Money cannot buy happiness, or can it? Translators' earnings and salary-related satisfaction

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Abstract

This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of translator earnings in Poland based on one of the largest analyses of the Polish translation market. Quantitative data from other surveys were examined and compared to assess mean income levels, income distribution and changes over time. The results show that the translators' community is very diverse. There are translators who earn well and translators who feel that they are underpaid. Experience, additional specialist education or specialization do not impact rates. Factors that noticeably affect the rates are certification as a sworn translator, form of employment and translated language. The most important discovery is that the level of earnings has a significant impact on translators' job satisfaction, level of stress, or exhaustion. The demand-supply dynamics of the translation market play a crucial role in determining translator incomes.

Factors such as globalization, international trade, immigration trends influence the demand for translation services.

Keywords

translators, translator income, specialization, job satisfaction

Pieniądze szczęścia nie dają, a może jednak?
Zarobki tłumaczy a satysfakcja
związana z wynagrodzeniem

Abstrakt

Artykuł przedstawia kompleksową analizę zarobków tłumaczy w Polsce w oparciu o jedną z największych analiz polskiego rynku tłumaczeń. Dane ilościowe z innych badań zostały przeanalizowane i porównane w celu oceny średniego poziomu dochodów, ich rozkładu i zmian w czasie. Wyniki pokazują, że społeczność tłumaczy jest bardzo zróżnicowana. Część tłumaczy zarabia dobrze, podczas gdy część uważa, że zarabia za mało. Doświadczenie, dodatkowe wykształcenie lub specjalizacja nie mają wpływu na stawki. Czynnikami, które zauważalnie wpływają na stawki są uprawnienia tłumacza przysięgłego, forma zatrudnienia oraz język przekładu. Najważniejszym wnioskiem płynącym z badania jest fakt, że poziom zarobków ma znaczący wpływ na satysfakcję z pracy, poziom stresu czy przemęczenie tłumaczy. Dynamika popytu i podaży na rynku tłumaczeń odgrywa kluczową rolę w określaniu dochodów tłumaczy. Czynniki takie jak globalizacja, handel międzynarodowy, trendy imigracyjne wpływają na popyt na usługi tłumaczeniowe.

Słowa kluczowe

tłumacze, dochody tłumaczy, specjalizacja, satysfakcja z pracy

1.   Introduction

Job satisfaction is a complex and multifaceted construct. Studies on the correlation between it and earnings have been of interest for psychologists and economists and different reports have explored this relationship. Although the findings may vary to some extent, some general trends that have been observed. They are as follows: threshold effect (dissatisfaction due to being below a certain level), relative income (salary compared to others), job characteristics (nature of work, job security) cultural and societal differences and personal goals (work-life balance) (Sloane & Williams, 2000; Kitsios & Kamariotou, 2021). Additionally, salary is considered a chief determinant of occupational prestige (Weiss-Gal & Welbourne, 2008) and a crucial status parameter (Dam & Zethsen, 2009). Renumeration of both translators and interpreters varies across the countries.

The analysis of rates charged and satisfaction with earnings should be of great importance to translation bureaus and agencies that function on the labor market as individual financial satisfaction could have influence on different factors, such as work productivity, or social contacts. The topic of translation rates is also of interest to translators themselves as they can analyse the data we collected and see how their rates compare with those of fellow translators. Our study goes beyond presentation of rates since we compared earnings in different groups of translators. This allows us to identify broader trends in the translation industry, such as which specializations, languages or forms of employment tend to be more rewarding.

1.1. Previous studies on salary among
translators and interpreters

Based on the analysis of the Polish market of literary translators, Paszkiet (2013) showed that the rates per 1800 characters fluctuated over a range of PLN 23-32, compared to PLN 500 to 700 for a printer's sheet. Exceptions included the situations in which the translator received PLN 1100-1400 per printer's sheet

from the publishing house for bestsellers or translations of books supported by foreign foundations or cultural institutes (Paszkiet, 2013).

In turn, European Council of Literary Translators' Associations (CEATL, 2022) published a general report on the state of working conditions among literary translators in Europe in 2020 with the total number of respondents being 2,980. The questionnaire was available in 24 languages (Basque, Bulgarian, Catalan, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish, and Swedish). The survey assessed minimum, usual and maximum basic fees per contract over the previous two years in Euros per 1800 keystrokes. The highest usual rates were reported in Norway and Switzerland (EUR 63.08 and 49.86, respectively) compared to EUR 8.30 in Poland. The lowest usual rates were found in Romania and Serbia (EUR 3.26 and 5.03, respectively). Additionally, the study findings showed that the professional situation differed a lot from country to country and even highly experienced full-time translators could hardly make a living from literary translation alone. Additionally, apart from the basic fees per page, translators also relied on the income from royalties and grants and prizes for literary translators. Furthermore, the study showed that compared to the results with the previous surveys, the income for literary translators hardly increased over the last decade.

In turn, a study by Kirov & Malamin (2022) conducted among Bulgarian translators showed a different perspective. According to income, the respondents (n=188) were rather affluent, with income in the upper range of medium and high income (BGN 1000–2600). Approximately 20 % of respondents considered themselves low-income earners (< BGN 999). The highest income was reported among the age group 41–50 years. Interestingly, Bulgarian translators were mostly not specialized and undertook various types of translation, the most common being that of documents, followed by technical literature, and legal literature.

Another interesting research is the one based on a worldwide survey of freelance translators conducted by Inbox Translation in collaboration with the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) in February and March 2023. A total of 2,803 freelance translators participated in the 2023 survey, which presented the findings of a global survey of freelance translators that was a follow-up to the first global survey of freelance translators conducted in early 2020, which gave the authors (Cincan, Bejgu, Joeman, 2023) an opportunity to compare many of the findings over time, as well as generated new insights into the working practice of translators. The participants reported on their gross income from translation – 16 % reported a gross annual income of less than USD 5,000, while 2 % earned more than USD 100,000. Most respondents indicated that there should be higher rates in general for freelance work, or that these should be standardized or regulated.

In 2021, American Translators Association (ATA, 2022) conducted a survey on translators and interpreters in the U.S based on the data from before the pandemic (2019) and during the pandemic (2020). The findings showed the most complete and accurate data on income and pay rate. The respondents had various backgrounds and experience (> 66 % female; > 44 % over 55 years of age; 59 % had at least a master's degree with the mean 20 year-experience). Translation and interpreting company owners reported the highest mean gross income ($142,271), which was significantly higher compared to staff translators ($94,091) and freelance translators ($49,000). In turn, the lowest income was found for multiple-role staff translators who were also freelance translators ($32,000). Interestingly, the results showed a dichotomy between education and income level (mean income increased with higher education levels $57,972 for bachelors compared to $57,581 for masters). Surprisingly, those with no degree reported a higher income than those with a doctoral degree ($58,002 vs. $48,932).

For instance, in the USA, they are very heterogeneous, and are related to the language combination, the field of specialization, the years of experience, or even the geographical location.

Surprisingly, despite the increase in the number of orders, salaries still remain slightly below the national average, the highest salaries being in Washington D.C. Professionals with expertise in a specialized scientific domain are also given higher rates (Cabrera, 2017). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median annual salary for interpreters and translators was $49,110 ($23.61 per hour; May 2021), the highest 10 percent earning over $97,760. The median annual salaries in the top industries were as follows: Government $62,390, hospitals: state, local, and private $54,940, educational services: state, local, and private $49,200 and professional, scientific, and technical services $48,900. Self-employed workers were not included in the statistics.

