

From Translation Risk to Mediation Decisions: A Cross-Case Study of Translator Mediation in Authentic Translation Projects

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Abstract: Translator mediation is often discussed as the management of cultural distance, yet professional translators also mediate domain knowledge, genre expectations, technologies, stakeholders, and production constraints. This article examines how such mediation operates in four authentic translation projects: a Chinese-to-English railway video-course localization project, an English-to-Chinese trade-book translation, a Chinese-to-English popular-science book on Chinese folk culture and physics, and a Chinese-to-English journal-article translation. A retrospective multiple-case design combined qualitative content analysis with cross-case synthesis. The dataset comprised project briefs, case reports, work logs, translation notes, bilingual drafts, terminology files, courseware, and deliverable inventories. The unit of analysis was the translation decision episode: a documented problem or risk linked to an action, resource, revision, or outcome. Within-case analysis identified seven recurrent risk domains: knowledge, terminology and consistency, cultural-conceptual, genre and discourse, process, technological and multimodal, and stakeholder-ethical risk. Cross-case comparison showed that translators responded through four interdependent forms of mediation: evidential, discursive, stakeholder, and technological-process mediation. These were organized into a recurrent Risk-Evidence-Decision-Revision cycle rather than a sequence of isolated textual techniques. Translation memories and terminology bases stabilized repeated choices, but they did not replace judgment; meetings, source checking, parallel texts, client queries, and differentiated revision redistributed uncertainty across people and artifacts. The study reframes translator mediation as situated risk governance and proposes a process model that connects risk identification, evidence assembly, decision authorization, implementation, and revision. The findings support project-based translator education that assesses not only target-text quality but also the traceability and revisability of decisions.

Keywords: Translator mediation; Translation risk; Authentic projects; Multiple-case study; Translation technology; Translator education

Online publication: April 26, 2026

1. Introduction

Translation in professional settings rarely consists of an isolated bilingual act. Translators work with incomplete briefs, unstable files, specialist concepts, target-genre conventions, translation-memory matches, reviewers, clients, publishers, and delivery deadlines. Each element can alter what counts as an acceptable solution. A terminologically accurate sentence may still be unsuitable for a spoken video script; a culturally familiar source-language label may acquire unintended associations in English; and a fluent translation may fail because a diagram is unreadable or the wrong source-file version was used. The central professional problem is therefore not simply how to replace one expression with another, but how to decide under distributed and changing constraints.

Risk provides a productive lens for this problem. Pym distinguishes credibility, uncertainty, and communicative risk and argues that translation effort is allocated unevenly according to the consequences of failure ^[1]. This approach shifts attention from equivalence as a static relation to decision-making under uncertainty. However, risk does not manage itself. Translators must recognize what is at stake, locate and evaluate evidence, negotiate among actors, implement a choice across files and media, and test that choice through revision. These activities can be understood as mediation in a broader professional sense.

Intercultural mediation conventionally concerns intervention that anticipates misunderstanding or loss across cultural distance ^[2]. That account remains crucial, especially for culture-specific concepts and contested historical labels. Yet the workplace evidence examined here suggests that mediation also occurs between specialist and lay knowledge, source-text organization and target-genre expectations, client instructions and reader needs, human judgment and automated suggestions, and individual choices and team-wide consistency. Situated approaches similarly treat translation as cognition distributed across persons, artifacts, and environments rather than as a purely internal linguistic operation ^[3]. Translation technology is part of this environment: it shapes attention, segmentation, retrieval, and collaboration, but remains dependent on human evaluation ^[4].

This article investigates mediation through four completed translation projects that differ in direction, domain, scale, genre, and modality. The cases comprise a railway video course translated from Chinese into English, a 312-page negotiation book translated from English into Chinese, a 71,163-character book combining Chinese folk culture and popular physics translated into English, and a 6,768-character research article translated into English for journal submission. Their heterogeneity enables theoretical replication: if similar decision mechanisms recur under markedly different conditions, they are less likely to be artifacts of one genre.

Three research questions guide the study:

- (1) What translation risks and mediation needs are documented across different authentic projects?
- (2) How do translators mobilize evidence, technology, collaboration, and revision to address those risks?
- (3) What recurrent risk-resource-decision relations support a process model of translator mediation?

