

## **A Pilot Study into the Periphery Somatic perceptions of Literary Translation: Phenomenological Insights from Cognitive Translatology**

**Mohammad N. Aldalain\***

**[maldalain@MUTAH.EDU.JO](mailto:maldalain@MUTAH.EDU.JO)**

**Nader N. Albkower**

**Haitham Aldreabi**

### **Abstract**

Norman N. Holland's seminal work *Literature and the Brain* (2009) delves into how our cognitive processes influence our understanding of literature. Expanding upon this inquiry, this research explores the somatic perceptions of literary translators and their impact on the translation process and resultant text. Grounded in translation process research (henceforth TPR), we interviewed six literary translators from Jordan and analysed their responses thematically. The findings illuminate the significant role of translators' emotional and intuitive emotions in shaping thematic and narrative decisions, yielding a nuanced and subjective target text. Acknowledging the significance of somatic perceptions highlights the personalised nature of literary translation. This study contributes to TPR by advocating for a balanced consideration of individuality alongside the pursuit of generalizability. It also advocates for a contextualised approach in Translation Studies, emphasising the importance of situational realities. In the realm of TPR, our study aligns with cognitive translatology (another branch of TPR alongside computational translatology), emphasising the human element in translation over computational approaches.

**Keywords:** literary translation, Translation Process Research, generalisability, individuality.

---

\* Mutah University, Jordamn .

Received: 10/3/2025.

Accepted: 18/6/2025.

© All rights reserved to Mutah University, Karak, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 2025

## دراسة تجريبية حول الإدراكات الجسدية الطرفية للترجمة الأدبية: رؤى فينومينولوجية من علم الترجمة المعرفي

محمد الضلاعين\*

[maldalain@MUTAH.EDU.JO](mailto:maldalain@MUTAH.EDU.JO)

نادر البكور

هيثم الدريبي

### ملخص

يتناول نورمان ن. هولاند في كتابه "الأدب والدماغ" (2009) الكيفية التي تؤثر فيها المستويات المعرفية الإدراكية على فهمنا للأدب. وبالبناء على ذلك، تستكشف دراستنا التصورات الجسدية للمترجمين الأدبيين وتأثيرها على عملية الترجمة وكذلك على النص الصادر من الترجمة. واستنادًا إلى أدبيات دراسات عملية الترجمة، أجرينا مقابلات مع ستة مترجمين أدبيين من الأردن وبإخضاع مقابلاتهم للتحليل الموضوعي كشفت نتائج الدراسة عن الدور الكبير للمشاعر العاطفية والحدسية للمترجمين في تشكيل القرارات الموضوعية والسردية، مما يؤدي إلى نص هدف ذي جودة يعكس معارف المترجم وقدراته. يبرز الاعتراف بأهمية التصورات الجسدية الطابع الشخصي للترجمة الأدبية. وتسهم هذه الدراسة في أبحاث عملية الترجمة من خلال الدعوة إلى مراعاة التميز الفردي جنبًا إلى جنب مع السعي لتحقيق قابلية تعميم نتائج الدراسات. وكما تدعو الدراسة إلى نهج سياقي في دراسات الترجمة، وذلك مع التأكيد على أهمية الواقعية الموقفية. تأتي هذه الدراسة متمشية مع علم الترجمة المعرفي بوصفه فرع آخر من فروع أبحاث عملية الترجمة بجانب علم الترجمة الحاسوبي، ومما يقدم أهمية العنصر البشري في الترجمة على الأساليب الحاسوبية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الترجمة الأدبية، دراسات عملية الترجمة، العمومية، الفردية.

\* كلية الآداب، قسم الترجمة، جامعة مؤتة، الكرك، المملكة الأردنية الهاشمية.

تاريخ تقديم البحث: 3/2025 . تاريخ قبول البحث: 18/6/2025.

© جميع حقوق النشر محفوظة لجامعة مؤتة، الكرك، المملكة الأردنية الهاشمية، 2025.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background and context of the study**

Literary texts have inherent chaos emerging from their complexity. Readers may naturally experience various emotions as a reaction to reading literature. In addition, unlike media or technical texts, the translator of literary texts needs to account for the fact that they come from various times in history with different socio-cultural, religious, social, and political factors that had shaped the original text at the time of its production.

The literary translator of such works may confront a battleground by primarily experiencing the reader's reactions and, since translation can be a work of empathy, by assuming the role of the author. Prominent literary translators, such as Svetlana Geier, Susanna Basso, Laura Bocci, and Franco Nasi, testify to the prism of cognitive, emotional, and physical aspects within the translation process, as they endorse the holistic engagement with the text to produce successful translations (Nunes et al., 2020, p.133).

This paper engages with a phenomenological investigation of the visceral link between a translator's peripheral somatic perceptions and their impact on the translation process and the source text (henceforth ST). Examining the wealth of literature in translation process research notably reveals that very scarce literature is available on this topic. There has been very limited practical evidence on the interaction between body, mind and text in the context of literary translation, considering, on the other side, that according to recent survey trends in published literature in the Translation Studies Bibliography, TPR is a field of research that had received the most attention since 2010 (Martín et al., 2021, p.9). According to Anderson (2005, p.179), relatively little research has been done to investigate translators' emotional interaction with their work.

