, the individual (in the case of this study a translator) would present the praise via, for instance, reported speech. This creates distance between the agent and the action insofar as the action is performed by the reporting of a compliment that has not been presented as subjectively self-declared. Third-party evidence changes a self-declaration into a testimonial, it foregrounds facts and backgrounds subjectivity.

The amount of self-praise that would be considered to be socially acceptable is complex, as it is both context and culture dependent. Compliments, for instance, were found to have received different reactions in different languages: from acknowledgments (such as "thank you") and minimization or avoidance, in which self-praise is downgraded, to acceptance. For instance, Wu (2011) shows that the acceptance of a compliment in Mandarin Chinese interactions may be perceived as self-flattery and the way in which self-praise is resisted and challenged. The complimentee minimizes the compliment by producing a dispreferred response to the prior pair-part to avoid self-praise and thus maintain humility.

Indeed, in many cultures, especially in the Western world, the celebration of success and achievement is not actively pursued. Children are told from an early age of the importance of self-presentational issues for social acceptance and to carefully calibrate self-complementary behaviour in front of others. One such as example is the avoidance of overt displays of self-praise in front of peers² or the need to modulate them. When engaging in self-praise, therefore, participants have been found to display an awareness of its delicate nature. They have been shown to resort to redressing strategies such as shifting credit or reinterpreting the speech act, thus denying "responsibility for breaking the constraint against self-praise" (Dayter, 2014, p. 96; cf. Matley, 2018). Slovenians, too, are generally known as modest and humble, with self-praise being frowned upon. There are two proverbs commonly used as a response to an individual's self-praising behaviour: "lastna hvala se pod mizo valja" ("praising oneself has very little value") or "kdor visoko leta, nizko pade", ("pride goes before a fall").

² Exceptions to this can be found in sports. Consider football where the celebration by the scorer, though in some cases excessive, is expected and endorsed by the fans and members of the team. As the (non)verbal display of praise here refers to acclaim that goes beyond individual achievement.

Similarly, third-party compliments are frequently met with embarrassment and brushed off, but this, as we will show, is context dependent.

The translators' forum, examined in this study, renders itself as a possible space for its members to engage in self-promotional behaviour as they seek and offer advice. The forum's main activities revolve around responding to job opportunities and translation queries. In these, participants present themselves as knowledgeable and trustworthy by virtue of being multilingual, as result of family background or as acquired through qualifications.

In the next section of the paper we conceptualise self-promotion. This is followed by a description of the forum, our methodological approach, the study's main findings and general conclusions.

2. Self-promotion and self-praise

Positive self-presentation is a feature of online environments. The capability of receiving likes and comments (Matley, 2020) increases the feeling of connection (Utz, 2015). Although self-presentation and self-promotion are ubiquitous on the social network site Facebook, they are, to a large extent, under-explored areas of research, especially from a sociopragmatic perspective. Notably, self-promotion is a key factor behind them (e.g. Dayter, 2014; Matley, 2018, 2020). Paulhus et al. (2013) found that self-promotion in job interviews is, to a certain degree, expected and appropriate, at least in some cultural contexts, because it is seen as improving the likelihood of success (see, also, Lipovsky, 2006; Roberts and Campbell, 2007; Roberts, 2013). Moreover, Paulhus et al. (2013) view self-praise and self-enhancement as sub-categories of self-promotion, the goal of which is to impress the audience with one's competence. Considering the specificity of their context, they define self-praise as involving "highlighting of one's positive attributes, e.g., repeatedly alluding to one's specific talents" (Paulhus et al., 2013, p. 2042).

Self-praise has been characterised as a face-elevating act involving statements that vary from slightly positive to boastful disclosures about oneself. In this respect, giving a straightforward positive evaluation of oneself was found to be "socially marked and interactionally censored action" (Wu, 2011: 3156), e.g. resisted, rejected or disparaged, mainly because elevating oneself has been perceived as done at the expense of lowering the other (Leech, 1983; Brown and Levinson, 1987) and sanctioned as accusations of bragging. Unsurprisingly, therefore, earlier studies mainly focused on self-praise avoidance in responses to compliments (see, for example, Holmes, 1986) or have found that self-praise was objectified in reported third-party compliments (see Table 1 below):

Table 1. Studies on self-praise and compliments across languages

Holmes (1986)	on compliments responses in New Zealand English
Speer (2012)	on interactional organization of self-praise
Spencer-Oatey and Ng (2001)	on compliment responses in Chinese
Chen and Yang (2010)	on compliment responses in Chinese

Recent studies of self-praise online have revealed that self-praise is not necessarily an interactionally delicate activity, even when delivered in an unmitigated manner. From a speech-act perspective, Dayter (2014) examined self-complimentary behaviour in Twitter interactions amongst a group of ballet enthusiasts and found that despite its undesirable nature, users constructed self-praise with various levels of explicitness (from those rooted in indirection to direct self-praise without modification), to appear as the objective heroes of a community of practice, i.e. members who possess specific desirable attributes.³ Desirable attributes (e.g., skills) are likely to surface in entrepreneurial settings, like the translators' online community examined in this study, where individuals position themselves as the right person for the job (e.g. answer queries) by sharing and promoting forms of what they orient to as cultural capital (i.e., linguistic skills, published translations, and credentials, certificates and educational degrees). Each of these forms of cultural capital is seen as potentially convertible into economic capital, i.e., financial rewards.