In Canada, according to the latest figures (Living in Canada), the highest hourly median wages were $45.00 per hour and the lowest median were $22.00 per hour. A typical full-time annual salary ranged from $45,000 – $70,000. To compare, in Germany, according to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), interpreters working as freelancers or sent by an agency earned between € 25 and € 32 an hour (Berbel, 2020), while sworn interpreters, working for the German justice system, earned € 70, which is more than twice the amount.

Bednárová-Gibová and Madoš (2019) showed a clear correlation between salary satisfaction and lower status perceptions (lower salary satisfaction correlated with lower status ratings, and high salary correlated with an absence of lower status ratings) for sworn translators. On the other hand, there is no correlation between salary satisfaction and high-status ratings for European Union translators.

Such official data, unfortunately, are not available for Polish population since there is no official registry. However, according to the Polish National Renumeration Research, the median monthly total salary was PLN 6,390 gross. Every second translator/interpreter received a salary between PLN 4,970 and PLN 8,180. The 25 % of the lowest-paid professionals earned less than PLN 4,970 gross. A group of 25 % of the highest-paid translators/interpreters could earn above PLN 8,180 gross. The

number of studies related to the renumeration rates on the Polish market is hardly existent. Therefore, we decided to analyse this issue.

Obviously, apart from a large amount of satisfaction from performing the professions of translators or interpreters, and a certain mission related to these jobs, the financial aspect cannot be overshadowed since it is also of prime importance in today's life of both translators and interpreters as in some cases it is their only profession (as opposed to teachers who also perform the profession of translators).

Socio-political context

COVID-19 and the pandemic restrictions introduced a change on the market (Gu et al., 2021). The end of pandemic restrictions led to the return to organizing live events. Furthermore, 2022 was marked in Poland by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which had a serious impact on the situation of translators and interpreters and lead to an increased demand in the previously less common language pairs i.e. Polish-Ukrainian and English-Ukrainian. Additionally, the legal and economic situation in Poland also highly contributed to the situation. Inflation rose sharply in Poland and reached a sky-rocketing level of 18.4 %. Of note, it was accompanied by an increase in salaries (including the amount of the minimum wage), which translated into the financial expectations of translators and interpreters. Another issue was the introduction of the New Deal that increased the cost of the maintenance of business activity (increase in health premiums that could not be deduced from the tax, and hence the need to raise rates to compensate for the significant increase in costs). All the above factors significantly contributed to the wellbeing of translators and interpreters, one of its aspects being financial satisfaction.

Sworn translators' earnings

The Polish market of translators and interpreters is not regulated by fixed rates. However, based on the Regulation of the Minister of Justice of 24th January 2005, the regulation specifies the rates of remuneration for the activities of sworn translators and interpreters performed at the request of the court, prosecutor, the police and public administration bodies.

These rates are, however, very low. The languages are divided into the following language groups: Group 1 (English, German, French, Russian, Group II (other European languages, Latin), Group III (non-European languages, Latin alphabet) and Group IV (non-European languages, non-Latin alphabet). The rates depend on whether the text is translated into Polish or from Polish (PLN 44.07 – PLN 94.37). As regards interpreting, the rates range from PLN 74.94 to PLN 122.68). Of note, if translation or interpreting is commissioned on the day of its performance, the rate is doubled and 25 % higher rates are given to translations of specialized texts.

These, as stated above, are related only to the services listed by the Minister of Justice, such as state institutions or the police. Outside of them, the rates are subject to negotiation. As can be seen, these rates are not high, which many times resulted in petitions to the Minister of Justice to increase such rates due to the discontent of translators and interpreters.

Recently, the Polish Association of Conference Interpreters (PSTK) report related to the remuneration rates of conference interpreters on the Polish market has been published (PSTK, 2022). The report is the result of an online survey conducted on 124 working interpreters, which was carried out by PSTK. According to the report, 2022 was a particularly turbulent year in the conference interpreting industry that was characterized by dynamic changes. At the same time, a clear upward trend in the level of fees and higher willingness, or even determination, to raise rates were observed. The reasons for this situation can be seen due to the presence of different factors with a considerable impact on the interpreting sector, i.e. the effects of the post-

pandemic market transition, the war in Ukraine and the economic context, as indicated above.

The survey was conducted between December 2022 and the end of January 2023 (the assignments for foreign clients and for the activities of certified translators were excluded from the analysis). Despite its methodological limitations typical of surveys of this type (assumption that the survey participants provided truthful data and that the questions were answered by those people to whom they were addressed), its results were very interesting and reflected the situation on the Polish market.

A total of 124 people participated in the survey. 100 people responded as regards one language pair, 21 provided data for two language pairs, and 3 for three. 73 responses came from English interpreters, followed by German, Italian, French, Spanish, Ukrainian and Russian interpreters and others working in other language pairs (n=18).

As regards the English language, most (n=30) provided the standard rate of PLN 1,200, which showed that this rate per working day served also as a minimum rate, followed by PLN 1,400 (n=13), 1,300 and 1,500, which further confirms the strong upward trend in terms of interpreter fees in this group. When answering the question about the highest rate, interpreters provided the amount of PLN 1,800 (n=10), followed by 2,000 (n=8), and 1,600 (n=6). 35 % of interpreters reached the rate of at least PLN 2,000.

As far as the German language and Romance languages are concerned, the situation was similar. After discarding outliers, the range of rates for these languages was PLN 1,200 – 1,600 with the dominant value of PLN 1,400. The exception was Spanish, where the dominant was PLN 1,500, while in the case of French the collected data did not allow to determine the dominant. Of note, as regards Ukrainian and Russian (PLN 1,200 – 1,600), the highest divergence in the upper rate ranges was found with fee amounts as high as PLN 4,800 per day of work. In terms of other languages, the spread of rates did not allow drawing any firm conclusions.

The above extensive analysis showed that rates did increase. As many as 93 interpreters admitted to having increased rates in 2022. Moreover, as many as 106 survey participants said they intended to raise their rate in 2023.

1.2. The concept of life satisfaction and job satisfaction

Traditionally, two theoretical approaches to the concept of life satisfaction are distinguished, i.e. the 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' perspectives (Headey et al., 1991; Loewe et al., 2014). According to the former, a person's overall life satisfaction depends on their satisfaction in different areas of life that may be grouped into domains (Pavot & Diener, 2008) and the more needs are satisfied, the greater the satisfaction with life in total. In turn, according to the 'top-down' perspective, the differences in personality and other traits of the human being predispose the individual to be differentially satisfied with their lives (Diener et al., 2003; Loewe et al., 2014). However, Erdogan et al. (2012) noted that these attitudes did not need to be mutually exclusive, particularly when dispositional factors are viewed as more distal predictors of life satisfaction compared to domain satisfactions.

Of note, the weights that people give to different life domains also change throughout life. Additionally, when the study participants were asked to judge their global life satisfaction, Loewe et al. (2014) reported that those from different cultures and in different developmental stages of life weighed life domains differently, which is in line with previous studies (Diener, 2000; Diener & Suh, 2000; Diener & Lucas, 2000).

In his paper, Loewe et al. (2014) made a very interesting observation, namely that researchers analyzing subjective well-being were focused on non-working populations, including children or students, and left the satisfaction of workers to other fields, such as management and psychology. These fields mostly defined a satisfied worker as a person happy with their job and little information was related to a more holistic concept of life

satisfaction among workers. Loewe et al. (2014) also noted that some studies showed that life satisfaction could have a similar predictive power than that of work satisfaction in predicting crucial organizational outcomes, such as job performance, work commitment or even burnout among employees.

