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Organizational ergonomics of translation as a powerful predictor of translators' happiness at work?

Klaudia Bednárová-Gibová

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Organizational ergonomics of translation as a powerful predictor of translators' happiness at work?

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ABSTRACT

Following the sociological turn in translation studies, researchers' attention has shifted from studying a *translatum* to the translator. In connection with unexplored socio-psychological aspects of translator-oriented research, their happiness at work has been paid scant attention. More recently, interest in the translation process as a 'situated activity', i.e. the translator's workplace, has come to the fore. Intermingling these new research avenues, the overarching aim of the paper is to find out to what extent ergonomics of translation has an influence on translators' happiness at work. More specifically, components of organizational ergonomics of translation will be explored, along with their impact on agency translators' happiness at work. The paper is built upon a quantitative analysis of 98 questionnaires completed by agency translators in Slovakia. The paper explores correlations between the agency translators' support for workflow, opportunity to discuss translation problems, autonomy at work, time pressure, clarity of deadlines, feedback, variety in deskbound routines on the one hand and happiness at work (HAW) on the other hand. The research has revealed significant relationships between the translators' HAW and their working environment, text type, time pressure and ability to maintain concentration.

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1. Introduction: background to the study

Whether you are a translation studies scholar, translator or anyone else, work is, undoubtedly, taking over our lives in today's world. Sociologists who study working conditions concur that, at present, we dedicate far more time and energy to work and we identify with work content much more intimately than ever before (see Kuznik & Miquel Verd, 2010). At the same time, cross-sectional literature on work psychology indicates that people who experience greater positive affect (translate as 'happiness') achieve better outcomes in the workplace than their less happy peers. Happy workers seem more invested and involved at work, they have a greater commitment to their jobs and show a stronger performance (Walsh et al., 2018).

As a result of the sociological paradigm shift in translation studies (hereafter TS), not texts, but translators and their social standing, cultural influence and agency in society have been on

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the receiving end of scholars' attention. Indeed, the question remains as to whether translators can be studied properly without reflecting on their translations (and vice versa), but as Djovčoš and Tyšš (2018, p. 53) forewarn us, disregarding the personality of the translator as a social agent breeds an inability to act as an informed player on the translation market with respect to text selection for translation, pricing or even quality assessment.

Regardless of any controversies in translator-minded research, and keeping abreast of its contemporary focus on emotional and psychological tuning of the translator's personality (see e.g. Bednářová-Gibová, 2020; Hubscher-Davidson, 2009, 2018), the present study aspires to make a contribution to sociological TS research. The study focuses on exploring translators' happiness at work as a still under-researched phenomenon of the translator's agency. Moreover, the paper also takes into account the recent research in translation ergonomics as some scholars (Ehrensberger-Dow, 2015, 2017; Ehrensberger-Dow & Hunziker Heeb, 2016; Pulipati, 2018) acknowledge that there is a connection between ergonomic conditions (of the workplace) and productivity, health and ultimately job satisfaction which can arguably be considered equivalent to happiness at work (see section 3 of this study).

The study aims to find out to what degree ergonomics of translation impinges on translators' happiness at work. As there is little research on how organizational aspects of translation ergonomics interact with translators' happiness at work, the study purports to fill the identified research gap. With its focus on agency translators in Slovakia, it represents a contribution to the research mosaic of the continuum of translators across the Slovak social space as a follow-up to the author's previous research (Bednářová-Gibová, 2020; Bednářová-Gibová & Madoš, 2019) although the translation ergonomic perspective has been integrated for the first time within this wider undertaking. In this vein, the study represents an exploratory study and serves as a launching pad for further comparative research both at the national as well as supranational levels within my on-going happiness at work research.

According to a recent *World Happiness Report* by Helliwell et al. (2018), Slovakia reached the 39th rank on the proverbial happiness ladder out of 156 countries of the world, which is not a deterrent outcome. However, the said report did not zoom in on translators specifically. With regard to previous translator-oriented research, it is not an understatement to suggest that many studies, regardless of their embeddedness in varied 'ethnoscapes', seem to paint a rather grim picture of the translator's professional identity as almost universally marginalized, low-status and grossly unappreciated (Dam & Zethsen, 2009, 2011, 2016; Djovčoš & Šveda, 2017; Katan, 2009, 2011). Quite paradoxically, however, the desk research into secondary sources shows that despite these few empirical studies on translators' job satisfaction or happiness at work (e.g. Bednářová-Gibová, 2020; Bednářová-Gibová & Madoš, 2019; Dam & Zethsen, 2016; Katan, 2009; Liu, 2011), translators seem to exhibit fairly positive 'happiness styles', to borrow the term from Singh and Aggarwal (2018).