The article contributes a seven-domain risk framework and a Risk-Evidence-Decision-Revision model. The model treats mediation as a situated and revisable process of risk governance. It also offers a pedagogical bridge between competence inventories, such as the European Master's in Translation framework ^[5], and the observable work through which competence becomes consequential in projects.

2. Translator mediation as situated risk governance

2.1. From cultural mediation to multidimensional mediation

The mediator metaphor highlights the translator's active position between participants and meaning systems. Katan defines intercultural mediation as intervention responsive to cultural distance and possible misunderstanding ^[2]. In the present study, cultural mediation includes explaining culture-specific items, managing presupposed knowledge, and evaluating the ethical and discursive effects of labels. It is not reduced to a binary choice between domestication and foreignization. A culturally marked item can require documentary verification, consultation with a client or editor, an explanatory addition, and later consistency control.

Professional projects extend this mediating function. Nord's functionalist account makes the brief, purpose, and recipient central to translation decisions ^[6]. House likewise emphasizes that quality judgments depend on relationships among text, context, register, and function ^[7]. A translator working on courseware must therefore mediate not only languages but also the affordances of slides, scripts, speech, and images. A translator preparing a journal article must mediate between the source author's rhetorical habits and the target journal's expectations. Mediation is thus best treated as a family of coordinated interventions rather than a synonym for handling culture-bound words.

Four forms are analytically useful. Evidential mediation concerns how competing sources of authority—source context, parallel texts, terminology resources, official formulations, domain experts, and client instructions—are assembled and weighted. Discursive mediation concerns the reorganization of information for a target genre, register, or mode. Stakeholder mediation coordinates the expectations and authority of authors, clients, publishers, reviewers, instructors, readers, and team members. Technological-process mediation concerns the configuration of files, platforms, memories, terminology bases, quality checks, and delivery sequences so that decisions remain consistent and revisable.

2.2. Risk, uncertainty, and distributed decision making

Pym's framework clarifies why translators devote different levels of effort to different textual elements ^[1]. High-consequence items invite more checking and consultation. The materials in this study additionally show that risk can originate outside the sentence: an outdated slide deck, an OCR-corrupted source, a blurred image, or a late client replacement may undermine an otherwise defensible translation. Translation risk is therefore defined here as the possibility that a project decision or production condition will compromise communicative purpose, stakeholder trust, deliverable usability, or ethical acceptability.

Uncertainty is not merely an individual deficit. It is often a signal that authority or information is distributed. In project work, uncertainty may be resolved by checking a video against its script, consulting a parallel corpus, querying the client for an original image, or assigning a passage to a reviewer with greater genre experience. Translation memories and terminology bases externalize prior choices and make them available to a team; meetings make tacit doubts discussable; tracked revisions preserve the history of contested choices. Such artifacts can reduce uncertainty, but poorly prepared resources can also propagate error. The relevant competence is not tool use alone but the ability to judge when a resource deserves trust.

This perspective aligns with situated cognition, in which expertise depends on interaction with material and social environments ^[3], and with accounts of translation as human-computer interaction ^[4]. It also resonates with professional standards that separate translation, checking, revision, and project administration

while linking quality to resources and process specifications ^[8]. The Risk-Evidence-Decision-Revision cycle proposed below integrates these insights at the level of observable decision episodes.

2.3. Authentic projects and translator education

The European Master's in Translation framework groups professional competence across language and culture, translation, technology, personal and interpersonal competence, and service provision ^[5]. Authentic or realistically simulated projects make these domains interact. Situated learning exposes learners to consequential tasks, collaboration, technologies, and unexpected problems that cannot be fully predetermined by the instructor ^[9]. Project-based environments therefore offer more than practice material: they reveal how expertise is coordinated under constraints.

Yet authenticity alone does not guarantee learning. Students may complete a product without making their reasoning visible. A process model can support reflection by requiring a traceable account of the risk perceived, the evidence consulted, the decision made, the authority behind it, and the effect of revision. This is consistent with qualitative approaches that make analytic categories and inference paths transparent ^[10].