Of note, life domains have already been discussed with attention paid to the financial aspect (Flanagan, 1978; Andrews & Inglehart, 1979; Headey et al., 1991; Headey & Wearing, 1992; Felce & Perry, 1995; Greenley et al., 1997; Gregg & Salisbury, 2001; van Praag et al., 2003; Sirgy et al., 2010). Studies demonstrated that financial satisfaction was more strongly related to subjective well-being (SWB) in Eastern Europe compared to Western Europe, as reported by Saris et al. (1996) and in the emerging economies financial satisfaction could be dominant, as opposed to richer countries/societies where income levels were so high that there was no need to be worried about financial situation, which also might be in line with the Maslow's needs hierarchy (1970).

In their study, Loewe et al. (2014) found that workers attributed most significance to their financial situation, which was in line with previous findings according to which satisfaction with income (financial situation) was a dominant predictor of life satisfaction. Interestingly, although in many reports the health domain was predominant (Marmot, 2003), Loewe et al. (2014) found that satisfaction with health had a weaker effect on life satisfaction compared to previous research.

The analysis of job satisfaction related to earnings should be of great importance to translation bureaus and agencies that function on the labor market as individual financial satisfaction could have influence on different factors, such as work productivity, or social contacts.

Of note, Navarro and Salverda (2019) paid attention to certain factors that are crucial in terms of financial satisfaction. Absolute income (one's income in the current period) is not the only income measure that matters to a person to be satisfied with life since according to the Easterlin Paradox, increase in income is not always related to increase in satisfaction. In other words, at

a point in time happiness differs significantly with income both among and within nations. However, over time it does not trend upward as income grows – while people on higher incomes are more content than those with lower income at a given point in time, higher income does not produce greater happiness over time. This phenomenon could be explained by the individual internal and external comparisons, as reported by Navarro and Salverda (2019).

For the former ones, technically known as *hedonic adaptation*, studies showed that increase in past income could only have a transient effect, as individuals either adapt to their past experiences or new aspirations occur. As a result, they would return to the same satisfaction level as in an initial moment after a period of adaptation. The latter one, technically known as *relative income hypothesis,* is associated with the fact that comparisons are made with those belonging either to the same demographic group (e.g. co-workers), or those with similar socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. the same gender, education profile). People are affected by the comparison with the economic situation of those who surround them. In other terms, financial satisfaction could be affected by absolute income, on the one hand, and the comparisons that an individual makes with themselves in the past in terms of income and with their fellow workers, on the other hand (internal and external comparisons, respectively).

Studies have confirmed that financial issues are highly significant in life and are one of the main factors related to overall well-being (Netemeyer et al., 2018; Woodyard & Robb, 2016). While economic hardships such as loss of income may exert the impact on individuals' well-being, the income level has an effect on financial solvency as well as financial satisfaction (Joo & Grable, 2004). Generally, life satisfaction is made up of satisfaction in different areas of life that are clustered around several main life domains (Loewe et al., 2014). Different studies showed various variables directly influencing financial satisfaction, these being financial knowledge, financial attitude, or financial capability related to the ability and opportunity to act (Falahati

et al., 2012; Xiao et al., 2014). Financial knowledge is related to one's knowledge of economic issues and personal finance, while financial capability is associated with the ability to practically use financial knowledge with the necessary financial behaviour to achieve financial satisfaction (Çera et al., 2020). Also, financial capability, which is related to risk-aversion attitude, can be defined as the knowledge of how to best manage money, the interest and willingness to practically implement knowledge and the means to do so. All these three aspects are of crucial financial success in life. When any of these is missing, the other two are also wasted. In turn, financial attitude is a person's approach to financial issues and may increase and influence financial satisfaction. Based on the above, a relationship can be established with financial attitude influencing financial capability that impacts on financial satisfaction (Çera et al., 2020).

Inadequate short- and long-term financial decisions, caused by an individual's low levels of financial knowledge, can have an adverse influence on a financial situation of a person (Greenberg & Hershfield, 2019) and one of the sources that could be beneficial in this respect is the improvement in financial literacy (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014; Çera & Tuzi, 2019), which could be useful for making adequate financial decisions in terms of short- and long-term financial planning.

In their study, Çera et al. (2020) reported that financial satisfaction was related to a person's ability to finance the desired life at any moment now and in the future and prudent management of income and expenditures could reduce economic hardships, thus increasing satisfaction, which is also in line with the findings of other authors, such as Brüggen et al. (2017).

Additionally, improvement in financial capability results in a reduction of burden and the stress level (Taylor, 2011) and could contribute to higher well-being in general, and also economic satisfaction as studies show that financial capability and financial satisfaction are positively associated (Çera et al., 2020). Also, financial education increases financial knowledge and improves financial well-being by leading to better decision-making processes and financial capability of a person, thus

helping them make better financial decisions and improving financial satisfaction.

2. Methodology

2.1. Data collection

In our study, data were gathered through two distinct channels: firstly, by extending email invitations to members of TEPIS (The Polish Society of Sworn and Specialized Translators) and Bałtyckie Stowarzyszenie Tłumaczy (Baltic Society of Translators and Interpreters); secondly, by disseminating a survey link across various translators' Facebook groups. The survey was conducted over a span from December 2021 to July 2022. Respondents were offered a gross remuneration of PLN 100 (USD 25) that corresponds to the fee typically paid for translating 2-3 pages of text. Subsequent to response validation, where questions assessing attentiveness were utilized, and a sample refinement process, including targeted recruitment efforts to involve non-English-speaking translators, our final participant pool comprised 245 individuals. The survey underwent validation by two experts, both researchers specializing in translation studies and actively practicing translators. A preliminary pilot survey was conducted prior to the primary survey, with the active participation of seven translators who provided valuable feedback. The survey consisted of questions on various aspects of the translation profession. In this paper we present the responses to selected questions regarding the financial side of the profession, namely:

— Q24 On average, what is your gross rate for a billing page (1800 characters with spaces) of non-specialist (non-certified) translation? [Q24: non-spec. rate/page]
— Q25 In your opinion, is the amount you receive for a billing page of non-specialist (non-certified) translation adequate?

— Q26 On average, what is your gross rate for a billing page (1800 characters with spaces) of specialist (non-certified) translation? [Q26: spec. rate/page]
— Q27 In your opinion, is the amount you receive for a billing page of specialist (non-certified) translation adequate?

In the part of the paper comparing answers of various groups of translators, the answers to the following questions were used as grouping variables:

— Q2 – How long have you worked as translator?
— Q4 – Do you hold a diploma in a specialist area related to the texts you translate?
— Q9 – Are you a sworn translator?
— Q7 – What is your main working language?
— Q13 – What is your form of employment as a translator?
— Q17 – How many pages per hour do you translate of unknown topic/discipline?
— Q18 – How many pages per hour do you translate of well-known topic/discipline?
— Q48: Please mark on a 1 to 5 scale to what extent do you agree with the statement: *Translation work is a stable source of income for me.*

2.2. Data analysis

In our analysis, we focused on respondents who had responded to at least one question in the segment of the survey dedicated to working conditions, i.e. 245 out of a total of 255 participants. Among them there were individuals who chose not to answer specific questions within this section. Consequently, the count (N) in individual survey results varies, and this variation is indicated in the titles of tables and figures.