As already mentioned, this study links the issue of translators' happiness at work with an ergonomic perspective to provide an insight into how aspects of organizational ergonomics impinge on it. A deeper appreciation of the importance of organizational ergonomic issues such as autonomy at work, nature of translation jobs, opportunity to discuss translation problems with others, support for workflow, time pressure, variety of desk-bound routines, and feedback enables translators to rethink their behaviour not only for the sake of translation quality but also their own happiness at work.

In this paper, I shall look at the ethnographic data of agency translators ‘who are everything but part-timers, freelancers or transitory workers’ and ‘are at the very centre of the translation profession [contributing] to creating a solid core’ (Dam & Zethsen, 2016, p. 175). This means that they are treated, in line with the approach by Kuznik and Miquel Verd (2010), as ‘representatives of a profession’. The focus on Slovak translators, albeit of lesser cultural importance when compared to major languages, is responsive to an earlier appeal by Cronin (2006) encouraging that the local should meet the global in the contemporary glocalised world concerning new research trends in TS. Therefore, the research embedded in the Slovak ethnoscape can substantially enhance the investigations into translators’ happiness at work by an analysis of the indexicalities of a minor socio-psychological professional identity.

2. Ergonomic considerations in translation

In recent years, translation theorists have drawn attention to the conceptualization of translation as a ‘situated activity’ (Ehrensberger-Dow et al., 2016; Kuznik & Miquel Verd, 2010; Risku, 2002). This means that translation as a human activity is performed ‘in a context of personal interactions, in a given place and time [...], in connection with other processes and with an organizational structure’ (Kuznik & Miquel Verd, 2010, p. 26). The same conceptual reference can be covered by a parallel notion of ‘embeddedness’ (Ehrensberger-Dow et al., 2016), bringing to the fore the importance of the physical setting and social environment which translators find themselves embedded in. Hence, the conceptualizations of ‘situated activity’ and ‘embeddedness’ with their interactional focus create a fundamental theoretical substratum for an ergonomic perspective of translation.

Even though definitions of ergonomics may be varied, according to the official website of the International Ergonomics Association¹ (hereafter IEA) it has the following meaning:

Ergonomics (or human factors) is the scientific discipline concerned with the understanding of interactions among humans and other elements of a system, and the profession that applies theory, principles, data and methods to design in order to optimize human well-being and overall system performance.

Adapting the above definition to the TS setting, one can add that ergonomics is concerned with a set of interactions between translators as social subjects and various contextual elements that they use in order to interact most efficiently and safely. It has been argued that optimizing translators’ comfort can contribute positively to their translation performance, health and well-being (see Ehrensberger-Dow, 2017).

Although ergonomics is usually understood as related primarily to the physical conditions of the workplace, it actually has a much wider scope. The IEA distinguishes three main areas of ergonomics: physical, cognitive and organizational. First, the physical area is defined by the IEA as ‘concerned with human anatomical, anthropometric, physiological and biomechanical characteristics as they relate to physical activity’², so it is connected with translators’ workplace equipment and layout, safety and health. Second, the cognitive domain deals with ‘mental processes, such as perception, memory, reasoning and motor response, as they affect interactions among humans and other elements of a

system'.³ In the context of translation, the cognitive ergonomics can be linked with human-computer interaction including the design and operation of interfaces and functionalities of CAT tools. In addition, it also features mental workload, decision making processes, and work stress. Third, organizational ergonomics zooms in on 'the optimization of socio-technical systems, including their organizational structures, policies and processes'.⁴ That said, organizational ergonomics, relevant to this study, explores how translators interact with manifold layers of organization (in terms of communication, teamwork, collaboration, quality management and feedback) and environment.

In the present study, my concern is to examine to what degree the selected categories of organizational ergonomics have an impact on translators' happiness at work. Based on the categories of translation workflow and organization by Ehrensberger-Dow et al. (2016), they include the following: opportunity to discuss translation problems with others, autonomy at work (when to translate, which jobs, order of jobs, break behaviour), time pressure, clarity of deadlines and feedback about quality. In order to arrive at a yet fuller picture of the translators' reality of the workplace, their support for workflow (use of reference sources and translation software) and variety of deskbound routines, adopted from Ehrensberger-Dow (2017), will also be subject to a correlational analysis. More details on this are provided in section 4.