Dayter (2014) argues that some self-praising strategies, especially attenuated ones, can be recognised as self-elevation solely by the members of an in-group. These may include attributes normally considered as complainables that raise the status of the user in the peer group, establish solidarity by inclusivity and offset the face-threatening potential of self-praise in interaction. This highlights the fact that self-directed face-enhancing practices are context dependent. Thus, the context and the setting are of key importance. Tobback (2019) examined disclosures of professional skilfulness in users' LinkedIn summaries and found that the fact that LinkedIn is a hub where promoting skilfulness is at stake, not all users' strategies may be perceived as self-complementary behaviour. Put differently, although users employed qualitative (e.g., adjectives such as *excellent*, *thought-provoking*) and quantitative (e.g., years of work experience) intensifying elements to promote one's skilfulness, many such strategies were in fact perceived as indirect due to the specific context of LinkedIn summaries and the overall aim of the medium. Similarly, Shelton (2019) who examined epistemic shifts in relation to self-praise in interviews, found that rather than bragging, an interviewer used self-praise to establish her role as a knower, i.e. an expert (K+) (see example 3 in Section 4.2).

The findings of these studies show that an endless choice of surface forms may be interpreted as self-praise. When studying such behaviour, it is, therefore, important to not only examine the positive disclosures the users reveal about themselves that are a matter of pride to a specific group, but also those self-enhancing moves that are perceived as outright bragging and sanctioned or censored by the target audience.

The present study investigates how translators engage in self-promoting behaviour as part of their participation in an online professional forum where bragging was not

³ This means that explicit or implicit announcements of accomplishments or positive evaluations of some aspect of self are not only evaluated positively by the speaker, but also oriented to as positive and expected by the potential audience.

markedly observable. Self-promotional activities were relatively well received in line with contextual expectations. They were predominately reacted to as following expectations; hence as appropriate in the forum.

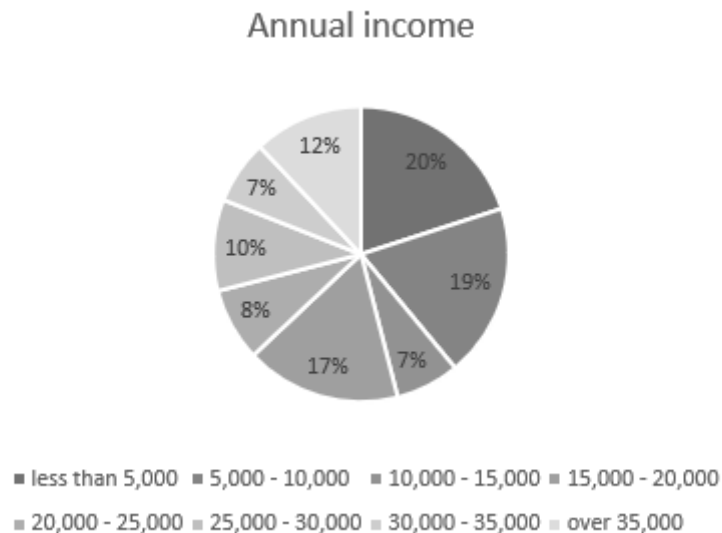
3. A translators' online community

Put simply, a translator's job is to convert information, that is, the meaning of a text, from the source language into the target language. Their basic activity, therefore, is the translation of texts of various lengths into the target language, in an accurate and culturally appropriate manner (Nida, 2001). Apart from an excellent general vocabulary, translators' cultural capital should also include specialist knowledge, ideally in more than one field, along with the ability to clarify ambiguities and identify cultural differences (e.g., James, 2002; Munday, 2016). Professional translators are also expected to respect the professional ethics, which includes dealing with commercially sensitive data, knowing when to accept or refuse a translation job based on qualifications and rates, and knowing what to charge clients so as not to undercut the market (Gouadec, 2010). Given the nature of their profession, translators are thus forced to regularly engage in self-promotion activities on their webpages or on dedicated translators' portals by advertising services to potential clients, colleagues, and by responding to translation offers in much the same way. For translators as independent professionals, self-presentation and self-branding in digital environments have become decisive, because it is where reputation, trust and professional networking come together and create value (see Gandini, 2016).

According to the recent survey amongst 300 translators in Slovenia (Perić & Dolanc, 2019) published in the White Paper on Translation in Slovenia, translators in Slovenia are mostly women, aged between 26 and 35 years, with a master's degree in applied linguistics and approximately 10 years of work experience in translation and proofreading. Most translators work from home as self-employed freelancers, i.e., over 40 hours a week, on weekends, holidays, even nights. 41 per cent of all respondents take about two weeks of leave a year, whereas 71 per cent of respondents translate even when they are sick. The translators' gross fee ranges between € 17 and € 20 per page. Agencies, on the other hand, pay much less, between € 10 and € 13 (gross rate). This means that the translators' work is project-based and that they are paid for the work that they do, either directly by their clients, or indirectly by translation agencies (see Figure 1; see, also Section 3.1).⁴

⁴ This means that freelance translators do not enjoy the same workplace and social benefits as typical employees (e.g. sick leave compensation, vacation pay, health insurance).