3. Method

3.1. Design and case selection

The study used a retrospective multiple-case design ^[11] with embedded translation decision episodes as units of analysis. Cases were selected theoretically, not statistically. They maximize variation across translation direction, genre, domain, modality, team size, and commissioning context while sharing three conditions: each was an authentic commissioned project, each involved documented collaboration and revision, and each retained multiple forms of project evidence.

Table 1. Case characteristics and primary mediation pressures

Case	Direction and product	Scale and team	Salient pressures
Railway video course	Chinese-English; scripts, slides, teaching plans, task guides, voice-over	14-day project; 2 teachers, 7 MTI students, 4 undergraduates	Specialist railway knowledge, script-video mismatch, multimodal delivery, file/version control, deadline
Negotiation book	English-Chinese; 25-chapter trade book	312 pages; three two-person translation groups plus senior reviewers and instructor	30-day deadline, cultural allusions, idiom and rhetoric, cross-chapter consistency, layered revision
Folk culture and physics book	Chinese-English; illustrated popular-science book	71,163 Chinese characters; 1 teacher and 4 MTI students	OCR noise, culture-specific items, classical poetry, physics explanations, images, ethical-historical labels
Journal article	Chinese-English; manuscript for an international journal	6,768 Chinese characters; 1 teacher and 1 MTI student	Disciplinary terminology, academic register, journal requirements, diagrams and tables

3.2. Materials and data boundaries

The analysis drew on all materials available from the project teams. These included four project case reports; a dated work log; a negotiation translation notebook containing source passages, draft renderings, and revision concerns; bilingual sample translations; terminology spreadsheets; English course-design and team-information files; and the inventory of scripts, slides, teaching plans, task guides, audio, images, compressed deliveries, and successive drafts. Duplicate packages and audio files were treated as evidence of workflow,

modality, and deliverable structure rather than as independent textual observations.

The materials vary in evidential resolution. The case reports summarize problems and solutions retrospectively, whereas the negotiation notebook records particular passages and revision observations. The railway archive provides unusually strong production evidence through file versions and modality-specific outputs. Accordingly, the study makes analytic claims.

3.3. Unitization and coding

The basic unit was a translation decision episode: a bounded segment in which (a) a problem, uncertainty, or project requirement was documented and (b) the team took or proposed an action linked to evidence, coordination, revision, or an outcome. Pure descriptions of dates, personnel, or file counts were not coded unless they explained a decision.

Analysis proceeded in three stages. First, within-case matrices reconstructed context, risk, evidence, action, collaboration, revision, and reported outcome. Second, qualitative content analysis combined concept-driven and data-driven coding^[10]. Pym's risk framework^[1] and the research plan sensitized the initial categories, while process, technological-multimodal, and stakeholder-ethical distinctions were refined against the archived episodes. Third, cross-case synthesis compared recurring mechanisms and case-specific configurations^[11]. Negative and unresolved evidence—such as inadequate figure clarity or repeated slide reworking—was retained because it identifies limits of mediation rather than simply implementation failures.

Seven risk codes were used: knowledge (R1), terminology and consistency (R2), cultural-conceptual (R3), genre and discourse (R4), process and project management (R5), technological and multimodal (R6), and stakeholder and ethical (R7). Evidence codes distinguished source-internal evidence, parallel or authoritative texts, terminology resources, stakeholder input, technology-generated matches, and revision feedback. Strategy codes captured explicitation, reformulation, terminological stabilization, workflow redesign, consultation, and multimodal remediation. Multiple coding was permitted because an episode could, for example, involve cultural, ethical, and stakeholder risk.

4. Findings

4.1. Seven risk domains

All four cases contained multiple, interacting risks. Knowledge risk was clearest in railway operations, physics, negotiation concepts, and computer-assisted dynamic assessment. Terminology and consistency risk increased with repeated content and distributed production. Cultural-conceptual risk dominated the folk-culture book but also appeared in the railway label “Officer on duty” and in British allusions and institutional references in the negotiation book. Genre and discourse risk was most visible in the trade book and journal article, where semantic correctness did not ensure publishable prose. Process risk emerged from deadlines, work allocation, naming, and version control. Technological-multimodal risk included OCR, file conversion, fuzzy graphics, table distortion, CAT-platform configuration, slide layout, and voice-over: stakeholder-ethical risk concerned target readers, client requests, publication norms, historical naming, and ideological acceptability.