In a broader perspective, the need for an analysis of organizational aspects of translation is advocated by Olohan (2011, p. 345) who laments that 'the human and organizational aspects are not addressed at all, or only implicitly, or in an ad-hoc fashion'. How translators interact with their working environment and organizational aspects thereof, can have a substantial impact on their happiness at work, as tested by this study. Moreover, it seems important to accentuate that organizational ergonomics of translation show us that translation as an activity performed by social agents is situated not only in time and physical locale, but also within broader organizational components that call for a deeper analysis.

3. Happiness at work and translators

Social sciences (and this includes TS) have of late reported a steep rise of research interests in the construct of happiness at work (Singh & Aggarwal, 2018). In terms of the conceptual operationalization of the construct of happiness at work (hereafter abbreviated as HAW), its denotative content and objective measure remain a source of controversy. This is primarily because the concept in point has fuzzy semantic boundaries as a consequence of its philosophical essence; it can be used to mean various things in various contexts. According to the psychological literature, '(subjective) well-being', 'quality of life', 'affect', 'satisfaction' or even 'flow' are considered to be loosely synonymous with happiness, although some stress the need to distinguish between them (Warr, 2007). As concerns the application of the term to occupational reality, 'job satisfaction' might seem an apt designation. The latter is also widespread in the body of secondary literature including in translation (e.g. Dam & Zethsen, 2016; Katan, 2009; Liu, 2011). However, since 'job satisfaction' can imply the fulfilment of an individual's occupational needs (see Bednářová-Gibová & Madoš, 2019) and is therefore more restrictive, I prefer to use the term 'happiness at work' (HAW). In addition, not only is HAW endowed with a broader semantic extension to encompass more subordinate constructs such as 'affect' or 'well-being', but its

connotations are based on active, energy-laden and positive associations (Salas-Vallina et al., 2018; Warr, 2007). For instance, while ‘affect’ may be associated with unpleasant connotations, ‘well-being’ implies ‘a sense of positivity that is desirable but inert’ (Warr, 2007, p. 8). As implied by HAW, its associations with vitality are denotatively confirmed by e.g. *Oxford English Dictionary* suggesting that happiness is ‘the state of pleasurable content of mind, which results from success or the attainment of what is considered good’. In addition, the philosophical tint of HAW has the potential to point out issues that have been so far sidestepped outside psychological research, so it seems suitable for translator-oriented research.

Despite inherent controversies, the present study understands the term HAW as experiential and data-driven. Concurrently, it is derived from a collective level of analysis (Fisher, 2010), which enables the study of translators’ HAW as a collective experience impacted by the work group dynamics. In line with my previous research, I understand HAW as translators’ experience of subjective well-being at work which includes contentment, positive assessment of aspects of their professional lives and prevalence of positive over negative feelings (see Bednárová-Gibová, 2020).

As regards existing measures of happiness, general measures have been developed such as e.g. *Oxford Happiness Questionnaire*, *Positive and Negative Affects Schedule* (PANAS), *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (SWLS) or *Revised Life Orientation test* (LOT-R). However, their common denominator which makes them unsuitable for gauging translators’ happiness is their general orientation lacking a job-specific perspective. Concerning HAW, there have been observable attempts at proposing scales for its measurement at the professional level (e.g. S.M.I.L.E.S Framework by Andrew, 2011, iPPQ based HAW Scale by Lutterbie and Pryce Jones, 2013, Happiness Works Ltd., 2016), and to a lesser degree at the academic level (see Singh & Aggarwal, 2018 for more detail). Again, what the mentioned scales have in common is their general and sometimes even popular orientation. To date, the most comprehensive instrument for measuring translators’ ‘job satisfaction’ has been devised by Rodríguez-Castro (2015). Its main limitation, however, consists in the length of the questionnaire underlying individual task and job (dis-)satisfiers, which is a common issue with a questionnaire-based enquiry. Other recent instruments for gauging translators’ HAW include the IWP Affect Questionnaire, employed for example in the study by Bednárová-Gibová (2020). However, the purpose of this study is not to devise a measure of HAW in connection with translation ergonomics. Instead, it focuses on giving a quantitative analysis of the translators’ assessment of components of their organizational functioning by methods described more fully in the next section of the paper.