Figure 1.
Annual
income of
freelance
translators in
Slovenia (in
EUR) in
2017, based
on 139
respondents
(Mikolič
Južnič, 2019)



By working from home, translators become “physically segregated from the socially constructed workplace” (Hatton, 2017, p. 344) and thus invisible or disembodied (Poster et al., 2016). Thanks to new technologies, however, freelance translators today can enjoy professional flexibility and a location-independent working style. For many, profession-specific online communities have become an important source for professional self-branding and the construction of social capital, which can lead into job opportunities (Gandini, 2016). Even online interactions provide a platform for self-representations, including self-promotion. Put differently, an online forum works as a social field in which group members (translators) could be said to battle for their positions “within the social system with the capital available to them” (Prunč, 2012, p. 1-2).

Guidelines published by associations and educational institutions may include recommendations regarding translation fees and daily workload. Translators are also encouraged not to accept jobs at rates that undercut the recommended translators’ rates. However, in recent years, the career path of many freelance translators has indeed become destabilised by increasingly precarious market conditions.

The group that is the focus of this study was created in 2012 on Facebook as a support network for translators, interpreters, proof-readers, linguists and anyone else who may (a) need help with their current translation problem; (b) wish to post a translation job;⁵ (c) participate in profession-related discussions (e.g., work requirements). Through participation in the forum discussions, group members can accrue cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1980, 1988), which they may, given the opportunity, convert into economic capital. Anyone can join this group by answering a few simple questions. Since it was created in 2012, over 8.500 members of various nationalities and professions have joined the community. Over the past two years, the number of group members has remained broadly the same. Each day, translators publish

⁵ Job posts may be published by translators or agencies in need of translators for a larger translation project or non-translators who join the group solely for the purpose of recruiting a translator.

several dozens of posts, the majority of which develop into multi-party discussions. Although not all group members are native speakers of Slovenian or live and work in Slovenia, interactions are predominately in Slovenian. Group members, on the other hand, are of various nationalities, yet connected to the Slovenian language and culture (e.g. through familial connections). As such the group has become an important personal and professional hub for translators, as it is the largest virtual linguistic peer-support community in Slovenia. Apart from seeking advice and elaborating on each other's translation suggestions and ideas, the group's main activities include responses to the posted job offers, assessing and establishing the merits of clients and standards of the profession. The group is moderated by four administrators who reserve the right to filter and remove posts (and users) they consider inappropriate. According to the group rule No. 5, the forum does not allow (self-)promotional posts: "SELF-PROMOTION IS NOT ALLOWED: Advertising services without administrators' prior approval is not allowed. Show what you are made of by actively participating in group discussions".




It is important to note that in Slovenia translating is not a protected profession. Given that not all group members are qualified translators, i.e. professionals with a degree in translation studies and relevant work experience, we refer to this online group as a semi-professional community. The setting examined in this study is a translators' social media website that was primarily created for the purpose of providing free assistance to translators' queries (e.g., help with translation problems). Nonetheless, bidding for translation jobs (e.g., last-minute opportunities) and engaging in general discussions from the field of translation (e.g., working conditions, pay) are also important activities. Thus, in their contributions, the translators may wish to position themselves as the knowledgeable person for the task in hand and, in so doing, engage in self-promoting behaviour. How the interactants position themselves vis-à-vis each other's contributions also reveals what skills they understand as relevant to the profession of translators.

3.1 Data

For the purpose of this study, 65 interactions were culled from the group's Facebook website "Prevajalci na pomoč!" (Translators to the rescue!), in which the participants engage in self-complementary behaviour for the purpose of self-promotion.⁶ The interactions were posted between 2013 and 2020 in Slovenian. In this community, most group members do not know each other from the offline world, while few co-operate professionally. Most posts are from members who are practicing translators, interpreters, and proof-readers, whose income depends solely on their translation

⁶ The source text is thus in Slovenian, the English translation has been added. Bold/italics are used to highlight important text segments. Moreover, in line with the international academic ethics, pseudonyms have been used in the transcripts. Nonetheless, the exchanges analysed in this chapter for academic purposes are publicly available and searchable.

services. However, other group members also frequently participate in discussions, respond to public tenders or seek assistance.

The interaction is launched when a group member publishes a post, called by group members as an original post (OP). The OP typically introduces the conversation topic, to which others can post comments, reply directly to specific comments or react to them with a thumbs up (likes ) or an emoji ( ) , amongst other things. The activities identified in the data include bidding for jobs in response to public tenders, responding to translation queries and discussing working conditions (working hard, short deadlines, fees). Public tenders or job offers range from smaller projects, e.g., translations of short abstracts, to larger ones, e.g., translations of books. In such cases, translators promote their skills, which may include: being a native or near-native speaker of a source and/or target language, being a certified translator or interpreter, having years of relevant experience in a particular field, having the ability to cope with stress and so on. In recent decades, the so-called “native speaker principle” has been adopted by the translation industry and education institutions. Based on this belief, only a native speaker can produce a grammatically and linguistically accurate translation, which is why translators should only ever translate into their mother tongue. Native speakers are thought to be ideal translators because they are more aware of subtle nuances and cultural and idiomatic expressions (Chong, 2017). The native-like benchmark for linguistic competence in order to become an interpreter is also present in students (Runcieman, 2018, on students of interpreting aspiring to attaining native-like level of perfection at the very beginning of their study).

When responding to translation queries, translators are expected to provide a language combination or the target language and as much context as possible in their OP. Members then propose various solutions and express their diverse opinions on proposed solutions based on the context and the frequency of use of specific terms or phrases. In assuming and maintaining a K+ role, i.e., positioning themselves as the knower (Shelton, 2019), they may oppose each other's views and potentially threaten each other's professional face. However, given that group members view the forum as an opportunity to find work, they do not want to be seen as confrontational and lose out on potential jobs and economic capital. The interactions may be short, containing an OP and just a few comments or lengthy, with up to 200 comments. The analysis of data demonstrates that elements of self-praise emerge in reactive position through the aforementioned activities.