Table 2. Cross-case distribution of documented risk domains

Risk domain	Railway course	Negotiation book	Folk culture and physics	Journal article
R1 Knowledge	High	Moderate	High	High
R2 Terminology and consistency	High	High	Moderate	High
R3 Cultural-conceptual	Moderate	High	High	Low to moderate
R4 Genre and discourse	High	High	High	High
R5 Process and project management	High	High	High	Moderate
R6 Technological and multimodal	High	Moderate	High	High
R7 Stakeholder and ethical	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate

The ratings summarize documentary salience, not measured prevalence. Their main value lies in configuration. For example, the railway case combined R1, R2, R5, and R6: domain accuracy depended on a workflow able to stabilize terminology across scripts, slides, guides, and audio. In the folk-culture case, R1, R3, R4, R6, and R7 converged: a culturally loaded item might require factual research, reader-oriented explanation, a stance-sensitive label, and placement within an illustrated layout.

4.2. Case 1: The railway course—mediation across expertise, files, and modes

The railway course contained dozens of interconnected files on signaling, track circuits, points, interlocking equipment, operating procedures, and written authorities. The first major decision was not lexical. The team compared scripts with recorded videos and treated the performed content as authoritative when the two diverged. This was evidential mediation: the source was reconstructed from multiple artifacts rather than assumed to be a stable document.

Process mediation then made the corpus workable. The team counted deliverables and male/female voice segments, established a naming convention, and allocated whole related files to the same translator where possible. Because no pilot translation memory was ready, shorter files were translated and reviewed first; approved content then seeded a memory used for longer scripts, teaching plans, task guides, and slides. This sequencing converted early decisions into shared project infrastructure.

Technology did not eliminate the need for review. YICAT and an alignment tool enabled collaboration and reuse, while group leaders and the project lead reviewed successive outputs. Daily meetings surfaced problems and allowed plans to change. When slide images were blurred, the preferred response was to request original images from the client. When the client later supplied replacement source slides, the English slides had to be revised again. The episode demonstrates that version uncertainty can dominate sentence-level accuracy and that stakeholder confirmation is a quality-control mechanism.

The term “Officer on duty” illustrates cultural-conceptual risk within a technical project. The archive explicitly rejects a mechanical use of cadre because of its associations in English. The issue required attention to institutional function and target-language connotation, not merely dictionary correspondence. Thus, the technical case also supports a cultural account of mediation, but one embedded in evidence and stakeholder purpose.

4.3. Case 2: The negotiation book—mediation between semantic accuracy and Chinese book discourse

The negotiation book combined severe time pressure with stylistic complexity. The PDF was converted, split into 28 files, cleaned, and checked against the source. Three two-person groups worked concurrently

in YICAT, each using a terminology base. Translation and first review overlapped, and regular meetings synchronized progress and recurring choices.

The translation notebook records several episodes in which literal or locally plausible renderings distorted the passage's logic. In a discussion of difficult behavior, the draft treated reward difficult behaviour as "rewarding difficulty" rather than reinforcing strategically obstructive conduct. Elsewhere, Mother Hubbard required recognition of a nursery-rhyme allusion and its "bare cupboard" implication. A long confidence-trick passage contained culture-specific institutional humor: being a "guest of Her Majesty" alludes to imprisonment, while "big houses" evokes affluent suburban homes rather than a generic building. These examples required evidential and cultural mediation before fluent rewriting was possible.

The project separated revision functions. The first substantive pass retained tracked changes and prioritized semantic errors with reference to the English. A later instructor pass removed revision traces and focused on coherence and rhetorical appropriateness in Chinese. The distinction is theoretically important. It shows that accuracy control and target-discourse mediation are related but non-identical. The final whole-book pass addressed terminology and logical continuity across chapters. Revision was therefore not a terminal check but a sequence in which different risks were assigned to different passes and reviewers.

4.4. Case 3: The folk-culture and physics book—mediation of cultural density and epistemic accessibility

The source book's "one folk custom, one story, one illustration, one principle" design brought together tools, toys, musical instruments, games, food, architecture, performance, classical poetry, and physics. The scanned PDF contained watermarks and illustrations; conversion generated recognition errors, corrupted characters, punctuation problems, and layout defects. OCR output was checked with document tools, and text embedded in images was extracted separately. Here, technological remediation was a precondition for any defensible linguistic decision.