### **1.2 Theoretical framework**

The present study seeks to describe how the somatic perceptions of literary translators shape the translation process and the ST. In cognitive translation studies, which is seen as synonymous with translation process research studies (SEE discussion by Martín et al., 2021, p.2), two major trends in research are conducted in this field: computational and cognitive (Ibid., p.8). It is within the realm of the latter that the present study is conducted. The present study partially resonates with the primary aims of translation process research identified by Bell (1991) to give preliminary

answers on how the translation process functions and what skills and knowledge the translator needs to have to carry it out (p.43).

Aligning with calls for reconsidering translation as an individualised process (Halverson, 2014), the paper disrupts traditional views by appreciating individuality and particularly individualised somatic perceptions, as researchers have seen generalisability as a deciding factor in assessing the quality of research in TPR (see Walker & Federici, 2018, p.75, also Hubscher-Davidson, 2017, p.54). Individuality brings to the fore the role of the translator's experience as an active agent in creating TT while recognising the role of human, emotional and personal constructs in the process.

The study also examines the temporal dynamics of somatic perceptions of literary translators, which we assume to be evolving throughout the translation act, which, in turn, continuously develops and impacts decision-making.

### **1.3 Contribution of the topic and research gap**

In his book *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze* (2002), Peter Hessler splendidly narrates his experience as a Peace Corps volunteer in China. Considering the wide circulation of the work among English-speaking audiences, two translations of the work to Chinese were available: one by a Fuling local Li Xueshun and another by Wu Meizhen, both in 2003. The former is by a translator native to the town where the events of Hessler take place, who reconstructs the narrative with vivid descriptions and truthfulness to the historical events. The latter, whose translator has had no familiarity with the settings of Hessler's events, lacks depth and thus results in an unreliable narrative. Both translations remarkably contribute to a better understanding of the role of the somatic perception of the translator and how this experience can feed into the translation process and the source text that is the target text.

Building on that, examining the connection between somatic perceptions of literary translators and literary texts can be significant. Such an attempt helps us to understand how the original is re-created and put into new cultural and linguistic surroundings, considering all the intricacies of the sensations and other elements that are to be experienced by the audience of the re-created literary text. The somatic perceptions of literary texts as experienced by literary translators mirror the complexity of human

experience, emphasising the need to consider more than mere linguistic elements in research into the translation process. Research into the somatic perceptions of literary translators can open new research horizons into, for instance, language processing in the context of translating, the faithful transference of emotional content, the aesthetic experiences of translators and the embodied cognition of translators.

Furthermore, research into translators' somatic perceptions faces some concerns. First and foremost, theory, which is often majorly philosophical, dominates the field, which may make research inaccessible to a broader audience. Second, tools that enable measuring, interpreting, and modelling cognitive processes during translation are not readily available. Third, current research often fails to differentiate between fleeting external bodily sensations (such as muscle tension) and more profound internal reactions (such as emotional resonance).

Additionally, TPR has encountered criticism due to its heavy reliance on the expertise performance approach (EPA), which explores cognitive aspects of translation under laboratory conditions, ignoring the interactiveness inherent in the process. The present study attempts an approach that reflects the situation and reality of the translation process and act.

The paper's contribution prompts a paradigm shift in translation studies (henceforth TS), which urges reconsidering the central role of somatic encounters in shaping decisions in literary translation. As argued in House (2015, p.130), literary translation could be the most challenging, prestigious and rewarding. This entails, we assume, an impact on the literary translator, which may take the form of somatic influences that, in turn, could be a factor in shaping the translation process and the ST.

#### **1.4 Study Questions:**

This lays the foundation for this paper's central inquiry, starting with the gaps in current research into the subject under examination. The ensuing questions guiding this exploration are as follows:

How do the bodily reactions of purposefully selected translators manifest during literary translation, and what themes and narrative arcs emerge from these bodily experiences?

To what extent does the subjectivity and individuality of translators' bodily engagement through cognitive translatology challenge traditional norms in literary translation, particularly notions of generalizability and standardised processes?

How do translators navigate the nuanced relationship between their bodily reactions and decision-making, and what lived motifs and temporal dynamics can be identified in their choices, ultimately contributing to a transformative nature in literary translation?

## **2. Literature Review**

As Cole puts it, a good translation represents that which is observed to be worthy of transfer through translation from the original to the source text (Allen & Bernofsky, 2013, p.11). Hansen (2005) says that in every translation situation, the experiences of the translator and their emotions will emerge, impacting the decisions made

Hinting at translation's inherent aspects of commitment and responsibility, Hills (2012, p.77) proposes that entering into translation is like entering a relationship. Translators go through experiences that would affect them emotionally and physically. Some translators express such situations, and in some scenarios, they tell others about them. For example, Martin Luther wrote about his experience translating the New Testament from Latin and Greek into vernacular German, describing the cognitive effort and the subsequent physical impact left on him (Martín et al., 2021, p.50). His contribution has enriched the history of Bible translation, but for him, it was an experience that permanently impacted him (Almanna, 2015, p.4). Such somatic perceptions can be triggered by various factors, one of which might be uncertainty, another inherent aspect of translation.