4. Data and methodology

Since this research is based on agency translators as a focus group, it is embedded in the domain-specific HAW investigation. The principal aim is to find out to what degree organizational ergonomics of translation has a bearing on translators’ HAW. In conjunction with this aim, components of organizational ergonomics of translation are explored, along with their impact on agency translators’ HAW. Considering a great potential of organizational issues in workflow especially in translation agencies, the research hypothesis is that organizational ergonomics of translation represents a powerful predictor of HAW. By adopting a selective focus on organizational ergonomics, my approach to

ergonomics infrastructure is not holistic, but restricted to one particular segment. The tested criteria of HAW are based on a synthesis of the repertoire of aspects by Ehrensberger-Dow et al. (2016) and Ehrensberger-Dow (2017) and were compiled by the author of this study. The inclusion criteria comprise major survey items of workflow and organization. Two more components of organizational translation ergonomics, i.e. support for workflow and variety of deskbound routines, were adopted from Ehrensberger-Dow (2017) to provide a yet deeper analytical framework. The exclusion criteria include survey items of physical and cognitive domains within ergonomics related to workspace and working environment, computer workstation, health, and the majority of the categories of tools and resources (with the exception of changing computers, CAT tools and pen/pencil use).

A quantitative analysis drawn on a questionnaire method was used to accomplish the study's aim. The quantitative analysis draws on a correlational analysis based on statistical chi-square tests (χ^2) and p -values, using contingency tables. This method was chosen to provide an objective picture of the interrelations between tested variables and find interactions between them. The χ^2 test calculations were performed by means of the chi-square calculator available at the Social Science Statistics' website.⁵

The questionnaire was created in the Google Forms interface and was composed of 29 questions, of which 2 were open, 2 closed and 25 semi-closed. In the case of the semi-closed questions, Likert scales were used to measure the participants' responses. Overall, the questions were both direct and indirect and were split into background questions and organizational ergonomics questions. The background questions were posed in order to gain an understanding of the translators' basic profile in terms of the type of employment, age, education, number of years being involved in translation business, language(s) from which they translate etc. Although the research components in the questionnaire were based on the previous studies by Ehrensberger-Dow et al. (2016) and Ehrensberger-Dow (2017), its design is entirely new. Due to the existence of previous research into organizational ergonomics of translation, no pilot study was conducted. There was no exigent need to test the adequacy of the research components, viability of a full-scale survey or to assess a research protocol on ergonomics in terms of its workability.

The research subjects were agency translators; their selection was prompted by the fact that nowadays a substantial part of translational action is provided mainly through translation agencies (see Kuznik & Miquel Verd, 2010). In addition, my focus on agency translators rather than for example freelancers gives greater visibility to translation as occupational activity and employment. Another reason was that organizational ergonomics issues seem particularly relevant for the selected translator type in whom workflow is expected to be effectively organized. The research subjects were recruited via non-probability convenience and snowball sampling methods. The ethnographic data were collected over the period of four weeks in February 2019 and are based on a total of 98 research participants. The subjects were contacted via e-mail and worked for 9 selected translation agencies in Slovakia, i.e. ASAP-translation.com Ltd., Lexika, Lexman, Interlang, A.B.I.E.S. Ltd., epreklady.sk, prekladatelna.sk, Skrivanek Slovakia Ltd. and Presto. The inclusion criteria for the translation agencies were based on their number of translators and years of experience in the Slovak translation market; the agencies with a larger number of employees were preferred as well as those with an

older date of creation. Only one Bratislava-based translation agency refused to take part in the research, and thus had to be excluded from the data collection process.

It should be emphasized, however, that the main limitation of this study is connected with relying on ethnographic self-report data which are not exempt from the social desirability bias (see Hubscher-Davidson, 2018). Agency translators who volunteered to take part in the research are probably happier than those who did not, so it is likely that a positive bias towards happy agency translators is present in this paper. It is also important to mention here that correlational research does not entail causation, and that results need to be interpreted with caution.