The project created a limited terminology resource because repeated lexical material was concentrated in headings such as "cultural origins" and "interesting physics." This is a useful counterexample to indiscriminate terminology extraction: the resource strategy was adapted to the source's low repetition. Translators marked unresolved terminology, unclear cohesion, and source-syntax constraints, then consulted parallel texts and reference tools. Teacher review followed student self-revision and first review.

Cultural mediation was pervasive because many items lacked ready target-culture equivalents and relied on background knowledge shared by Chinese readers. Classical poems created both intertextual and stylistic risk, whereas physics passages required concise explanation without sacrificing rigor. These pressures often favored combinations of retention, explanation, and discourse restructuring rather than one global strategy.

The archive's discussion of "War against Japan" makes the ethics of evidential choice explicit. Possible English labels differ in historical framing and institutional circulation. The case report contrasts Second Sino-Japanese War with War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and links the decision to official discourse, authorial intention, and translator responsibility. The point is not that one English label is universally correct; it is that apparently lexical choices can distribute voice, stance, and historical agency. Ethical mediation therefore requires transparent evidence and an explicit account of purpose.

4.5. Case 4: The journal article—mediation toward a target disciplinary genre

The fourth case involved a review of two decades of empirical research on computerized dynamic

assessment, intended for an international journal. The team extracted text, used OCR for diagrams, and generated 37 candidate terms by specifying frequency and length thresholds. Verified terms were imported into YICAT with a translation memory. After translation, the bilingual file underwent a first review, reinsertion and formatting of figures and tables, and a second review.

The key risk was not word-level equivalence alone. The target manuscript required formal, objective, concise, and comparatively impersonal academic prose, as well as compliance with journal requirements. The report notes continuing problems with structure, lexical precision, and cohesion after initial translation. This confirms that terminology consistency can coexist with genre-level weakness. Discursive mediation involved tightening relations among propositions, removing redundancy, and selecting structures appropriate to English-language research writing.

The unresolved visual problems are equally informative. Re-created flowcharts remained insufficiently clear, and CAT-exported tables required manual repair that did not fully reach publication quality. The episode shows that a linguistically satisfactory file can remain unusable as a submission artifact. Multimodal competence and production quality are therefore integral to mediation, not peripheral formatting skills.

4.6. Cross-case mechanisms

Across the four cases, four mechanisms recurred.

First, evidential mediation transformed uncertainty into an accountable basis for choice. Evidence included source-video comparison, original PDFs, parallel texts, verified terminology, official formulations, journal instructions, and reviewer feedback. The strength of a decision depended less on the number of sources than on their relevance and authority.

Second, discursive mediation adjusted relations among propositions, readers, and genres. It appeared in Chinese trade-book coherence, accessible explanations of physics, formal railway scripts, and international academic prose. This mechanism explains why terminological accuracy was necessary but insufficient.

Third, stakeholder mediation distributed authority. Clients supplied files and clarified deliverables; publishers imposed time and style expectations; instructors and experienced reviewers differentiated revision tasks; target readers constrained connotation and explicitation; team meetings synchronized local decisions. Problems intensified when stakeholder confirmation occurred late, as in the replacement railway slides.

Fourth, technological-process mediation turned decisions into durable, reusable project resources. File cleaning, naming rules, terminology bases, translation memories, alignment, tracked changes, OCR, and staged quality control extended individual judgments across time and team members. Technology amplified both good and bad decisions, making validation and revision indispensable.