All statistical computations were performed using Statistica software, version 14.00.15. The data analysis encompassed

frequency calculations and fundamental statistical measures. Assessment of data normality through normality tests indicated non-normal distribution characteristics. Consequently, non-parametric statistical tests, specifically Mann-Whitney U-tests and Kruskal-Wallis tests, were employed to ascertain the statistical significance of the results. We adopted a 90 % confidence level, a well-established standard within the realm of humanistic studies. When the p-value registers below 0.1, it indicates a statistically significant difference, signifying a 90 % level of confidence that the observed result is not the result of random chance. It is worth noting that various factors, such as subject variability and sample size, influence the outcomes of statistical tests. As articulated by Sabri and Gyateng (2015), "The lower the p-value, the more confidence we can have in concluding that there is evidence of impact". The results section presents mean, median, minimum, maximum and coefficient of variation in tables, accompanied by boxplots.

2.3. Sample

A wide range of translation professionals participated in the survey:

— Translators aged between 18 and 70+ (Fig. 1) with different levels of experience (Fig. 2);
— both sworn and non-sworn (Fig. 3);
— mainly native Polish speakers (Fig. 4), as this research is set in the context of the Polish translation market; the other mother tongues mentioned are mainly Slavic. Some respondents claimed to have two or even three mother tongues;
— translating mainly European languages (see Fig. 5);
— with different specializations; interestingly, the majority could not specify one (Fig. 6);
— doing different types of translation (Fig. 7);

    — translating in both directions (Fig. 8);
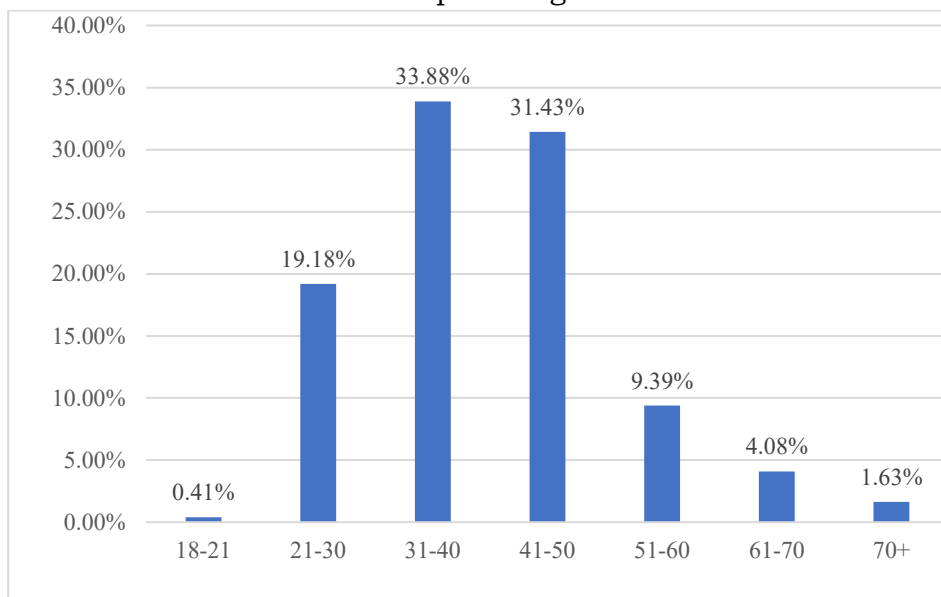   — MT and CAT users/non-users (Figs. 9, 10).

Figure 1
Participants' age
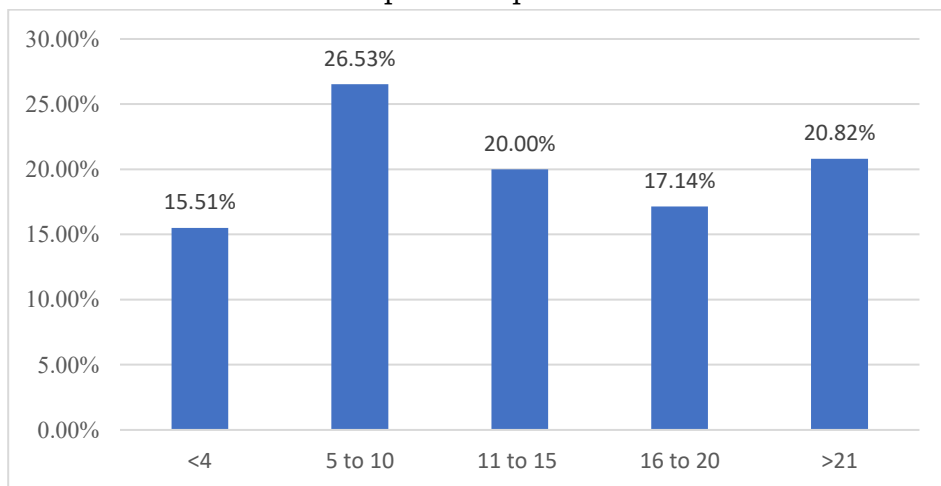

Figure 2
Participants' experience

Figure 3
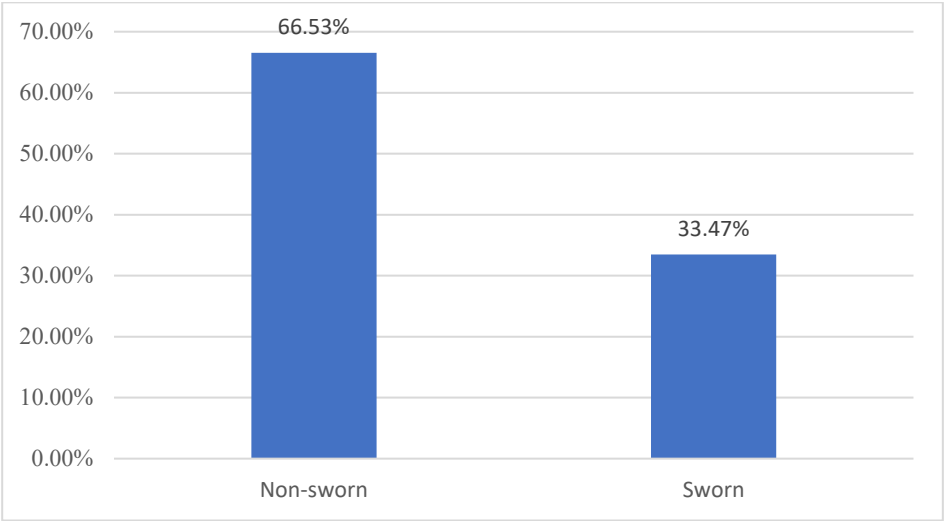Sworn/non-sworn participants

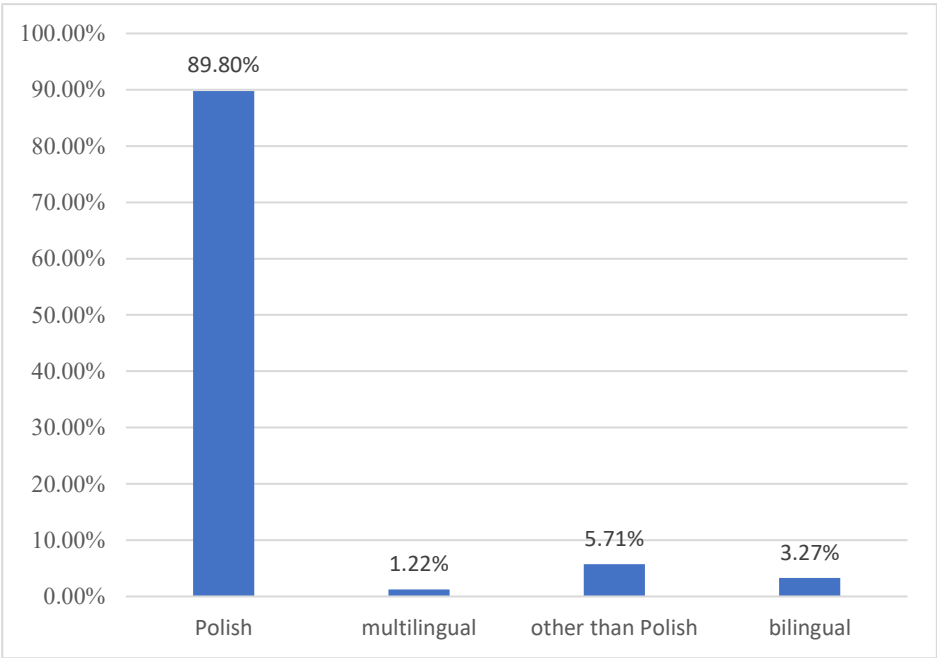**Figure 4**
Participants' native language