Figure 2.
Activities on
the forum (65
cases)



We approach the examination of the data from an interactional discursive perspective which draws on sociopragmatics, on Goffman's (1967) notion of face and brings to bear Bourdieu's (1988) notion of capital. The analysis shows that the participants treated their knowledge, credentials and language ability as cultural capital to legitimise their position in the forum's interactions. They oriented to the forum as a work-related space for potential work opportunities in which they could establish a reputation for themselves. Self-promotion activities are mainly reactive; they include the treatment of bilingualism or multilingualism as a measurable skill, or, conversely, as a talent (Heller & Boutet, 2006). They also entail seeing language as the authentic possession of native speakers. By showcasing expertise (when responding to translation queries), citing academic qualifications (MA, PhD) and personal achievements (years of experience, efficiency), the participants reveal what they perceive as valuable attributes in the translation marketplace that can be converted into economic capital (Bourdieu, 1980).

4 Analysis

Out of the 65 interactions, in this study we focus on four interactional instances, in which elements of self-praise emerge as the participants engage in their self-promotional activities: responding to job opportunities, responding to translation queries, and discussing professional standards.

4.1 Responding to job opportunities / Self-promoting one's language proficiency and work experience

This is an example of a public tender as is evident from the call for bids. Overall, 28 such examples were culled from the translator's social media website. Excerpts [1] and [2] are presented below as representative examples, illustrating the way in which group members present themselves.

[1]

Monika: NEM-EN: Iščem prevajalca za prevod 13800 besed. Rok: čimprej 🤨 Je kdo na voljo? Če pa je kdo native EN, bi blo pa vrhunsko 🦵 Prosim, če se mi javite v ZS s ponudbo in rokom izvedbe. Najlepša hvala že vnaprej. (7 comments)

Tom: [...] *Anglescino obvladam na visokem nivoju, nemščina in slovenscina sta mi materinscina, in imam vec kot 15 let iskunsje [sic.] kot prevajalec* (ang, nem, slo, japonscina).

Translation:

Monika: GER-EN: I'm looking for a translator, 13.800 words. Deadline: asap 🤨 Is anyone available? If you're a native speaker of English, that would be the best 🦵 Please send me a PM with your offer and deadline. Thanks in advance.

Tom: [...] *I speak English at a high level, German and Slovenian are my mother tongues, and I have more than 15 years of experience as a translator* (Eng, Ger, Slo, Japanese).

In [1], Monika, the OP, published a job post for an English-into-German translation, emphasizing that being a native speaker of the target language is an additional plus. Monika's message is accompanied by a grimacing face and a strong-arm emoji. With the grimacing face emoji, Monika displays awareness of having eluded to the conditions of the market (e.g., timely deadline) and the potentially problematic nature of last-minute job offers (e.g., Danesi, 2017; Seargeant, 2019). In his response to the job offer, Tom, the translator, who is not a native speaker of English, attempts to tick the boxes listed in the job offer. He outlines a set of skills that he understands as relevant, i.e., being a natural linguist (e.g., native speaker of the source language German (and Slovenian) with high competence in English). He thus presents language as the authentic possession of native speakers, as a natural skill. His own bilingualism would endorse his statement. Bilingualism and native speakerism thus become idealised as something that translators ought to have to be able to translate. Indeed, the ideology of "native speaker hegemony" (Piller, 2018) still carries much weight in the profession of translators, that is, a native speaker (or a bilingual) being the best person for the job (see, also, the strong-arm emoji in Monika's post).⁷ On this forum, group members create a space, where native speaker linguistic competence or a natural language ability is presented as valuable and effortless (Blommaert & Dong, 2010) and on a scale with respect to other language abilities. Tom further boosts his position by citing 15 years of experience as a translator and enumerating the languages he speaks. Thus, Tom engages in self-complimentary behaviour or self-branding to justify his offer and potentially get the job.

Similarly in [2], in response to a brief translation query, as a self-promotion tactic, Mark enumerates his many academic qualifications with increased upgrading (from BA to PhD) and experience in the target language. His qualifications and experience should thus set him apart from the competition and identify him as the person for the job.

⁷ However, while translators are encouraged to work with native speakers, many professionals share the view that native speakers who are not versed in a particular area are not necessarily a reliable source of evidence or judgment. (Chong, 2017)

[2]

Tina: Pozdravljeni! Ali pozna kdo koga, ki res vredi zna latinsko? Samo za en stavek (gre za tattoo zato res mora bit točno prevedeno) 😊

Mark: [...] če gre za tatoo, prosim mene vpraši. *Mam BA, MA, in delam doktorat iz latinščine, pišem vsak dan po latinsko, govorim tudi kar tekoče.* Sam povej, pa bomo zrihtal.

Translation:

Tina: Hello! Is there anyone who speaks Latin fluently? I just need one sentence (it's for a tattoo so it has to be accurately translated) 😊

Mark: [...] if you need it for a tattoo, ask me, please. *I have a BA, MA, and I'm currently doing a PhD in Latin, I write in Latin every day, speak it quite fluently.* Just say it, and we'll sort it out.