5. Findings and discussion

5.1. *The research subjects' basic profile*

Before discussing the results of the correlational research, we will address briefly the translators' profile which includes, among other things, their basic demographic data. Translating represents a full-time type of employment for 79.6% of the respondents, which implies that being an agency translator in Slovakia is more an occupation than a semi-occupational career path, contrary to other translator types. As concerns gender, 74.5% of all respondents are female, which is aligned with other studies (see e.g. Dam & Zethsen, 2009; Djovčoš & Šveda, 2017; Katan, 2009, 2011) about the female vs. male distribution among translators. The age breakdown of the subjects reveals that the most important age groups of the translators are those in their thirties (40.8%) and twenties (30.6%). This suggests that the agency section of the Slovak translation market is currently dominated by younger translators. The respondents are predominantly M.A. degree holders (64.3%). The most translated languages are English (61.2%) and German (24.5%). This information serves to provide a necessary background to the translators' organizational ergonomics realities, which are further scrutinized in the next section of this study.

5.2. *Organizational ergonomics of translation and HAW research results*

5.2.1. *Support for workflow*

A surprising finding in agency translation in Slovakia is that contrary to our expectations, the overwhelming majority of the translators (95.9%) work on their own. As few as 4.1% of the translators engage in teamwork with other known translators, which reveals strong solo tendencies in terms of their overall translational functioning bordering on isolation at work. Despite this, 56.1% of the respondents who show high happiness levels ('very happy' and 'happy') find their solitary working environment 'very stimulating' or 'stimulating', respectively. Based on the data in Table 1, it can be claimed that there is a positive relationship between the translators' HAW and a stimulating working environment (the result is significant at $p < 0.01$). The more stimulating the working environment is, the happier the agency translators are and vice versa; the more negative their decision regarding the working environment ranking is, the less happy they are.

The respondents were also asked how they feel in terms of their employer providing them with sources of reference (i.e. glossaries, parallel texts, e-dictionaries, terminological

Table 1. Correlation between HAW and working environment.

Working environment	Very stimulating	Stimulating	Neither stimulating nor demotivating	Demotivating	Very Demotivating
Very happy	14	12	9	1	0
Happy	2	27	15	0	0
Neither happy nor unhappy	0	4	11	1	0
Unhappy	0	0	1	1	0
Very unhappy	0	0	0	0	0

χ^2 statistics: 31.2436; p -value: 0.00023.

databases etc.) for their translation jobs. It was hypothesized that supportive behaviour on the part of the employer could minimize the translators' self-perceptions of their isolation in workflow. Based on the gained data, however, a non-significant relationship was found between the translators' HAW and their employers' supportive behaviour (the result is not significant at $p > 0.05$).

Although 27.6% of the subjects claim that they 'often' use the reference sources provided by their employer/translation commissioner (see Table 2), there is no significant relationship between the translators' HAW and the use of the reference sources by the translation agency ($p > 0.05$). Similarly, no relationship was found between the translators' use of the translation software (i.e. CAT-tools) provided by the translation agency and their happiness levels ($p > 0.05$), as documented in Table 3.

Despite the results, which highlight the importance of neither reference sources nor translation software provided by the agency in order to optimize the translators' HAW, it seems useful to underscore that unsupportive organizational experiences can be a problem for agency translators who mostly work from home. This is confirmed by an anonymous respondent who reports on his experiences: *'certain translation agencies have a very complicated system of submitting translations, because they require a double quality check control in various translation software or the translation data to be exported from CAT-tools, which is rather translator-unfriendly'*.

Table 2. Correlation between HAW and the use of reference sources.

The use of reference sources	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Very happy	4	10	10	9	3
Happy	6	12	13	7	6
Neither happy nor unhappy	1	5	4	4	2
Unhappy	0	0	2	0	0
Very unhappy	0	0	0	0	0

χ^2 statistics: 2.205; p -value: 0.974074.

Table 3. Correlation between HAW and the use of translation software.

The use of the software	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Very happy	6	7	7	4	12
Happy	8	8	11	8	9
Neither happy nor unhappy	1	2	4	3	6
Unhappy	1	1	0	0	0
Very unhappy	0	0	0	0	0

χ^2 statistics: 2.8528; p -value: 0.943251.

5.2.2. Opportunity to discuss translation problems

An important component in organizational ergonomics of translation is the opportunity to discuss translation problems, which is ineluctably an integral part of translational action. The most frequent way that translation problems are discussed is by e-mail (35.7%), followed by translator forums and other social networking websites (32.7%) and by phone (10.2%). The informants adduce discussing translation problems in person as the least convenient possibility (4.1%), in all probability due to its time-consuming nature. 16.3% of the subjects give a combination of several possibilities such as e-mail, Skype, consultations with a native speaker, or all of the above. The opportunity to discuss problems provides the translators with a possibility of closer collaborating with other people, which is in general significantly associated with overall and intrinsic job satisfaction (see Warr, 2007).