Beyond fidelity and shifting focus from the technical aspects to the translator's lived experience, Toury (2012) and Krings (1986) argue that the mind or brain serves as the battleground of translation. Translators are not merely passive conduits for linguistic fidelity; they inject the text with their own subjective experiences, stylistic preferences, and emotional responses. This underscores the profound impact of somatic perceptions on both the process and the source text. This aligns with Anderson (2005), who highlights the sense of physical invasion by the original text and a need to control the reactions of the translator while translating (p.177). Some

translators have recognised such influences and the subsequent bodily reactions. A prominent literary translator, Carol Maier, is discussed in TPR literature as one example of a translator who falls under the influence of literary text translation and its physiological reaction (Bassnett & Bush, 2006, p.139).

However, over the years, (TPR) has explored diverse topics such as creativity, translation competence, confidence levels, risk-taking behaviours, expertise, time pressure, metaphor translation, and ergonomics (Kußmaul, 2000; Bayer-Hohenwarter, 2010; PACTE, 2011; Göpferich, 2013; Fraser, 2000; Künzli, 2004; Englund Dimitrova, 2005; Hansen, 2006; Sjørup, 2011; Ehrensberger-Dow and O'Brien, 2015, respectively). Further expanding the field and range of inquiries, in recent years, TPR has expanded to study both internal and external influences on mental processes, moving research from laboratories to translator workplace (Muñoz Martín, 2014, p.67). This shift highlights the importance of human, social, and cultural aspects in translating, sparking new research into how translators interact with their environment, tools, colleagues, and each other (O'Brien, 2012; Ehrensberger-Dow & Massey, 2014; Risku, 2014).

As a sequence of such expansion, valuable contributions emerged. Researchers like Jakobsen (2002, 2003), Da Silva (2007, 2012), and Schmaltz (2015) have explored innovative methodologies to study translation processes. These include keystroke logging, verbal protocols, eye-tracking, and brain imaging (Alves et al., 2018; García, 2013; O'Brien, 2006; Jakobsen & Jensen, 2008, respectively).

Acknowledging the commonalities between translation and reading, Kissler et al. (2007, p.480) discuss the physiological reactions that may arise as a response to the read content, particularly in literary contexts. Translators, as readers of the original in the first place, may assume this physiological reaction, and the process of translating itself may be shaped according to such a factor.

Putting somatic theory in action, Lawrence Venuti's influential work on domestication and foreignisation (2012) provided a framework for understanding the translator's role in shaping the final text. However, Douglas Robinson, a leading figure in somatic translation studies, critiques this binary approach. He advocates for a paradigm shift that embraces the dynamism between theoretical frameworks and the practical realities of translation (Robinson, 2011). While Robinson's somatic theory, anchored in phenomenological hermeneutics, offers a rich perspective, its philosophical

density can be a barrier for some readers (Robinson, 2015). One concern in this context is that the theory has not developed from broad principles to more specific application methods (Pawelec, 2012).

For Robinson himself, the theory seems inherently difficult to apply (Robinson, 2015). As one may observe, somatic perceptions are influenced by many factors, such as internal factors (e.g. emotions and personal history) and external factors (e.g. low pay and deadline pressures). Such complexity plays out in the translation process, evidenced by research (see López & Caro, 2014). These explorations reveal how the translator's ideology and personal understanding of history can impact emotional engagement with the text and the processing time.

Going beyond the text, the embodied nature of translation may also expand beyond the confines of the body itself to marshal arts and cultural practices (see Samudra, 2008), presenting one further challenge, where the translator has to navigate the physicality infused in the source material to be rendered to new recipients. Naturally, this will influence translators' choices. According to Han's examination of the influence of auditory stimuli on translators' choices, evidence was found that translation and sensory experiences are interconnected.

In a similar vein, West (2010) adopts a rather provocative perspective by viewing translation as an erotic act, where there is a continual attempt to completely interpret the source text, driven by intellectual and emotional yearning. For Baker (2016), translation, along with the somatic perceptions of the translators, is brought to analogy with militarised context, drawing on the ethical dilemmas translators encounter. Pedagogically, the somatics of translation have received attention from scholars. For instance, Ivancic and Zepter (2022) advocate for embodied understanding in translation pedagogy. This view is transformative in training translation trainees, who are encouraged to utilise their bodies in translation learning and to establish a deeper connection with the source material.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Description of participating translators**

Translators have voluntarily participated in the study after receiving an invitation to participate that was circulated through various online media. We received six replies from professional translators whom we contacted



and asked for a brief on their experience and contributions. We ensured their suitability for the purposes of the present investigation. We may describe their experience in the field as diverse, considering the wide range of contributions regardless of the relatively short years of experience. We informed each translator of the study's procedures, and they were required to sign a consent form. Data were anonymised throughout the study and were also uploaded to an encrypted data storage device. Only the researcher had access to the study materials, including the interviews, transcripts, and names and biographies of participants. Furthermore, for data reliability, datasets from the three-member research team were compared where we noted compatibility with very minor variations.

Recognising its limitations, we acknowledge that the findings of six translators do not constitute generalisable results. However, the findings from such a small sample could encourage further research into the somatic perceptions of literary translators. Furthermore, this paper primarily provides definitions, proofs of concepts, and tests for exploring possibilities in future research.

