

Special issue of *Translation and Interpreting Studies*

(John Benjamins)

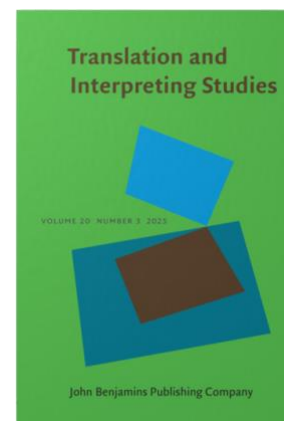
## ***Knowledge Construction in Multilingual Research: Research Ethics Meets Translation Theory***

edited by

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When conducting qualitative or quantitative research in contexts of migration, multilingual societies, or (post-)colonial encounters, anthropologists, sociologists, as well as field researchers from a range of other disciplines often rely on translators and/or interpreters to work with languages that are not native to them. Despite the pivotal role of translators and/or interpreters in the research process, these agents and their contributions to the creation of scholarly knowledge have largely gone unrecognised or have been deliberately silenced (Borchgrevink 2003). And while the biographies of famous anthropologists, such as Margaret Mead, are meticulously documented, very little is known about the interpretative transformations and impact of their Indigenous interpreters and translators, who enabled them to conduct their research (see, for example, Bruchac 2018).

Although a growing number of researchers are reflecting on their experiences in the field in this regard (e.g., Turhan and Bernhard 2022), and some methodological studies have also been published (e.g., the Multilingual Matters book series *Researching multilingually*; or, most recently, a special issue of *Social Inclusion* edited by Clara Holzinger, 2026), scholars from disciplines other than translation studies often do not consider using concepts or approaches from translation theory. It is therefore fair to say that the powerful role of translation in the construction of knowledge remains underestimated, particularly in terms of its ethical and methodological implications. This is further evidenced by a recent survey of field researchers in sociology and anthropology programs in the United States, conducted by Sepielak, Wladyka and Yaworsky (2023), which highlights this gap.

Even within translation studies - the discipline dedicated to the study of translation and interpreting as practice, translators as agents, and translations as constructed material artefacts - interest in this subject has been limited until recently. However, Mellinger and Baer argue in a contribution on research ethics in translation studies that “the role of translation and interpreting in conducting research within and beyond disciplinary boundaries” (2021: 375) is a topic that is gaining traction in this discipline too. Publications on the subject either reflect – with greater or lesser degrees of theorization – scholars’ own research experiences (e.g., Korak and Schögler 2025), propose methodological approaches (e.g., Littig and Pöchhacker 2014), or discuss the level of awareness of translational activities among researchers (e.g., Penttilä et al. 2021) or discuss academic translation in general terms (e.g., Baer 2027). A notable exception is Kate Sturge’s seminal book *Representing Others. Translation, Ethnography and the Museum* (2007), which focuses on translation from an anthropological perspective.

Against this background, the special issue will bring together scholars from a range of disciplines to explore how concepts and approaches from translation theory can deepen our understanding of the ethical and methodological implications of translation in multilingual research. It aims to foster an inter- or even transdisciplinary dialogue, as exemplified by the approaches of Gibb (2023) and Pilch Ortega (2025), that considers specificities of particular research paradigms and translational thinking. We particularly encourage contributions from researchers in translation studies, anthropology, educational sciences, sociology, or health studies, who want to look beyond the boundaries of their own disciplines to contribute to a more comprehensive examination of these issues.

Submissions are invited that address any of the ethical and methodological implications of translation in multilingual research, but those that engage with the following areas are particularly welcomed:

***Explicating the ethical implications of translation in multilingual research settings***

- How can translation be organized ethically within a multilingual research project?
- How can translation awareness in research be systematically raised? Which stakeholders should be involved, and how can this process be organized?
- What potential ethical risks does multilingual research, particularly translation and interpreting, pose for research participants? How can these risks be mitigated?
- What are the ethical responsibilities towards individuals translating/interpreting in/for multilingual research projects? How can their positionality, visibility, contributions be appropriately acknowledged? What are the implications for the value of translation in knowledge creation?
- What ethical challenges arise for individuals translating/interpreting in such settings? How do multiple roles (e.g, self-translation, scholar-translators) affect translation practices and research processes?
- Which approaches to research ethics or concepts and theories from translation studies are suitable for examining and describing multilingual research where translation plays a central role?

***Translation and the creation of knowledge***

- What notions of translation can help us better understand translation in multilingual research settings?
- What assumptions about translation (concerning, e.g., loyalty, neutrality, skopos, telos, role, etc.) are embedded in different research paradigms and their respective ethical standards?
- Where are ‘truth’ and knowledge constructed in multilingual and translational research practices?
- What expectations are tied to translation in the construction of knowledge within specific intellectual traditions, fields and disciplines?
- How do the power dynamics inherent to the geopolitics of knowledge influence the implementation (or lack thereof) of translation/interpreting in multilingual research contexts? What are the implications for the value attributed to translation in different epistemic communities and for determining what counts as relevant data?
- How does translation challenge the status of research materials (e.g., primary vs. secondary sources)? Can there still be ‘original’ material in such contexts?
- What conceptions of comprehension (‘Verstehen’) are adequate to capture the epistemic dimension of translation in research contexts?

**Timeline**

- Submission of extended abstracts (300-500 words) to the guest editors: **15 September 2026**
- Decisions to invite full papers: **15 October 2026**
- Full papers due to the journal **15 March 2027**
- Start of review process in March 2027
- Print publication in 2029 (online-first option available at <https://benjamins.com/catalog/tis>)

***Please submit your extended abstracts to all three guest editors:***

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Thank you!

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