However, as can be derived from the data in Table 4, there is no significant relationship between the translators' HAW and the opportunity to discuss translation problems (the result is not significant at $p > 0.05$). Hence, the type of translation problem discussion does not seem to have a bearing on the translators' HAW.

5.2.3. Autonomy at work (when to translate, which jobs, order of jobs, break behaviour)

The translator's job, solitary in its essence, has always been connected with conditions of self-sufficiency. With this perspective in mind, it is relevant to look at some components of organizational ergonomics of translation which could have an impact on the translators' HAW.

As Table 5 reveals, whereas 36.7% of the agency translators 'often' have the option to decide when they are going to start their translations, 7.1% 'seldom' admit to this possibility. Although the data imply that for the most part (63.2%) the translators are in charge of deciding when to embark on translating, the null-hypothesis about a non-significant relationship between the translators' HAW and the possibility of deciding when to start translating is accepted (the result is not significant at $p > 0.05$). In other words,

Table 4. Correlation between HAW and opportunity to discuss translation problems.

Opportunity to discuss translation problems	In person	By phone	By e-mail	Translator forum	Other
Very happy	2	4	10	14	6
Happy	2	4	17	12	9
Neither happy nor unhappy	0	2	7	6	1
Unhappy	0	0	1	1	0
Very unhappy	0	0	0	0	0

χ^2 statistics: 4.4319; p -value: 0.816209.

Table 5. Correlation between HAW and when to translate.

Decision when to translate	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Very happy	14	9	9	3	1
Happy	10	21	11	1	1
Neither happy nor unhappy	2	6	5	2	1
Unhappy	0	0	1	1	0
Very unhappy	0	0	0	0	0

χ^2 statistics: 11.4464; p -value: 0.17766

there is no correlation between the translators' HAW and the selection of the timing of translation.

Moreover, if the type of translation jobs affects the translators' HAW was also examined. As Table 6 shows, a significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) was found between the translators' happiness levels and the possibility to decide which type of translation they are going to work on. This means that the agency translators who can 'always' choose the type of translation that they work on report very high happiness levels. On the contrary, those translators who 'often' or 'sometimes' have the possibility to choose the translation type, are only 'happy' or remain unsure about their happiness levels.

The results are consonant with wider psychological research which dictates that happiness is strongly determined by the environmental opportunities for an individual such as having some control over job activities, affecting one's decision latitude and freedom of choice (see Warr, 2007, p. 83). It is my contention that when translators can influence the choice of the text type for translation, this can psychologically increase their peace of mind, although further research is needed to be able to confirm this.

In addition, the order of translations and its influence on the subjects' HAW was also tested; the results are displayed in Table 7. Although 26.5% of the translators 'always' and almost a half of them (45.9%) 'often' have the chance to decide the order of their translations, there is no significant correlation between the two tested variables (the result is not significant at $p > 0.05$).

Last but not least, translators' sense of autonomy at work is manifested in their possibility to decide when they are going to take a break from translation. Even though the subjects seem pretty autonomous in this organizational job aspect (only 5.1% report 'sometimes' and 1% 'seldom'), the null hypothesis about a non-significant relationship between the translators' HAW and the decision when to take a break has been accepted (the result is not significant at $p > 0.05$). This means that break behaviour does not have an impact on the translators' happiness levels (Table 8).

An interesting finding in the subjects' break behaviour is that almost a half of them (45.9%) prefer to take a break when they need some rest, somewhat disregarding

Table 6. Correlation between HAW and the type of translation jobs.

Type of translation jobs	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Very happy	22	6	5	2	1
Happy	12	20	8	4	0
Neither happy nor unhappy	4	6	4	2	0
Unhappy	0	0	1	1	0
Very unhappy	0	0	0	0	0

χ^2 statistics: 14.6089; p -value: 0.023526.

Table 7. Correlation between HAW and the order of translation texts.

Order of translation texts	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Very happy	14	13	6	3	0
Happy	10	23	8	3	0
Neither happy nor unhappy	2	9	4	0	1
Unhappy	0	0	0	2	0
Very unhappy	0	0	0	0	0

χ^2 statistics: 6.7288; p -value: 0.34666.