Participating translators were advised to demonstrate commitment and willingness to share their personal experiences, intuitive feelings, and insights during the translation process. This is essential for gaining insights into the phenomenological aspects of their lived experiences (Martín et al., 2021, p. 94).

### 3.2 Data collection

Tables 1 and 2 elaborate on the data collection method by focusing on the somatic perceptions of the participating translators.

**Table (1) Data Collection and Analysis Process in the Phenomenological Inquiry on Translators' Somatic Perceptions**

Stage	Description	Method	Outcome
Data Collection	Eliciting translators' experiences	In-depth interviews (mostly semi-structured)	Rich narratives of translators' somatic perceptions during translation
Data Recording	Capturing interviews for analysis	Audio recordings	Primary data source

# A Pilot Study into the Periphery Somatic perceptions of Literary Translation: Phenomenological Insights from Cognitive Translatology

Mohammad N. Aldalain, Nader N. Albkower Haitham Aldreabi

Data Analysis	Identifying patterns in translators' experiences	Thematic analysis guided by research questions	Themes reflecting translators' bodily reactions, decision-making, and lived motifs
Analysis Steps	1. Transcription: Converting audio to text	AI Transcription software (AIKO)	Textual data for coding
	2. Coding: Identifying and labelling relevant segments	Qualitative coding techniques	Codes representing key concepts in data
	3. Theming: Grouping codes into broader patterns	Identifying recurring themes aligned with research questions	Thematic framework for interpreting data
Reflexivity	Acknowledging researcher's subjectivity	Reflexive journaling, peer debriefing, member-checking	Enhanced credibility and trustworthiness of findings
Documentation	Maintaining a record of analysis process	Detailed notes, memos, audit trails	Transparency and potential for future validation

**Table (2) Stages of Periphery Somatics Analysis**

Stage	Description
Transcription	Converting interviews into written transcripts.
Familiarization	Reading and re-reading transcripts for a comprehensive understanding.
Initial Coding	Identifying segments related to somatic perceptions and decision-making.
Initial Themes	Grouping codes into preliminary themes.
Review and Refinement	Iteratively refining themes for coherence.

Validation	Engaging in member-checking and peer debriefing for credibility.
Defining and Naming Themes	Clearly defining and labelling each theme.
Coding Matrix or Framework	Developing a structured framework for organization.

### 3.3 Overview of the thematic analysis approach

In analysing the periphery somatics of literary translation, a systematic approach is employed, as shown in Table 3:

**Table (3) Method for Identifying Themes**

Element	Description
Approach	Combines deductive and inductive approaches based on research questions.
Validation	Continuous comparison ensures ongoing validation and refinement of themes.
Software	Analysis conducted manually due to lack of specialized software.

## 4. Findings and Analysis

The following themes have been noted to be recurrent in the interviews with the six translators: bodily awareness, subjectivity and individuality, emotional engagement and decision-making, cultural sensitivity, and a forward vision for continuous improvement.

For translator 1, who holds an MA in comparative literature and has 7 years of experience in translating contemporary fiction and poetry, the somatic experiences align with the literary content of texts under process, which is an impact acknowledged in terms of the production of a text that is authentic in the transference of the emotional content of the original, while recognising the diversity of the cultural construct of the source text and target text:

T1: 'I feel what characters feel. Sometimes, I need to distance myself from working on the text until I have a better mood to work and interact with the characters. I feel like this impacts my overall productivity and the quality of the final text. The readers deserve high quality final text taking into consideration the cultural and literary systems that these texts could have been brought from. I am also thinking of the other dimensions where the emotions are crucial in the source, and it is not so easy to ignore them in the target, as this also helps with the overall quality of the final product.'

This serves translator 1 in enhancing perspectives regarding the profession of translation. This reflects on the decision-making process, where this translator can devise fresh perspectives to handle translational challenges. The positive feedback from the clients/audience reflects on translator 1's future translations, where a feeling of enthusiasm guides the process.

Translator 2 holds an MA in comparative literature and has 7 years of experience translating contemporary fiction and poetry. He experiences increased bodily reactions in two ways: tension experienced in translation and breaking off the task at hand to pause to avoid further tension. It is also observed that there is an interplay between the bodily and emotional reactions to achieve authenticity in the translation:

T2: 'The text impacts me in various ways. I feel tension whenever it rises in the text, and I often prefer to pause my work on the text. I feel if I proceed with such tension rising, I may not be able to handle the content as I should. I might be not that confident in my ability to let my own feelings seep through and impact my choices, yet I think this is part of the profession, and I have no claims to make about the quality of the task that is influenced by emotions arising from the content of the text.'

Furthermore, the practice, according to translator 2, is hugely influenced by cultural considerations.

T2: 'I am not aware of cases where I told someone that I feel sympathetic with the characters I am translating in my text. Cultural perceptions draw a borderline between literature and other more types of writing. I might be ok to tell I feel sympathetic with people wounded in a

bombing somewhere in the world, but not with a character in my literary works that goes through domestic violence.'

Considering the challenging scenarios through which this translator's translation process goes, self-care procedures and breaks are adopted to help with the tension experienced during the translation. One crucial aspect of this translator is the utility of metacognitive skills to reduce problematic situations while processing the text. For this translator, the role played is crucial for the successful rendition of the source text, and the translator's agency is highly endorsed.