Self-praise can serve as a trust-building strategy with trust providing “the primary way of reducing people’s experience of risk” (Candlin & Crichton, 2013, p. 2; Dayter, 2014). In other words, a mistranslation may result in the loss of a business opportunity. Thus, by enumerating the qualifications from BA to a PhD, as well as one’s skills, the translator projects himself as suitable for this job and other potential jobs that may arise. The enumeration of qualifications is climaxed with the commercial expression: “Just say it, and we’ll sort it out”, with which Mark aims to present himself as the right person for the job.

As illustrated in [1] and [2], translators attempt to establish trust with the potential clients by corroborating their language proficiency (bilingualism and natural language ability) along with qualifications and trajectory of employment (e.g., years of experience). By evoking the cultural capital they have at disposal (e.g., accrued through learning, practice or inherited (e.g., being a native speaker)), group members try to present themselves in the best possible light professionally. This is in line with the findings by Tobback (2018) who found that direct expression of skilfulness through quantitative upgrading (e.g., positive evaluation/judgement to the professional category) and qualitative upgrading (e.g., numeral determiners such as years of experience) is expected in certain contexts.

4.2 Responding to translation queries / Self-promoting one’s professional qualifications

Another main activity in the forum, where elements of self-praise were identified, entails responding to translation queries. The group brings together (geographically) dispersed translators who regularly seek help when they are unsure about how to, for example, translate a specific term, sentence, and the like. Searching for terminology is time consuming, so turning to the forum for help can save time and contribute to their efficiency. In contributing to these discussions, the participants may engage in self-promotion by demonstrating their position as an expert in a particular field. This behaviour, however, may become marked when oriented to as a face-attack, that is, when a prior contribution by an individual has been challenged, ignored, or marginalized.

Ten interactions, in which group members negotiate their expertise, were culled from the group's website. Excerpt [3] illustrates how group members engage in direct disagreement (Angouri & Locher, 2012) with respect to the appropriateness of group member's (Barbara) proposed solution "artista".

[3]

Sandra: hr Tattoo umjetnik, tetovator, tetovažer, tattoo majstor? Nimam pojma 😞 Hvala, maham nepotetovirana jaz

Barbara: Tattoo artista

Sandra: to ni hrvaščina :(

Barbara: Seveda je

Sandra: @Barbara artista?

Barbara: Vsa bivša juga uporablja izraz artista, če hočejo bolj fancy zvenet

Sandra: artista je srbska beseda, hrvaška je artist (oz. ni ampak ajde)

Barbara: Oliver je pravi muzički artista, npr. *Imam sorodnike v Zagreba in moža iz Sarajeva* 😊

Sandra: Vsekakor stvar presoje

Barbara: No, ne bomo se kregali. *Govorim tekoče srbohrvaško in vem, da se uporablja*. Pa lep pozdrav

Cita: Ojoj, kakšni argumenti, od kod so mož in sorodniki in da po lastni presoji govoriš srbskohrvaško in potem je to to. Za prevod je treba boljše argumente. Srčno upam, ga. Barbara, da ne prevajate, vsaj v hr in srb ne. [...]

Daria: g. Barbara vsi vaši argumenti so napačni...*govorim vam kot univ. dipl. hrvatistka in prevajalka*

Translation:

Sandra: Croatian: Tattoo artist, ink master, tattoo maker, tattoo master? No idea 😞 Thanks, waving and without any tattoos

Barbara: Tattoo artista

Sandra: that's not Croatian 😞

Barbara: Of course it is

Sandra: @Barbara artista?

Barbara: the entire ex-Yugoslavia uses the term artista, when they want to sound more fancy

Sandra: artista is a Serbian word, in Croatian it's artist (or not, but ok)

Barbara: Oliver is a true musical artista, like *I have relatives in Zagreb and my husband's from Sarajevo* 😊

Sandra: Definitely a matter of judgement

Barbara: Well, let's not argue, *I speak Serbo-Croatian fluently and I know it's in use*. best wishes

Cita: oh my, the arguments, where your husband and relatives are from and that you speak Serbo-Croatian according to yourself and that's it then. Better arguments are needed when translating. I truly hope Ms Barbara that you're not a translator, at least not into Croatian or Serbian. [...]

Daria: Ms. Barbara all your arguments are false... *I'm saying this as a translator with a degree in Croatian language*

Here, Sandra appeals to the expertise of other group members. Barbara is the first group member to provide a suggestion to Sandra's request for help (a translation of a specific term into Croatian), which Sandra challenges without any mitigation "that's not Croatian". It is noteworthy that Croatian and Serbian share many linguistic similarities. Bailyn (2000) found that functional and grammatical lexical items in the original Serbian texts remain identical after translation into Croatian in 99.79% of cases. Nonetheless, qualified translators are expected to be culturally nuanced, and when in doubt many turn to this group for support. The interactants, Sandra and Barbara, disagree on the use of the word 'artista'. In backing her position, Barbara presents herself as culturally nuanced in Croatian; she invokes direct contact with native speakers of the languages in question – the legitimate owners of language – and everyday life experience. Interestingly, the grounds of her position are judged as relevant though not definitive, as observed in Sandra's putative closing remark "definitely a matter of judgement".