Table 8. Correlation between HAW and the decision when to take a break.

Taking a break	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Very happy	28	6	2	0	0
Happy	29	14	1	0	0
Neither happy nor unhappy	8	6	1	1	0
Unhappy	1	0	1	0	0
Very unhappy	0	0	0	0	0

χ^2 statistics: 7.85; p -value: 0.097231.

options such as ‘about every two hours’ (9.2%) or ‘I don’t know, I’m immersed in my work’ (13.3%) to the background. This indicates a certain awareness of their autonomy at work from the point of view of break management.

5.2.4. Time pressure

Time pressure (not only) in translation agencies when translation commissioners demand their ‘final products’ as soon as possible is sadly a harsh reality. It can be only presupposed that if translators were not under such a time pressure as regards translation submissions, their HAW could be increased. In this best-case scenario translators could buy more time for a quality check or work on more urgent commissions. The questionnaire results show that the situation in Slovak translation agencies is not too alarming, though. Almost a half of all translators (49%) admit to ‘sometimes’ being under time pressure at work and 27.6% say ‘often’. However, as it follows from the data in Table 9, a significant relationship between time pressure and the translators’ HAW was found ($p < 0.01$): the translators who report less stress at work (i.e. tick the ‘seldom’ scale option) seem to be happier. On the contrary, the translators who cannot decide how happy they are often work under duress.

5.2.5. Clarity of deadlines

Time pressure is closely connected with the next important component of organizational translation ergonomics – clarity of deadlines. As expected, due to a fixed organizational infrastructure in translation agencies, the deadlines are set either ‘precisely’ (46.9%) or ‘very precisely’ (45.9%). As research shows (see Table 10), there is no direct correlation between the translators’ HAW and clarity of deadlines (the result is not significant at $p > 0.05$).

5.2.6. Feedback about quality

According to Warr (2007, p. 86), feedback indicates whether required standards are explicitly communicated in the working environment and whether one is informed about the

Table 9. Correlation between HAW and time pressure.

Time pressure	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Very happy	0	6	15	14	1
Happy	1	10	27	6	0
Neither happy nor unhappy	1	10	5	0	0
Unhappy	0	1	1	0	0
Very unhappy	0	0	0	0	0

χ^2 statistics: 24.1935; p -value: 0.000481.

Table 10. Correlation between HAW and clarity of deadlines.

Clarity for deadlines	Very precise	Precise	Neither precise nor unspecified	More unspecified with certain flexibility	Anytime
Very happy	20	13	1	2	0
Happy	20	20	2	2	0
Neither happy nor unhappy	5	11	0	0	0
Unhappy	0	2	0	0	0
Very unhappy	0	0	0	0	0

χ^2 statistics: 4.0136; p -value: 0.674837.

consequences of their actions. In this sense feedback can be taken for a manifestation of ‘environmental clarity’ and is recognized as a crucial aspect of organizational ergonomics (Ehrensberger-Dow, 2017; Salvendy, 2012). As the survey results show, the subjects do not seem to suffer from receiving insufficient feedback: while 32.7% are ‘often’ given feedback on the quality of their work, the majority of them 41.8% are ‘sometimes’ provided with feedback. Only about a fifth of them (21.4%) complain that they are ‘seldom’ given feedback on what they do (see Table 11). To those, however, this could have adverse implications for their translation quality and decision making. Although a lack of feedback can hamper the increase in expertise and negatively impact translators’ health (see Ehrensberger-Dow, 2017), no significant relationship between the translators’ HAW and feedback ($p > 0.05$) was found. In other words, receiving feedback or not does not influence the agency translators’ happiness levels. This finding is, however, not in agreement with Ehrensberger-Dow’s tentative suggestions (ibid.), and thus deserves further research.

5.2.7. Variety of deskbound routines

The psychological research (Staats & Gino, 2012; Warr, 2007) informs us that a task variety at work and avoidance of repetition lead to a higher level of well-being. However, the obtained research results in Table 12 indicate that both those agency translators who do not alternate their work routines as well as those who do achieve comparable happiness levels (the result is not significant at $p > 0.05$). The reason is to be probably

Table 11. Correlation between HAW and feedback about quality.