Figure 5
Participants' working languages

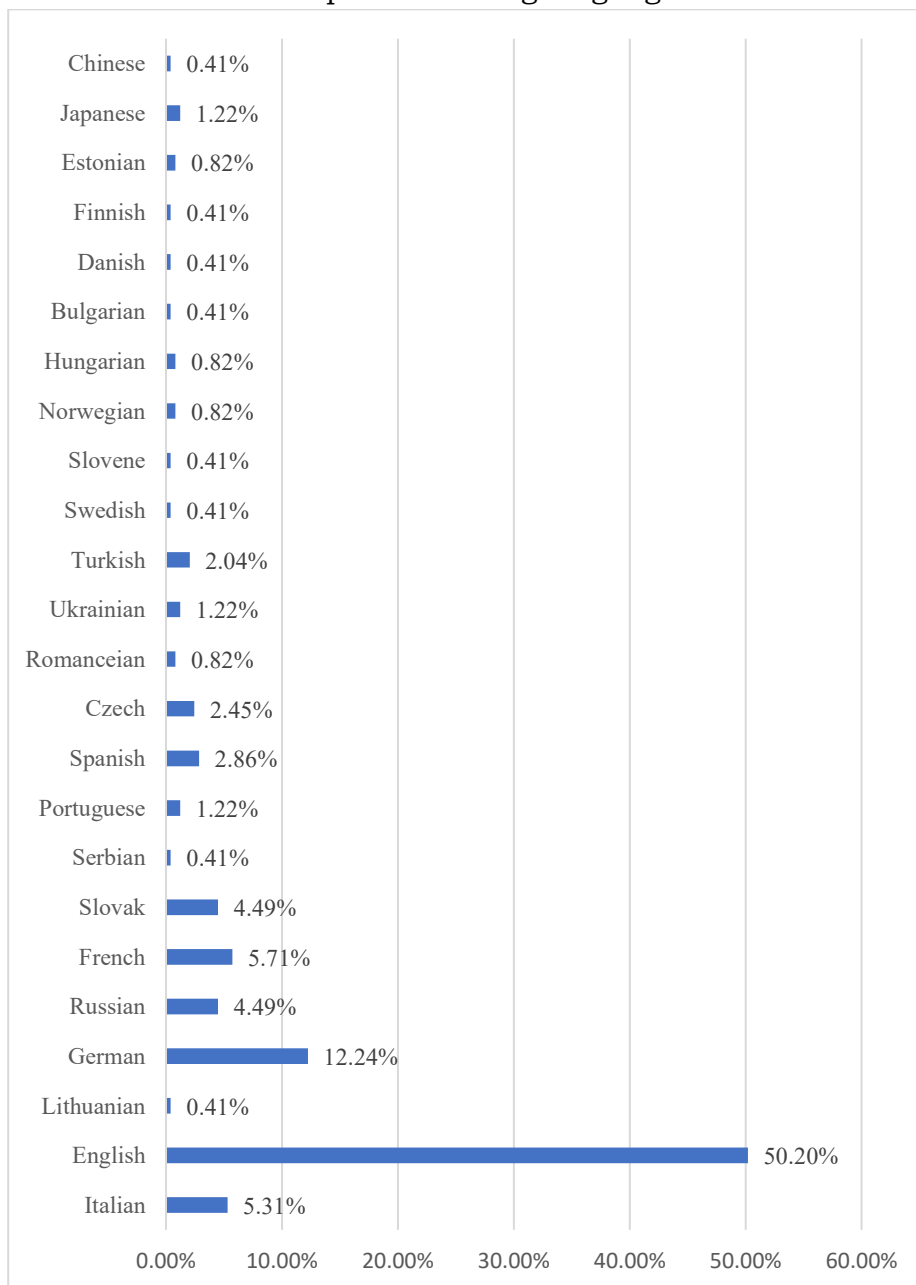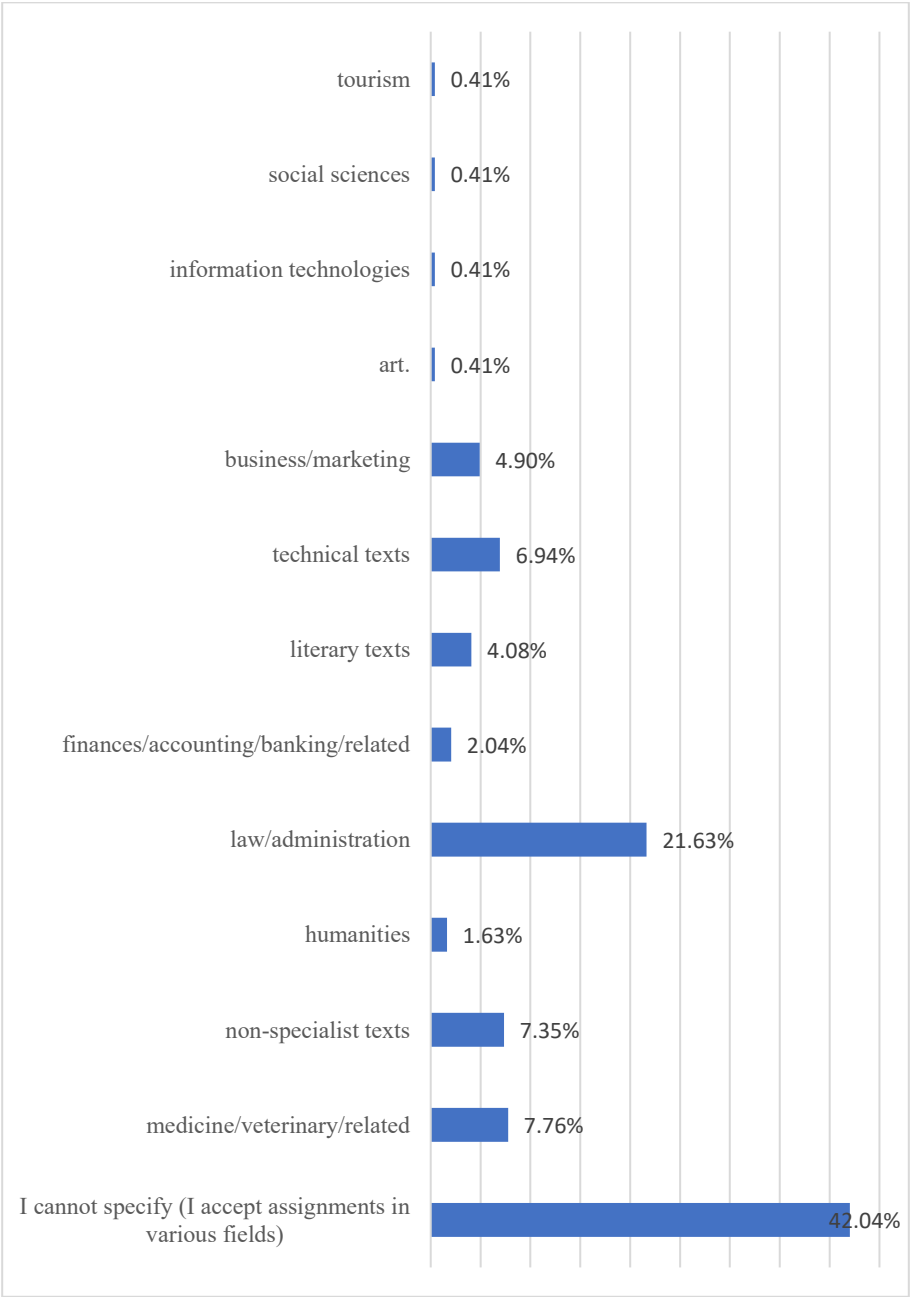**Figure 6**
Participants' main specialization