That Barbara perceives Sandra's comment as conflictive is evident from her *well-*prefaced response (Heritage, 2015) followed by "let's not argue", with which she orients to Sandra's response as face-threatening. Barbara attempts to establish her expertise by stressing that she is a proficient speaker of Serbo-Croatian and thus a reliable source of knowledge for others. She concludes with a leave-taking "best wishes". Sandra does not respond; however, a new group member, Cita intervenes, attacking Barbara's face by disparaging her claims of language proficiency on the basis of family relations, pointing to their absurdity (e.g., better arguments are needed). She positions Barbara as K- (as having a knowledge deficit) as she attacks her professional face (Orthaber & Márquez Reiter, 2011, 2015) by questioning her professional skills as a translator and warning of the potential dangers to semi-professionals: "I truly hope Ms Barbara that you're not a translator, at least not into Croatian or Serbian". The thread is closed by Daria's direct disagreement with respect to Barbara's claims which she supports by reference to having a qualification in the language in question. She thus provides an explanation for which a justification is not necessary (Scott & Lyman, 1968) insofar as a degree in Croatian represents better pedigree. In responding to translation jobs and queries the participants reveal their treatment of language as a work-related competence which is measurable vs. a talent (Heller & Boutet, 2006) and show how linguistic competence is conceived as a potential source of employment. Face concerns emerge in the way the participants treat Barbara's own positioning as an expert (through claims of language proficiency on the basis of family relations) as problematic and fail to accept it (cf. Reichert & Liebscher, 2012).

Invoking cultural capital by stressing one's qualifications in this way is particularly frequent in the data when responding to translation queries, especially when group members disagree with each other's proposed translation solutions. Such reactive form of self-promoting behaviour was also used by translators to position themselves as more knowledgeable than other group member(s). It involved the positive disclosure of qualifications and relevant skills to legitimate the participants' position with respect to a topic.

[4]

“[...] *ni prevedljiva. enostavno, ker v slovenščini še ni tako zakoreninjen idiom, da bi ga večina ljudi razumela. **verjemi, doktorat delam na temo.***”

“[...] *a lahko prosim vir za tako rabo? **konec koncev imam diplomo iz dramaturgije, pa prvič slišim, da je to v slovenščini mogoče***”;

“[...] *@Ted verjemi, da vem, kaj je absolutni in kaj relativni posluh. Kljub temu, da nimam absolutnega posluha, **imam diplomo Ag in verjemi, da ne morem nikakor ugotoviti, v kateri tonaliteti je kakšna skladba.***”;

“[...] *Po mojem mnenju ne manjka niti ena vejica in niti 1, niti 2 nista pravilna. Anglescina ni moj materni jezik, je pa res, da sem napisal doktorat v angleščini, da deset let živim v VB, da pisem in predavam v angleškem jeziku, na univerzitetnem nivoju.*

“[...] *Tim, saj je Maja napisala, da je odvisno od delovnih obveznosti, torej konteksta :-)* [...] *temveč sem podprla Majin odgovor. **Sem prevajalka in sodna tolmačka za ruski jezik;-)***

Translation:

“[...] *in Slovenian this idiom is not commonly used so most people wouldn't understand it. **Believe me, I'm doing a PhD on this topic***”

“[...] *can you provide a source for this use? I mean **I have a degree in dramaturgy** and it's the first time I hear that this is used in Slovenian”*

“[...] *@Ted believe me, I know the difference between absolute perfect and relative pitch. Even though I don't have perfect pitch **I do have a degree from the Academy of Music** and believe me, there's no way to determine the key of a piece of music.*”

“[...] *I don't think the commas are missing in these sentences, and neither sentence 1 nor 2 is correct. English is not my mother tongue, however, **I wrote a PhD in the English language, have been living in the UK for the past 10 years and I write and lecture in English, at university level.***

“[...] *Tim, as Maja wrote, it depends on job responsibilities, i.e. the context. [...] **I'm endorsing Maja's response. I'm a translator and a certified court interpreter for Russian ;)***

As the above excerpts illustrate, the participants bring forward their knowledge as translation problems are identified and resolved. Knowledge, however, is not fixed, but is contested and negotiated (Farrell, 2001) (see, for example, [4], where apart from listing qualifications, a group member seeks further clarification “can you provide a source for this use?”). Reactive self-promoting behaviour in the form of promoting professional qualifications thus occurs as a face-saving strategy when competing

knowledge claims are produced by the group members. To legitimize previously constructed expertise that may have been questioned by other participants and potentially protect their professional face, the participants invoke their cultural capital in the form of educational qualifications, even – as can be seen from most examples – if these are not in translation studies. To redress the face-threatening potential of such reactive behaviour, group members may use strategies such as a winking face emoji, which signals general positivity.

Overall, the examples illustrate that self-praise emerges through the data in the form of enumerated skills that group members understand as valuable and necessary for this profession (e.g., Lipovsky, 2006). Specifically, they show that group members use self-praising elements such as foregrounding or legitimizing one's skills, in particular natural linguistic abilities: being a fluent speaker of a particular language, being a regular user of the language, enumerating and citing qualifications and (inter)cultural knowledge, demonstrating awareness of linguistic and cultural differences between languages, direct contact to a particular culture to show their cultural capital. By branding themselves in this way, the participants attempt to convert cultural capital into economic capital. Self-promoting behaviour serves to counterbalance the fact that they are not linguists, native speakers of the languages in question or that they lack a degree in translation studies. Thus, they position themselves by foregrounding other qualifications (e.g., degree in dramaturgy, music studies). This helps them to position themselves as knowledgeable and apt for work.

4.3 Self-promoting one's accomplishments

The following example illustrates how the participants attempt to build trust by underlining their reputation through discussing translators' working conditions and everyday work requirements. 27 instances were culled from the translators' forum that feature what is considered as showcasing the skill of working hard and being able to handle large volume of texts within a short period of time (whether translating or proofreading) (see, excerpt [1]).