Table 3. Representative decision episodes across cases

Case and trigger	Primary risk	Evidence or resource	Mediation decision	Revision or outcome
Railway script differs from video	R5/R6	Video and script comparison	Treat performed video content as controlling source	Script corrected before translation and voice allocation
No pilot memory under short deadline	R2/R5	Short-file inventory and reviewed output	Translate short files first to seed TM	Reuse across scripts, guides, plans, and slides
Officer on duty risks misleading connotations	R3/R7	Target-language connotation and institutional function	Reject unexamined cadre equivalent	Context-sensitive label required in final review

Client supplies replacement slides late	R5/R7	Client communication and version comparison	Replace source baseline and rework slides	Repeated work exposes cost of late version confirmation
Mother Hubbard allusion	R3/R4	Intertextual recognition and passage context	Render pragmatic implication, not surface name alone	Reviewer-led Chinese reformulation
Confidence-trick passage	R3/R4	British institutional and social context	Make implicit humor and causal logic recoverable	Semantic pass followed by rhetorical pass
Book drafts are accurate but uneven	R2/R4	Tracked revisions and whole-book reading	Separate semantic review from stylistic polishing	Final unification of terms and discourse
Scanned folk-culture PDF is corrupted	R5/R6	PDF-image comparison and OCR checking	Extract and clean text before CAT import	Residual errors retained for later review
Culture-specific item lacks direct equivalent	R1/R3/R4	Parallel texts and contextual research	Combine retention, explanation, and restructuring	Teacher review checks accessibility and fidelity
Historical event label carries stance	R3/R7	Historical context and authoritative discourse	Evaluate label against purpose, voice, and reader	Ethical rationale made explicit rather than hidden
Journal manuscript contains repeated terms	R1/R2	Frequency-based extraction plus verification	Build and import 37-entry terminology list	TM/termbase supports consistency
Figures and tables remain unclear	R6/R7	Visual inspection and journal expectations	Re-create and manually repair visual objects	Outcome remains below publication standard

5. A risk-evidence-decision-revision model

The cross-case synthesis supports a cyclical model with five linked functions.

- (1) Risk framing. The translator identifies what may fail, for whom, and with what consequence. Risks can be textual, cultural, epistemic, procedural, technological, or ethical.
- (2) Evidence assembly. Relevant evidence is located and weighted. Sources may be internal to the project, external and authoritative, stakeholder-provided, technologically retrieved, or generated through review.
- (3) Decision and authorization. A proposed solution is selected and, where stakes or ambiguity warrant, authorized through consultation, reviewer judgment, or client confirmation.
- (4) Implementation and propagation. The decision is implemented in the target text and propagated through terminology bases, translation memories, naming systems, revised templates, and team instructions.
- (5) Revision and learning. Checking tests the decision against meaning, discourse, format, and use. Revision may confirm the choice, modify it, reopen evidence gathering, or expose a new risk.

The cycle is recursive. A blurred image discovered during revision returns the team to evidence assembly; a reviewer challenge can reframe an item from terminology risk to ethical risk; a validated translation-memory entry can reduce future uncertainty but still requires contextual checking. Mediation is therefore located not at one point between source and target, but across a distributed sequence of decisions.

The model also clarifies the relation between competence and performance. The EMT domains describe capacities translators should possess ^[5]. The present model describes how those capacities operate together. Language and culture competence helps frame connotational risk; technological competence retrieves and

propagates evidence; interpersonal competence enables authorization and negotiation; service-provision competence stabilizes versions and delivery; translation competence integrates them into a defensible target-text choice.

6. Discussion

6.1 Mediation exceeds culture-specific wording

The findings extend Katan's account^[2] without diluting its cultural core. Cultural distance mattered in folk practices, historical labels, British allusions, and institutional titles. Yet the same mediating logic governed journal conventions, railway multimodality, and project versions: translators anticipated a gap between what one actor or artifact supplied and what another needed to understand or use. Mediation can therefore be defined operationally as intervention that manages consequential discontinuities across languages, cultures, genres, knowledge systems, technologies, or stakeholder expectations.

This definition avoids treating every translation choice as mediation. Routine substitutions become analytically significant only when a documented discontinuity creates risk and calls for evidence, coordination, or revision. The decision-episode unit keeps the concept empirically bounded.

6.2. Technology as infrastructure, not autonomous solution

All four projects used CAT-related resources, but their value depended on sequencing and validation. In the railway case, reviewed short texts seeded later reuse. In the journal case, extracted terms were checked before import. In the folk-culture case, low repetition limited the usefulness of a large terminology base. These patterns support O'Brien's human-computer framing^[4]: tools reorganize the translation task, but do not independently determine quality.