Translator 3, who is a holder of PhD in Literature with 15 years of experience in translating historical fiction and philosophy, recognises the role of intuitive cues in translation:

T3: 'I trust my intuition a lot in literary translation. Literature seems to construct internal mechanisms to enable some sort of ability to help in ranking translation choices and narrow down such choices to arrive at the right decision.'

Furthermore, considering their multi-modal nature, bodily reactions are utilised for a successful rendition of the translation:

T3: 'It is not only me who translates; it is a collection of bodily experience feeding into my translation.'

Translator 3 seems flexible to challenges, with much reliance on proactive strategies in translation alongside an awareness of the narrative arcs.

T3: 'I read a lot before I translate. I know this helps me in many ways, such as preparing myself for content that might be differently translated if I am not doing such pre-readings.'

This all comes as helpful when stress is experienced as proactive strategies help translator 3 avoid falling under stress while the process is progressing:

T3: 'Translating is about tools; if you have them, you are equipped for translating. In literary translation, the tools might be difficult to attain unless you have the passion and the hard work to spend.'

One crucial aspect for Translator 3 is the recognition of subjectivity in literary translation, an aspect that other translators do not report. We believe that this results in the existence of emotional resonance in Translator 3's

translations, a psychological trait that has recently received much research in Translation Studies.

Translator 4, with an MA in translation and 8 years of experience in literary translation, appreciates the experience in literary translation and firmly adheres to the profession and its status. Translator 4 follows set of procedures to reduce stress experienced in translation such as shift of posture and breathing techniques:

T4: 'It might be very stressful, yet I practice breathing exercises to help me with my translation alongside other strategies.'

Professional considerations are balanced with the practical decisions this translator makes. This reflects on the successful management of burnout and emotional load in highly sensitive content in literary texts. However, this does not exclude personal emotions from impacting the process of translating, yet with a heightened level of concern for professional commitment.

T4: 'Yes, I am a professional translator, and this is something I am not supposed to turn my back to while translating, yet this does not exclude the fact that I am, by the end of the day, a human, and my reactions are just normal to what anyone else would experience.'

Translator 4 engages in rituals prior to starting with translating literary texts:

T4: 'I exercise a bit before translating. I know it helps with the flow of oxygen to my brain, and I also engage with the process of remembering prior experiences with similar texts.'

Translator 5 has a strong background in linguistics and literature and 8 years of experience in literary translation and criticism. He experiences somatic reactions, highlighting that the translator should be aware of such reactions:

T5: 'We need to be aware of the human factor involved in literary translation. We are humans, and we have emotions. Our responses are natural, yet we need to manage them.'

This, however, may involve opting for unconventional translation strategies such as borrowing from other texts with similar literary content to support the literary text under the process of translating:

T5: 'My culture has a rich history of literary works that can help me with my translations. I borrow phraseology and I utilise them in my translations.'

Cultural sensitivity is also considered an important factor in translating. Subjectivity is also highlighted here by translator 5. Coping mechanisms are taken into consideration, such as consulting with peer translators about translations underdone with similar content and strategies followed:

T5: 'My colleague's translators always come at the right time and place to consult and share thoughts.'

Translator 5 also expressed concern about developing translation training programs, which can be seen as an appreciation for a forward-looking perspective on the profession, practice, and theory of translation.

T5: 'Translation training programmes are far from the real experience in the field. Trainees learn a lot but have little practice.'

Translator 6 benefits from his academic background in literary translation and comparative literature and his experience in the field for 11 years to build heightened awareness of the profession and its demands. Also, for translator 6, the ongoing development of language knowledge and, necessarily, translation skills are crucial for the advancement in the theory and practice of translation:

T6: 'The translator is a rigorous learner. We never stop learning new things and looking for new tools and sources to enrich what we already have.'

Academic background is also seen as useful for translator 6, as it helps provide the necessary skills to engage further with the profession, including research and writing skills. Feedback from readers is crucial for translator 6 to be considered in future translations and to motivate further development.

## **5. Discussion**

The participating translators recognised moments of complexity in the levels of language and emotions. Such recognition reflects on the process of translating as it becomes a catalyst for injecting authenticity into the transferred content.

Considering the phenomenological dimension of the above observation, this challenges the conventional view of the perceived objectivity of translated texts. This also highlights the need to re-examine how the

emotional content in translated texts can be faithfully transferred from the source to the target text, considering that translators are not emotionless conduit transferrers of texts. The following five tables reveal further details about the analysis of the participating translators' emotional engagements and the consequences of such engagement, the holistic understanding of their role in the process, the cultural resultant influences, and highlight the temporal aspect of individuality and commitment to continuous improvement.

The examination of individuality in translator bodily engagement challenges traditional norms. Translators adopting phenomenological, mind-body connection, philosophical grounding, and passion for diverse cultures approaches showcase how their subjective engagement impacts translation styles and strategic decisions. This challenges the conventional emphasis on objectivity and linguistic fidelity or approaches pertaining to heavy reliance on linguistics, promoting a more authentic, emotionally resonant, and inclusive approach to translation. This, in turn, aligns with the notion of translation as mediation, where translation is not a neutral act.