In excerpt [4], group members shine light on long work hours and related employment exigencies (e.g. speed).

[4]

Nina: Zadnjič sem razmišljala o tem, koliko strani na dan je sploh možno največ prevesti. Sicer vem, da je vse odvisno od tematike, jezikovne kombinacije, pa celo od tega, kako se tistega dne počutiš itd. Pa vendar ... zanima me, koliko je bil vaš "osebni rekord". Zelo bom vesela, če boste tukaj delili svoje izkušnje o tem

Translation:

Nina: The other day, I was thinking about the maximum number of pages one can translate in a day. I know that it depends on the topic, the language combination, and even on one's mood etc. Nonetheless... I was wondering what's your "personal record". I'll be very happy if you could share your experiences here

Here, a group member, Nina, posts a general inquiry, asking fellow translators about their maximum daily workload, which she labels as their “personal best” and asks them to share their experiences. Thus, the post serves as an invitation to group members to talk about their achievements relevant to the question.

Anja: Jaz grem danes h koncu 15. strani, je pa res, da kucam od jutra. Delam srednje dolg dokument in vmes sem še popravljala in usklajevala svoje prevode, sicer bi verjetno že imela 15 strani.

Bojan: Tudi jaz sem sredi enega dolgega projekta in mi je v dveh dneh uspelo prevesti 20 strani pogodbe. Ampak prav tako delam od jutra do večera.

Cene: Js sem.danes v 6 urah prevedel 8 strani splošnega besedila, ampak cudne narave - astrologija, raznorazni zvarci in uroki bla bla. Drugac pa je bil rekort 17 strani pogodbe v enem.dnevu.

Dave: 25 strani pogodbe ali 30 strani poljudnega je tam tam za rekord v enem budnem obdobju. Faking miserable je to

Erik: Nekaj čez 130 strani nekega zakona iz slovenščine v srbščino v pribl. enem tednu že kar nekaj let nazaj, ker se je naročniku zelo mudilo

Frida: uh, očitno sem jaz čisti polž :) Pri neki prijavi projekta sem pred leti naklepala max 10 prev. strani na dan; sicer sem pa zelo hitro ugotovila, da če en dan prevedem "preveč" strani leposlovnega teksta, se mi drugi dan vse skupaj zagravža, tako da je povprečje enako, če ne pretiram.

Gaja: nikoli nisem niti pomislila na kakršnokoli podiranje osebnih rekordov v tem poslu, kaj šele, da bi koga hotela prekašat v brzini. prevod mora bit dober.

Dave: Ja ucasih mora bit dober, drugic mora pa bit na mizi, pa vse stranke stekajo, da bo kakovost kej trpela

Gaja: no, mene je pač presenetilo že začetno vprašanje glede osebnih rekordov in nato dejstvo, da so se številčni odgovori kar usuli, pa sem si rekla, morda pa ne bi bilo napak pokončno priznat, da sama tega nisem niti enkrat pomislila.

Nina: Ja, se strinjam. Vedno delam na tem, da bo prevod dober in ne, kako hitro ga bom naredila. Ampak, kot ste že nekateri omenili, je včasih rok zelo kratek. V tem primeru tudi naročnika obvestim, kaj lahko pričakuje od takšnega prevoda, ki bo narejen v krajšem času, kot je to predvideno.

Translation:

Anja: I'm nearly done with my 15th page today, though I've been plugging away since morning. I'm translating a medium length document and have also done some editing and revising, otherwise I probably would've finished all 15 pages by now.

Bojan: I'm in the middle of a long project, too, and managed to translate 20 pages of contract text in two days. But I also work from morning till evening.

Cene: I've translated 8 pages of general text in 6 hours today, but of a weird kind – astrology, all kinds of brews and spells blah blah. Otherwise my personal best was 17 pages of a contract translation in one day.

Dave: 25 pages of contract translation or 30 pages of a general text is my record in one period of being awake. That's fucking miserable

Erik: Just over 130 pages of a law from Slovenian to Serbian in approx. a week, a while ago, because the client was in a hurry

Frida: uh, obviously I'm a snail :) For some project application years ago, I managed to translate max 10 pages per day; But I realized very quickly that if one day I translate "too many" pages of fiction, the next day I'm stuck, so the average ends up being the same, as long as I don't exaggerate.

Gaja: *I never thought of breaking any personal records in this business, let alone wanting to beat anyone at speed. A translation has to be good.*

Dave: Yeah, sometimes it has to be good, but often it has to get done, and all the parties know that the quality may suffer

Gaja: well, I was surprised by the initial question about personal records, and then the fact that so many comments were posted, so I thought that it might not be wrong to admit that I never thought of it myself.

Nina: Yes, I agree. I always work on the quality of translation not how fast it'll be done. But as some of you mentioned, the deadline is sometimes very short. In this case I inform the client what to expect of a translation that has to be done in shorter time than anticipated.