The archive also shows technology's failure modes. OCR introduced corruption; CAT export altered tables; screenshot-based diagram recreation reduced clarity; memories could potentially spread an early error. Technological competence must therefore include risk recognition, resource curation, and exit strategies when automation degrades the deliverable.

6.3. Revision as differentiated mediation

Revision was most effective when its purpose was differentiated. The negotiation project explicitly separated semantic correction from rhetorical polishing. The journal article inserted a formatting stage between two reviews. The railway project combined group review, project-lead review, daily meetings, and final multimodal assembly. These patterns align with process-oriented quality frameworks such as ISO 17100, which assign distinct functions to translation, checking, and revision^[8].

Revision also redistributed expertise. A novice translator could flag a difficulty; a senior reviewer could resolve semantic logic; an instructor could adjudicate discourse; a client could provide an original image or source version. Quality emerged from the architecture of interaction rather than from a single ideal translator.

6.4. Implications for authentic translator education

Authentic projects expose learners to consequential uncertainty and therefore support situated learning^[9]. The findings suggest four design principles.

First, assessment should include a decision log, not only the final translation. Students should record

the risk, evidence, decision, and revision outcome for selected high-risk episodes. Second, roles should be differentiated: translator, terminologist, reviewer, project manager, and client liaison produce different views of the same problem. Third, technology tasks should include resource validation and multimodal quality checks, not merely CAT-tool operation. Fourth, reflection should examine unresolved cases. The inadequate journal figures and repeated railway slide work are pedagogically valuable because they reveal where the process failed to secure evidence or authority early enough.

The model can support a rubric with four questions: Was the risk framed appropriately? Was the evidence fit for purpose? Was the decision authorized at the right level? Did revision test the intended outcome? Such a rubric evaluates professional reasoning without pretending that every translation problem has one predetermined answer.

7. Conclusion

Across four authentic projects, translator mediation operated as situated risk governance. Translators mediated specialist knowledge, cultural presuppositions, target genres, stakeholder expectations, technologies, versions, and multimodal deliverables. Seven risk domains captured what could go wrong, while four mediation mechanisms explained how teams responded. Across the cases, the recurrent process took the form of a Risk-Evidence-Decision-Revision cycle in which uncertainty was made visible, evidence was assembled, authority was negotiated, decisions were implemented across project resources, and revision reopened earlier choices when necessary.

This account moves beyond inventories of isolated translation techniques. A defensible translation decision is defined not only by its textual form, but by the fit among risk, evidence, purpose, stakeholders, implementation, and revision. For research, this provides an empirically bounded framework for examining mediation across heterogeneous projects. For education, it positions authentic projects as laboratories of professional judgment: learners can be taught not only to produce a target text, but also to explain why a decision was necessary, what evidence supported it, who authorized it, how it was implemented, and what subsequent revision revealed.

These findings should nevertheless be interpreted within the limits of the study. The analysis was retrospective and based on uneven archival records from projects connected to a single educational-professional network. Because the case reports were written after project completion, they may foreground successful procedures, and detailed draft histories were substantially richer for the negotiation project than for the other cases. Audio files, compressed duplicates, and final course media helped establish project scope and workflow but were not treated as independent decision episodes. The study therefore supports analytic transferability across heterogeneous tasks rather than population generalization, and it cannot estimate the prevalence of particular risks, calculate the effectiveness of specific strategies, or causally attribute quality gains to individual tools or review stages.

Future research could address these limitations through prospective data collection across comparable projects. Retaining source, draft, review, and final states, together with the use of multiple coders, would allow closer examination of category boundaries and decision trajectories. Screen recordings, CAT-tool logs, client messages, and stimulated-recall interviews could further reveal when risks are first recognized and why some uncertainties are escalated while others become normalized. Comparative research should also examine how generative AI changes the assembly of evidence and the distribution of authorization. The

central question is therefore not simply whether AI systems can produce fluent translations, but how their suggestions enter a traceable chain of evidence, decision-making, responsibility, and revision.

Funding

The 2025 Graduate Curriculum Development and Educational Teaching Reform Research Program of Xi'an University of Posts and Telecommunications "Research on the Development Mechanisms and Effectiveness of Intercultural Competence in MTI Programs Based on Project-Based Learning" (Project No.: YJGJ2025040)

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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