The findings reveal literary translators' tendency to distance themselves from the linguistic aspects of the ST to redirect their focus on its thematic nature. This results in recreating the ST within the linguistic and cultural norms prevalent in the target language. Their attention to the narrative, which goes beyond the immediate context, allows room for individuality in their approaches to mediating how contexts reshape and interact with overlapping contexts. Their approaches to intertextuality and contextual meaning align with the constructivist approach of translation studies.

The openness to unconventional methods and the commitment to self-care and well-being provide an additional layer of analysis. This holistic perspective introduces a critical dimension to the translator's role as a professional. The emphasis on the well-being of the translators invites a reconsideration of the expectations traditionally placed on translators, prompting revisiting the often-overlooked emotional labour involved in translating, where the field is called to find ways to better mentally and emotionally support its practitioners.



The emphasis on continuous improvement, reflected in the translators' reflections on decisions and proactive strategies for addressing difficulties, contributes to a broader analysis of the advancing stripe of the translation line of work. However, the commitment to continuous improvement prompts reflections on the nature of expertise in translation. It challenges static views of expertise and invites discussions about how translators can best navigate the evolving linguistic, cultural, and technological landscapes.

Based on the above findings, we may argue that the somatic perceptions of the literary translators emanate from his or her emotional experience, and this experience has three sources:

- The emotional content of the material being translated
- The emotional reflections of the translator
- His or her background

However, acknowledging emotional nuances and the subsequent somatic perception during linguistic complexity emphasises the profoundly personal nature of translation, challenging objectivity norms. This view aligns with the bulk of research, where the translator's personality is proven to guide the translation process (see Hubscher-Davidson, 2009; Kruger & Crots, 2014; Paz, 2017).

The commitment to self-care also introduces a critical dimension to the translator's role, prompting discussions about the emotional Labor involved and advocating for better mental health support. This aligns with the bulk of research into the well-being and health of translators, where support at various levels is necessary, considering the sometimes very dangerous zones where translators and natural interpreters operate (see Crezee, 2013).

Cultural influences become crucial factors shaping reactions, challenging views of translation as solely linguistic and urging a re-evaluation of pedagogy to include cultural competence (see evidence in Saffarian et al., 2015). This takes further critical avenues if considered in translating sensitive texts, such as the (Quran see Mallah, 2022).

Recognition of evolving subjectivity over time showcases adaptability, prompting discussions about translators' lifelong learning trajectories. This commitment to continuous improvement aligns with contemporary views on professional growth (Gough, 2019; Angelone et al., 2019; Tarnaeva & Osipova, 2020), challenging static notions of expertise and emphasising adaptability in the face of evolving landscapes of culture, technology, and language.

This paper hopes to contribute to redefining the translator's role and spark conversations about the evolving nature of professions and the need for a holistic understanding of expertise in the 21st century.

## **6. Conclusion and implications**

Jean Anderson argues that little documentation and analysis are available on the translators' effective interface with their works (2005, p.179). We may understand the lack of literature on the present paper due to the burgeoning field of research into the translation process. However, the role of the body should not be underrated, and we are given examples from researchers in the field who call for re-examinations of translations of sensitive texts, where we consider the physical conditions of their translators. For example, (Dau, 2020, p.122) clarifies the necessity of re-examining Martin Luther's Bible translation, where we consider his physical conditions and the potential impact on his Bible translation. (Antonietti et al., 2008, p.62) emphasise empirical evidence for the relationships between somatic perceptions and internal processes such as disappointment, regret, reasoning and perception from one side, and decision-making from the other. Their cited evidence is essential for the interdisciplinary implementation of ways we can better understand these relations.

Similarly, (Napoli et al., 1992, p.179) cite further evidence from experience with infants; they describe their reactions as quick, complete and honest. Similarly, the present study highlights the translator as an intelligent being who naturally reacts to the content of the literary text, and this reaction can appear in the form of a somatic response. The argument is that this resulting response can shape the act's translation process and final product. Furthermore, the findings suggest a high level of reliability of such reactions across the responses of the six literary translators, such as tension, excitement, and relaxation, as they seem to be inherent to the process of translating.

(MacDougall, 1998, p. 275) criticises the Cartesian rift, calling for a more serious examination of the role of the body in the practices of analysis in anthropology. The study's contribution highlights the significance of self-awareness, intuition, and the transformative potential of bodily reactions. Additionally, aligned with postmodern theories, the findings underscore that subjectivity and individuality of somatic perceptions can stand as a

challenge to the conventional norms of translation process research, where the generalisability of research findings can indicate quality research.

Practically, translators, practitioners and educators may benefit from such somatic exploration: translators may examine further avenues and appreciate the significance of self-awareness, intuition and well-being while translating. Educators may incorporate such insights into training, which reflects an inclusive understanding of translation and the adjustment of the translator agency in the act of translating. Finally, practitioners may build on such insights to understand further the emotional resonance of literary translation and the transformative power of somatic perceptions of translators, which may help to address the entrenched dichotomies between the body of the translator and his or her cognition.