Within a short time, group members start exchanging their personal records with respect to the maximum number of translated pages in a day, which all exceed what is regarded as a realistic daily norm, when 5 or 8 pages a day are normally recommended (see Section 3). According to a recent study by Mikolič Južnič (2019), the average number of translated pages worldwide is about 6 pages per day, whereas the average maximum number of translated pages per day is 18⁸

The analysis demonstrates how the participants 'story top' (Dayter 2014) each other. One after another, the posts disclose the maximum workload individuals mastered in a relatively short time, with each participant topping the previous one. In this way, the participants counter the prior interactant's self-praising move, surpass their achievements (Wu, 2012; but, see, Dayter, 2014), or establish solidarity. Self-promotion represents a "double-barreled" action (Schegloff, 2007). In addressing stance differences between participants, it naturally invites the initiation of other actions, in our case, it is the proffering of qualifications and mention of skills. Through these, participants construct their professional personae.

With each commentator the reported translation workload increases. When the number of translated pages reported by the prior participant cannot be topped, the members rephrase their achievement (cf. from 17 pages *in a day* (Cene) to 30 pages in a *period of being awake* (Dave) to 130 pages *in a week* (Erik)). In addition, apart from citing the number of pages translated per time unit (day/week etc.), some group members also include information regarding text type to give their claim more weight (e.g., xy pages of contract or legal text etc.), thus offering a glimpse into their professional lives as translators (see Section 3). However, some group members attenuate the reported personal best (e.g., Anja: "but I also work from morning till evening"; Dave: "That's fucking miserable") by providing an evaluation of such a work practice.

That the competitive story topping activity is interpersonally sensitive is evident from the way Frida, interrupts the activity by labelling herself as "a snail" in terms of

⁸ Moreover, according to the guidelines by the Slovenian translators' associations, the work rate of professional translators, i.e. the number of pages a translator can translate per day while still maintaining the highest standards of translation work, should not exceed eight pages, i.e. 12.000 characters (no spaces) which equals approximately 2.000 words, when translating into one's mother tongue, and five pages or 1.300 words when translating into a foreign language .

reported work efficiency. She stresses the need for staying within her capabilities to be able to maintain personal quality standards and sustain job satisfaction. The story topping activity is further oriented to as inappropriate by Gaja, who confrontationally reproaches the participants for engaging in self-praise at the expense of norms and standards of quality, implying these should not be neglected. She thus attacks their professional face by moralising their behaviour, accusing them of acting unprofessionally (e.g., “a translation has to be good”) (see, Márquez-Reiter & Orthaber, 2018).

Group member Dave, who also participated in the competitive story topping, on the other hand, orients to the alleged transgression by claiming that efficiency is an important skill in the translation industry. Rather than providing a counterattack, Gaja orients to the topic of the original post, which triggered the participants’ self-praising of personal performance in the first place, as morally sanctionable. This example sheds light on the conditions of the social field: while translators should be afforded enough time to complete a translation task without compromising their personal standards for quality, this is not always the case. Therefore, group members see working hard and fast, albeit potentially at the expense of quality, as part of their identity and as an important skill and prerequisite for being successful in this profession (e.g., Simeoni, 1998).

5. Conclusions

This study examined translators’ self-promotional activities in a semi-professional online Facebook group that serves as a platform for translators to provide support with translation queries, engage in profession-related discussions, and find work. The examples analysed capture a particular moment in time where despite heightened demand, translation work remains invisible and poorly recognized (Gambier, 2012). For translators, profession-specific online communities have, therefore, become an important source for professional self-marketing and self-branding. Achieving favourable public exposure can help accumulate online symbolic and social capital (e.g., earning reputation as an expert) that can potentially be leveraged for other purposes such as landing a translation job. Indeed, in their online interactions, translators employed various self-promotional activities. These were mostly reactive and included treatment of bilingualism or multilingualism as a measurable skill and seeing language as the authentic possession of native speakers. The reactive position, in which self-praise occurred, shows the participants’ adherence to the group’s rules (i.e., self-promotion not being allowed) along with their awareness of its delicate nature (e.g., excerpt [4]). This is similar to the previous findings, where self-praise was found to be embedded in a third-party compliment as a testimonial rather than a subjective self-declaration. A reactive position allows the self-promoters to distance themselves from the action as the elements of self-praise naturally emerge through the response to the preceding, initiative act (e.g., a job tender, request for help, a question). At the same time, it allows them to adhere to the group’s rule regarding self-promotion.

With explicit mentions of educational qualifications, narrated experience and linguistic proficiency (e.g., having innate language competence), the participants projected their professional competence and constructed for themselves an expert identity as translators. Moreover, given that the forum does not allow self-promotion, group members showcased their expertise by discussing translation strategies (e.g., excerpt [3]). Thus, they seized this opportunity to make a good impression about themselves through self-branding, and thus convert their cultural capital into potential economic capital. When participating in discussions, the translators also put forth their professional face. When professional competence was deconstructed (e.g., they were treated as nonexperts and members of the outgroup), translators invoked skills based on familial connections to protect their professional face or showcased educational qualifications from a particular field (e.g., music or drama rather than a degree in translation studies) to enhance their professional image as experts and maintain positive self-presentation.

The examples have shown that in their contributions, the participants presented themselves as knowledgeable by virtue of their qualifications and skills (e.g., [1], [2], [3]) and as efficient in terms of their capacity and speed (e.g., [4]). The forum thus offers an evaluation benchmark and advice opportunity for freelance translators in a largely unregulated profession. Their contributions shed light on hard industry where multilingualism or bilingualism and linguistic speed are presented and oriented to as ideal and attainable assets. The interactions also offer evidence of what the participants deem necessary to obtain work, the competitive nature of a relatively saturated market and their personal investment. This, in turn, sheds light on the challenges translators as gig workers are faced with such as unsteady income and unstable, precarious work.

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