Figure 7

Type of translation performed by the participants
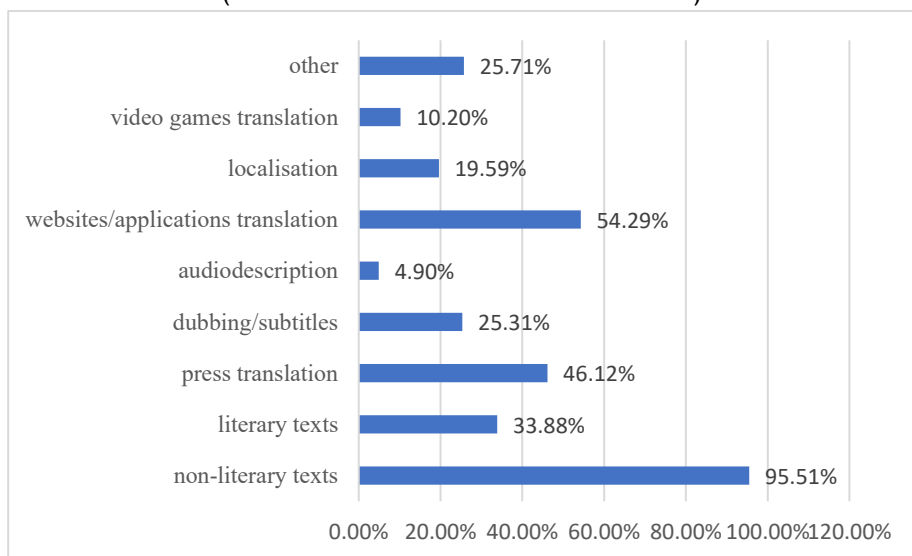(more than one could be selected)

Category	Percentage
other	25.71%
video games translation	10.20%
localisation	19.59%
websites/applications translation	54.29%
audiodescription	4.90%
dubbing/subtitles	25.31%
press translation	46.12%
literary texts	33.88%
non-literary texts	95.51%

Figure 8

Direction of translation performed by the participants

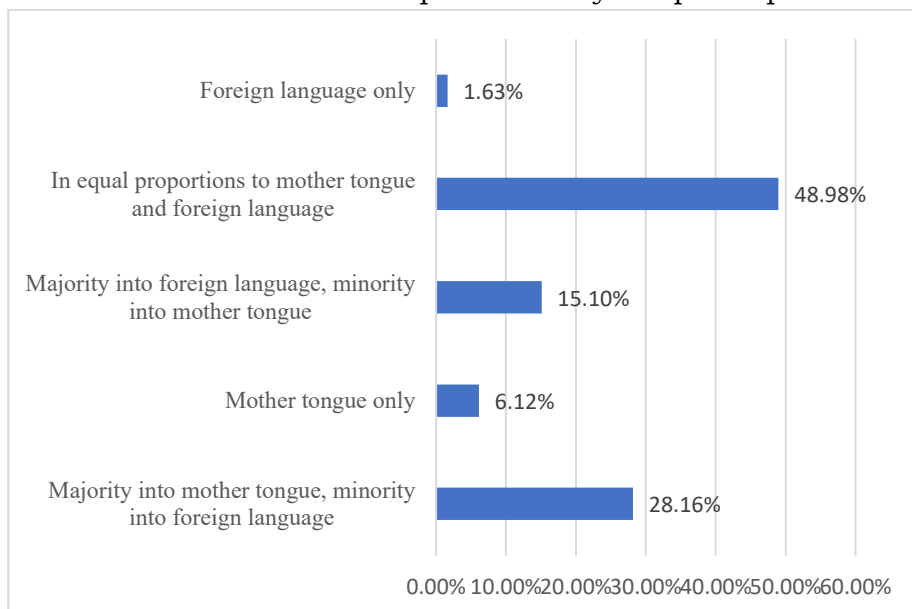| Category	Percentage
Foreign language only	1.63%
In equal proportions to mother tongue and foreign language	48.98%
Majority into foreign language, minority into mother tongue	15.10%
Mother tongue only	6.12%
Majority into mother tongue, minority into foreign language	28.16%

Figure 9
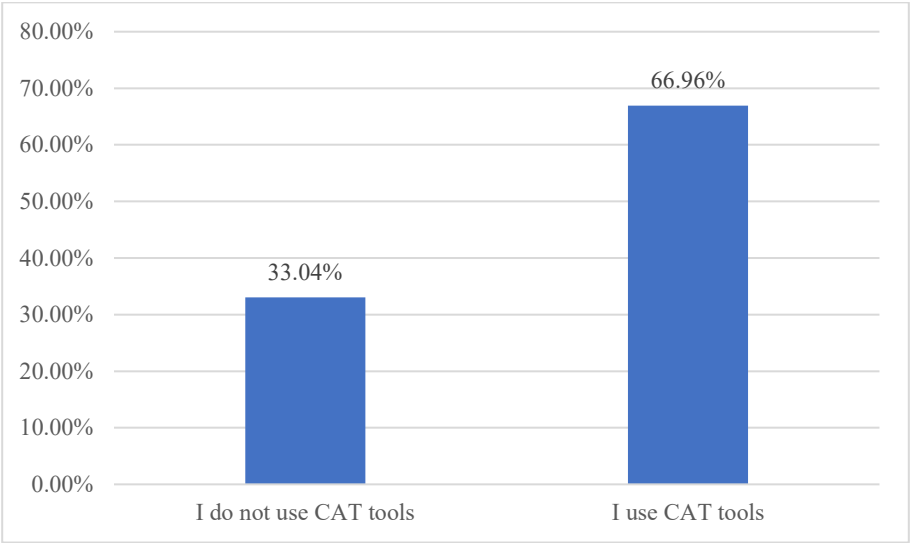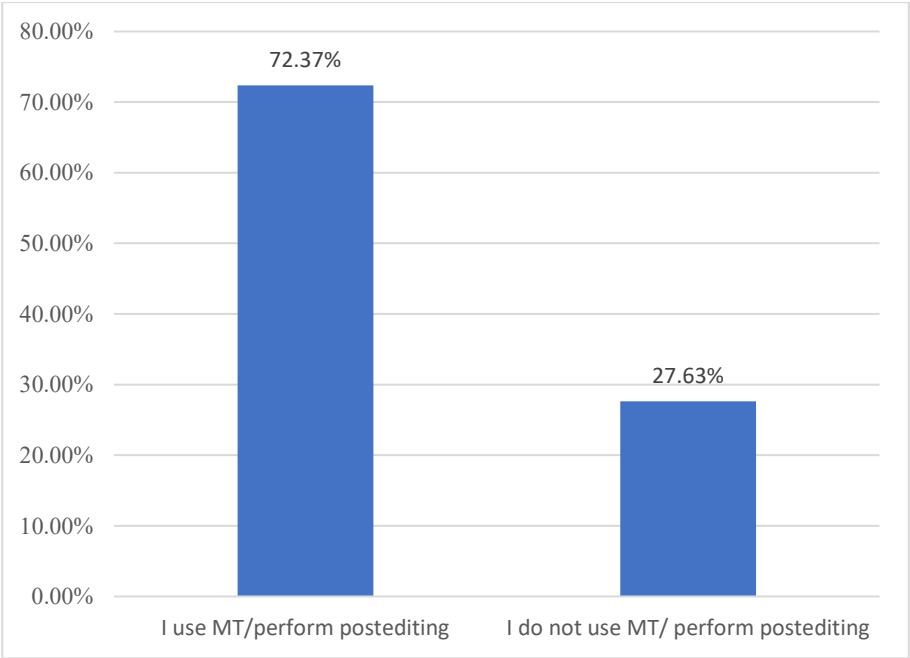Use of CAT tools performed by the participants