Feedback	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Very happy	2	7	16	9	2
Happy	0	19	18	7	0
Neither happy nor unhappy	0	5	6	5	0
Unhappy	0	1	1	0	0
Very unhappy	0	0	0	0	0

χ^2 statistics: 4.0614; p -value: 0.668362.

Table 12. Correlation between HAW and variety of deskbound routines.

Variety of routines	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Very happy	0	1	8	20	7
Happy	0	3	10	25	6
Neither happy nor unhappy	0	2	4	9	1
Unhappy	0	0	0	1	1
Very unhappy	0	0	0	0	0

χ^2 statistics: 2.1238; p -value: 0.907969.

Table 13. Correlation between HAW and concentration.

Concentration	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Very happy	0	4	11	18	3
Happy	0	1	21	19	3
Neither happy nor unhappy	0	2	13	1	0
Unhappy	0	1	1	0	0
Very unhappy	0	0	0	0	0

χ^2 statistics: 18.3141; *p*-value: 0.031699.

sought in the personalities of the translators, who are used to working monotonously for long hours, being immersed in what they do, so variety may not be psychologically sought after. 56.1% of the subjects ‘seldom’ change their work routines and 22.4% mention ‘sometimes’. Most importantly, the overwhelming majority of the agency translators (73.5%) associate variety in their work with the text genres and topics; the most preferred genres among the subjects are publicist texts (newspaper articles), IT texts (software localization) and texts of tourism (guidebooks), which partly reflects their humanities background. In our survey, many subjects unanimously agree that when working on the screen, changing computers (57.2%) and CAT tools (32.4%) does often bring a welcome variety. On the other hand, when working on the paper when annotating originals or revising translations by using printed texts, using a pen or a pencil is not recognized as a motivator of variety (72.6% of the respondents are negative).

Variety in deskbound routines is closely connected with concentration at work. Being under organizational pressure spending long periods involved in translation activities that lack variation can be cognitively exhausting, so translators can have difficulty maintaining concentration. Interestingly, a significant relationship between the translators’ HAW and concentration was found ($p < 0.05$). This means that the agency translators who have no problems with concentration (ticking the ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ options; i.e. 44.9%) seem to feel happy at work. Conversely, the translators who ‘sometimes’ (46.9%) report concentration problems, cannot seem to decide if they are happy or not (see Table 13).

6. Conclusion

In closing, it is deemed appropriate to stress that this study has pointed out the importance of doing empirical research in translation agencies. The correlational analysis has shown that how agency translators interact with their working environment and aspects of their organizational microstructure has some important implications for their HAW. Of the tested variables, significant relationships were found between the translators’ HAW and their working environment, the text type they translate, time pressure and the ability to maintain concentration. On the other hand, support for workflow (especially in terms of the reference sources and translation software provided by the translation agency), opportunity to discuss translation problems, timing of translation, order of translation texts, break behaviour, clarity of deadlines or variety of deskbound routines have been confirmed to have a far less serious effect on the translators’ HAW. Contrary to previous research, the obtained results show two crucial points of difference: first, feedback provided to the agency translators does not seem to significantly contribute to their happiness levels and second, alternating work routines does not necessarily increase the translators’ HAW.

Based on the results, it can be claimed that although organizational ergonomics of translation cannot be underestimated in terms of its potential for workplace wellness in translation agencies, it cannot be taken as a powerful predictor of the translators' HAW, as originally presupposed. Therefore, the predictive hypothesis underlying my research has not been corroborated and the answer to this study's title seems negative. Drawing on Warr's vitamin analogy (2007) where happiness is influenced by the environment in a way analogous to the effect of vitamins on physical condition, it is possible to argue in parallel that an absence of the primary organizational ergonomics leads to unhappiness at work, but its presence beyond a certain level does not further increase happiness.

Overall, the results of the performed analysis provide useful information on the current situation of translation organization aspects in Slovak translation agencies. Although the research focuses on translator figures in a relatively small country, its results could be taken as a springboard for comparison with translation agencies located in other non-Slovak linguistic landscapes. In this manner, the research could contribute to exploring the issues of translation ergonomics and HAW beyond the national level in today's globalized world.

Notes

1. See <https://www.iea.cc/whats/index.html>
2. See <https://www.iea.cc/whats/index.html>
3. See <https://www.iea.cc/whats/index.html>
4. See <https://www.iea.cc/whats/index.html>
5. <https://www.socscistatistics.com/tests/chisquare2/Default2.aspx>.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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