## References:

- Alexander, David E., & Pescaroli, Gianluca (2019). The role of translators and interpreters in cascading crises and disasters: Towards a framework for confronting the challenges. *Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal*, 29(2), 144–156.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/DPM-12-2018-0382>
- Almanna, Ali, & Farghal, Mohammad (2015). Contextualizing translation theories: Aspects of Arabic–English interlingual communication. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Alves, Fabio, Szpak, Karina Sarto, & Buchweitz, Augusto (2018). Translation in the brain: Preliminary thoughts about a brain-imaging study to investigate psychological processes involved in translation. In D. Li, Lei, V. L. Cheng & Y. He (eds.), *Researching cognitive processes in translation* (pp.121–138). Berlin: Springer.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-1984-6\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-1984-6_6).
- Anderson, Jean (2005). The double agent: Aspects of literary translator affect as revealed in fictional work by translators. *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series – Themes in Translation Studies*, 4.  
<https://doi.org/10.52034/lanstts.v4i.134>
- Angelone, Erik, Ehrensberger-Dow, Maureen, & Massey, Gary (2019). *The Bloomsbury Companion to Language Industry Studies*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Antonietti, Alessandro, Corradini, Antonella, & Lowe, Jonathan E. (2008). *Psycho-physical dualism today: An interdisciplinary approach*. Lexington Books.
- Li, Bo (2014). An Interview with Prof. Douglas Robinson on Translation and Translation Studies. *Compilation & Translation Review*, 7(1).
- Baker, Catherine (2016). Writing about embodiment as an act of translation. *Critical Military Studies*, 2(1–2), 120–124.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2016.1139314>
- Baker, Mona (2009). Resisting state terror: Theorizing communities of activist translators and interpreters. In E. Bielsa & C. W. Hughes

- (Eds.), *Globalization, Political Violence and Translation* (pp.222–242). Palgrave Macmillan UK. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230235410\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230235410_12)
- Bassnett, Susan, & Bush, Peter (2006). *The translator as writer*. A&C Black.
- Bayer-Hohenwarter, Göpferich (2010). Comparing translational creativity scores of students and professionals: flexible problem-solving and/or fluent routine behaviour. In Göpferich, S., Alves, F., & Mees, I. M. (Eds). *New approaches in translation process research*. Samfundslitteratur.
- Bell, Roger T. (1991). *Translation and translating: Theory and practice*. Longman.
- Crezee, Ineke (2013). *Introduction to healthcare for interpreters and translators*. John Benjamins
- Da Silva, Igor Antonio Lourenco (2007). *Conhecimento experto em tradução: Aferição da durabilidade de tarefas tradutórias realizadas por sujeitos não-tradutores em condições empírico-experimentais*. <https://repositorio.ufmg.br/handle/1843/ALDR-797K7C>
- Dau, William (1917). *Luther examined and reexamined: A review of catholic criticism and a plea for revaluation*. Concordia Publishing House.
- Ehrensberger-Dow, Maureen, & Massey, Gary (2014). Translators and machines: working together. *Man vs. Machine*, 1, 199-207.
- Ehrensberger-Dow, Maureen, & O'Brien, Sharon (2015). Ergonomics of the translation workplace: Potential for cognitive friction. *Translation spaces*, 4(1), 98-118.
- Englund Dimitrova, Birgitta (2005). Expertise and explicitation in the translation process. *Expertise and Explicitation in the Translation Process*, 1-315.
- Fraser, Janet (2000). The broader view: How freelance translators define translation competence. *Benjamins Translation Library*, 38, 51-62.
- Gambier, Yves, & Doorslaer, Luc van. (2010). *Handbook of translation studies*. John Benjamins Publishing.
- García, Adolfo M. (2013). Brain activity during translation: A review of the neuroimaging evidence as a testing ground for clinically-based hypotheses. *Journal of Neurolinguistics*, 26(3), 370–383. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneuroling.2012.12.002>

- Göpferich, Susanne (2013). Translation competence: Explaining development and stagnation from a dynamic systems perspective. *Target. International Journal of Translation Studies*, 25(1), 61-76.
- Gough, Joanna (2019). Developing translation-oriented research competence: What can we learn from professional translators? *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, 13(3), 342–359. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1750399X.2019.1656404>
- Halverson, Sandra L. (2014). Reorienting translation studies: Cognitive approaches and the centrality of the translator. In *Translation: A multidisciplinary approach* (pp.116-139). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Hansen, Gyde (2005). Experience and emotion in empirical translation research with think-aloud and retrospection. *Meta*, 50(2), 511-521.
- Hansen, Gyde (2006). Retrospection methods in translator training and translation research. *Journal of specialised Translation*, 5(1), 2-41.
- Hessler, Peter (2002). *River town: Two years on the yangtze*. Harper Collins.
- Hills, Lia (2012). “Effective Self-Translation: How Not to Completely Lose Yourself in Another’s Language”. In *Creative Constraints: Translation and Authorship*, edited by Rita Wilson and Leah Gerber, 77–84. Clayton, VIC: Monash University Publishing.
- Holland, Norman N. (2009). *Literature and the brain*. PsyArt Foundation.
- House, J. (2015). *Translation: A multidisciplinary approach*. Springer.
- Ivancic, Barbara, & Zepter, Alexandra L. (2022). A bodily and co-creative approach to teaching literary translation. *INTRALINEA ON LINE TRANSLATION JOURNAL*, 1, 1-12.
- Jakobsen, Arnt Lykke, & Jensen, Kristian Tangsgaard Hvelplund (2008). Eye movement behaviour across four different types of reading task. *Copenhagen Studies in Language*, 36, 103–124. <https://research.cbs.dk/en/publications/eye-movement-behaviour-across-four-different-types-of-reading-tas>