Figure 10
Performance of postediting of MT
raw output by the participants

3.   Rates and satisfaction with rates
3.1. How much do translators charge per page?

In Q24 and Q26, the respondents were asked to choose the rate they most often charge per billing page (1800 characters with spaces) of non-certified translation. Q25 enquired about the non-specialist translation and Q26 about specialist texts. There was a possibility to refrain from answering these questions by ticking the option "I don't want to answer" (valid counts are provided in Table 1). Figures 11 and 12 reveal that the typical rate for specialist translation (PLN 60) amounts to 150 % of the rate of non-specialist translation (PLN 40) and the range of rates charged for specialist translation is much wider (the highest rate declared – PLN 120 is six times higher than the lowest – PLN 20). A higher number of outstanding results contributes to higher means; the difference between medians is smaller (Table). The figures show that half of the respondents charge between PLN 30 and 50 for non-specialist and between PLN 40 and 60 for specialist translation.

Figure 11

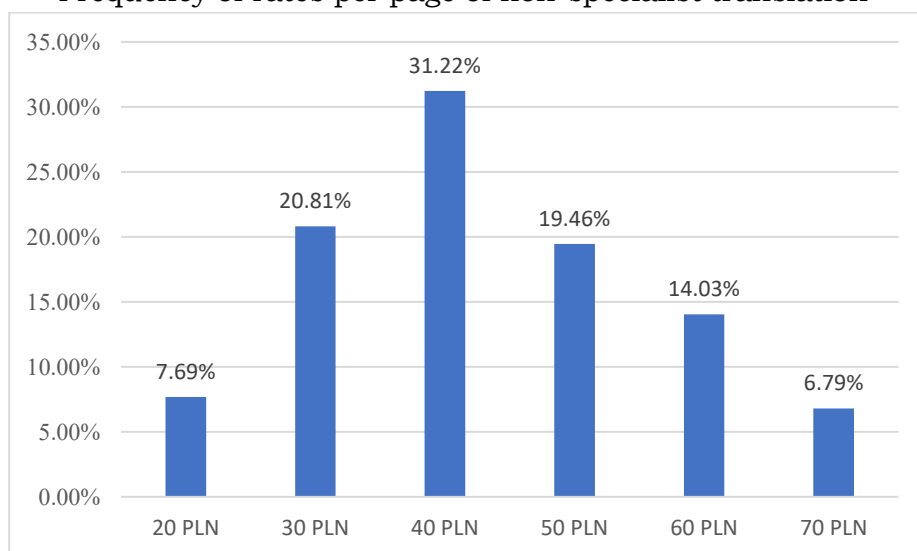Frequency of rates per page of non-specialist translation

Figure 12
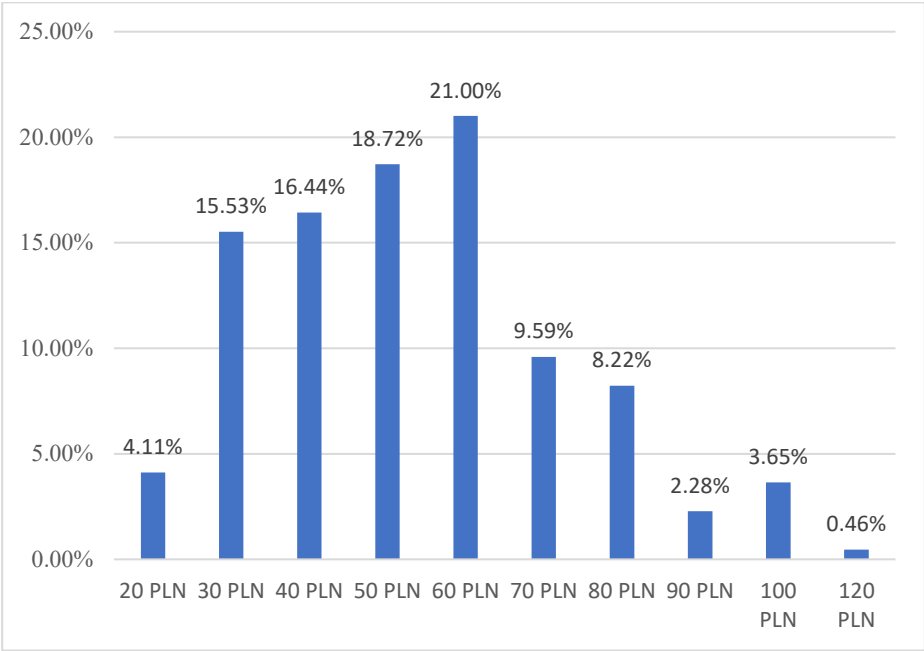Frequency of rates per page of specialist translation

Table 1
Rates per page of non-specialist and specialist
translation – descriptive statistics

Variable	Valid N	Mean	Me-dian	Min.	Max.	Std. Dev.
Q24: rate per a billing page of non-specialist (non-sworn) translation	221	43.17	40.00	20.00	70.00	13.38
Q26: rate per a billing page of specialist (non-sworn) transla-tion	219	53.56	50.00	20.00	120.00	19.70