- Jakobsen, Arnt Lykke (2002). Orientation, segmentation, and revision in translation. In *Empirical translation studies: Process and product*, ed. Gyde Hansen, 191–204. Copenhagen: Samfundslitteratur.
- Kissler, Johanna, Herbert, Cornelia, Peyk, Peter, & Junghofer, Markus (2007). Buzzwords: Early cortical responses to emotional words during reading. *Psychological Science*, 18(6), 475–480. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2007.01924.x>
- Krings, Hans P. (1986). Was in den Köpfen von Übersetzern vorgeht: Eine empirische Untersuchung zur Struktur des Übersetzungsprozesses an fortgeschrittenen Französischlernern. G. Narr.
- Künzli, Alexander (2004). Translation revision. In *Doubts and Directions in Translation Studies: Selected Contributions from the EST Congress*, Lisbon.
- López, Ana Maria Rojo, & Caro, Marina Ramos (2014). The impact of translators' ideology on the translation process: A reaction time experiment. *MonTI. Monografías de Traducción e Interpretación*, 247–271. <https://doi.org/10.6035/MonTI.2014.ne1.8>
- MacDougall, David (1998). *Transcultural cinema*. Princeton University Press.
- Mallah, El Fuzi (2022). The influence of translators' cultural backgrounds on their performance: Translation of the quran as a case-study. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 5(8), 70–82. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2022.5.8.9>
- Martín, Ricardo Muñoz (2014). A blurred snapshot of advances in translation process research. *MonTI. Monografías de traducción e interpretación*, 49–84.
- Martín, Ricardo Muñoz, Sun, Sanjun, & Li, Defeng (2021). *Advances in cognitive translation studies*. Springer Nature.
- Moe, Marija Zlatnar, Tamara Mikolič Južnič, & Tanja Žigon (2021). Who determines the final version? The roles of translators, language revisers and editors in the publishing of a literary translation. *Across Languages and Cultures*, 22(1), 14–44. <https://doi.org/10.1556/084.2021.00002>
- Mørk, Hans-Olav (2012). Hearing the voice of the other: Engaging poets and writers as bible translators, with a case study on isaiah 7. 14. *The Bible Translator*, 63(3), 152–168. <https://doi.org/10.1177/205167701206300301>

- Napoli, Vince, Kilbride, James M., & Tebbs, Donald E. (1992). *Adjustment and growth in a changing world*. West Publishing Company.
- Nunes, Ariadne, Moura, Joana, & Pinto, Marta Pacheco (2020). *Genetic translation studies: Conflict and collaboration in liminal spaces*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- O'Brien, Sharon (2006). Eye-tracking and translation memory matches. *PERSPECTIVES-STUDIES IN TRANSLATION THEORY AND PRACTICE*, 14(3), 185-205. unselected
- O'Brien, Sharon (2012). Translation as human–computer interaction. *Translation spaces*, 1(1), 101-122.
- Pawelec, Andrzej (2012). Douglas Robinson and the somatic approach to translation. *Między Oryginałem a Przekładem*, 18, 25–37. <https://www.cceol.com/search/article-detail?id=124317>
- Risku, Hanna (2014). Translation process research as interaction research: From mental to socio-cognitive processes. *MonTI. Monografias de Traducción e Interpretación*, 331–353. <https://doi.org/10.6035/MonTI.2014.ne1.11>
- Robinson, Douglas (1991). *The translator's turn*. JHU Press.
- Robinson, Douglas (2011). *Translation and the problem of sway*. John Benjamins Publishing.
- Robinson, Douglas (2015). The somatics of tone and the tone of somatics: The Translator's Turn revisited. *Translation and Interpreting Studies. The Journal of the American Translation and Interpreting Studies Association*, 10(2), 299–319. <https://doi.org/10.1075/tis.10.2.09rob>
- Samudra, Jaida Kim (2008). Memory in our body: Thick participation and the translation of kinesthetic experience. *American Ethnologist*, 35(4), 665–681. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1425.2008.00104.x>
- Schmaltz, M. (2015). Resolução de problemas na tradução de metáforas linguísticas do chinês para o português. um estudo empírico-experimental.
- Sjørup, Annette C. (2011). Cognitive effort in metaphor translation: An eye-tracking study. In *Cognitive explorations of translation* (pp.197-214). Bloomsbury Academic.



- Tarnaeva, Larisa, & Osipova, Ekaterina (2020). Content and language integrated learning in teaching translators for professional communication. In Z. Anikina (Ed.), *Integrating Engineering Education and Humanities for Global Intercultural Perspectives* (pp.331–340). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-47415-7\\_35](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-47415-7_35)
- Venuti, Lawrence (2012). *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis.
- Walker, Callum, & Federici, Federico M. (2018). *Eye tracking and multidisciplinary studies on translation*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- West, Kevin (2010). Translating the body: Towards an erotics of translation. *Translation and Literature*, 19(1), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.3366/E0968136109000740>