Figure 13

Rates per page of non-specialist and
specialist translation – box plots

Median; Box: 25%-75%; Whisker: Non-Outlier Range

Q24: rate per a billing page of non-specialist (non-swo...
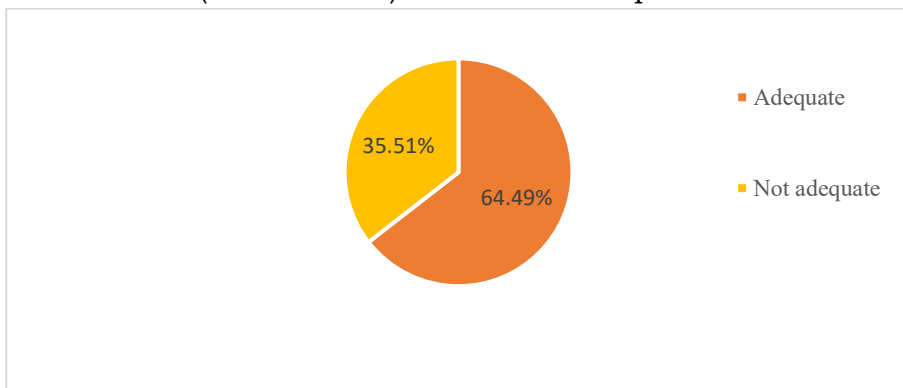Q26: rate per a billing page of specialist (non-sworn) ...
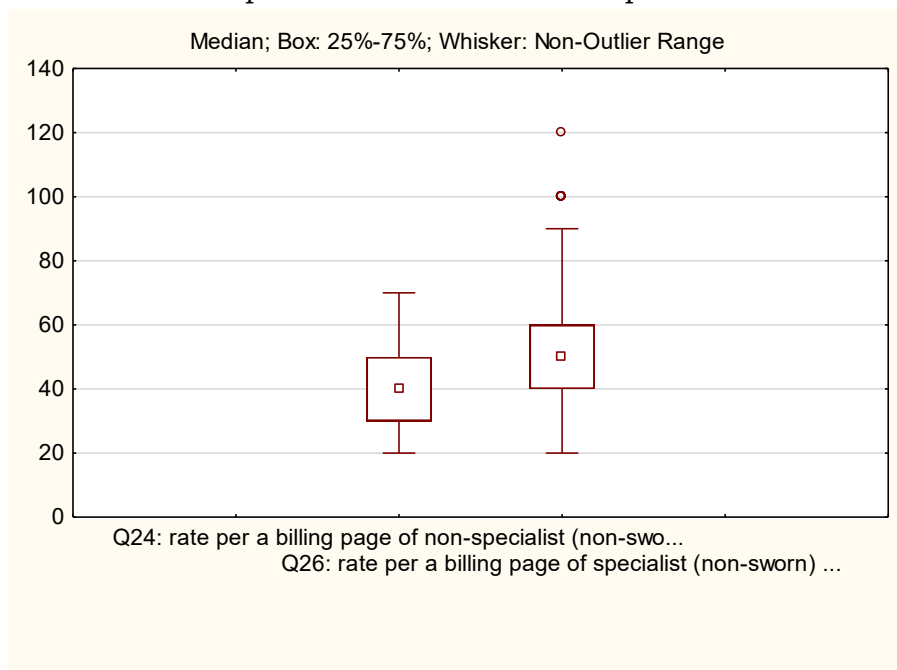
3.2. Are the rates adequate?

In Q25 and Q27, the respondents were asked if they found the
rate per page adequate. Both in the case of specialist and non-
specialist translation roughly two thirds of respondents de-
clared acceptance with the level of earnings per page (Figures
14 and 15).

Figure 14

Answers to Q25: In your opinion, is the amount
you receive for a billing page of non-specialist
(non-certified) translation adequate?

Figure 15

Answers to Q27: In your opinion, is the amount
you receive for a billing page of specialist
(non-certified) translation adequate?
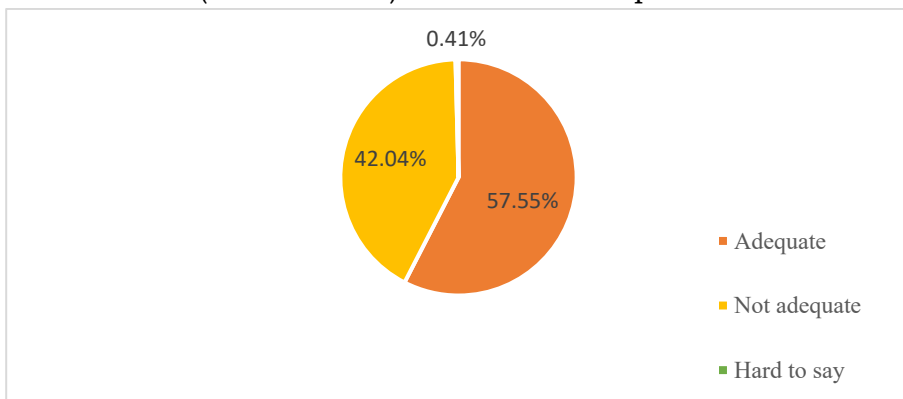
The question arises: did those who were dissatisfied with their
earnings earn less than those who were satisfied? To answer
this question, we compared the level of earnings in two groups:
those who were satisfied with their earnings and those who were
not (Figure 16). As regards non-specialist translation (Q24),
there is a statistically significant difference in the level of rates
per billing page between these two groups (Mann-Whitney

U-test p=0.000001), which suggests that translators' opinions on rates are not just unfounded complaints. The median rate for dissatisfied translators is PLN 30 per page (compared to PLN 40 for satisfied translators). Dissatisfied translators earn between PLN 20 and 50 (while the satisfied group earns between PLN 30 and 60). With regard to specialized translation (Q26), there is also a noticeable contrast in earnings between satisfied and dissatisfied translators. Approximately half of the satisfied respondents, falling within the 25th to 75th quartile range, reported earnings in the range of 50 to PLN 70 per billing page. In contrast, dissatisfied translators indicated earnings ranging from PLN 30 to 60 per billing page.

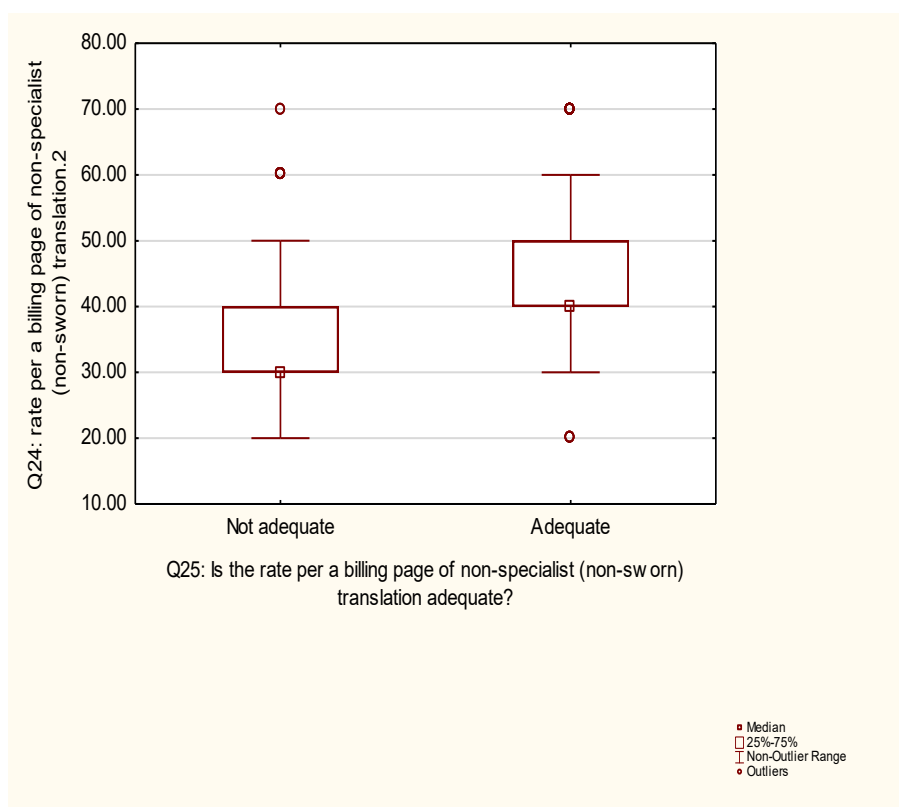**Figure 16**

The answers to Q24 grouped by Q25

Q25: Is the rate per a billing page of non-specialist (non-sworn) translation adequate?

■ Median
☐ 25%-75%
⊥ Non-Outlier Range
○ Outliers

Figure 17
The answers to Q26 grouped by Q27
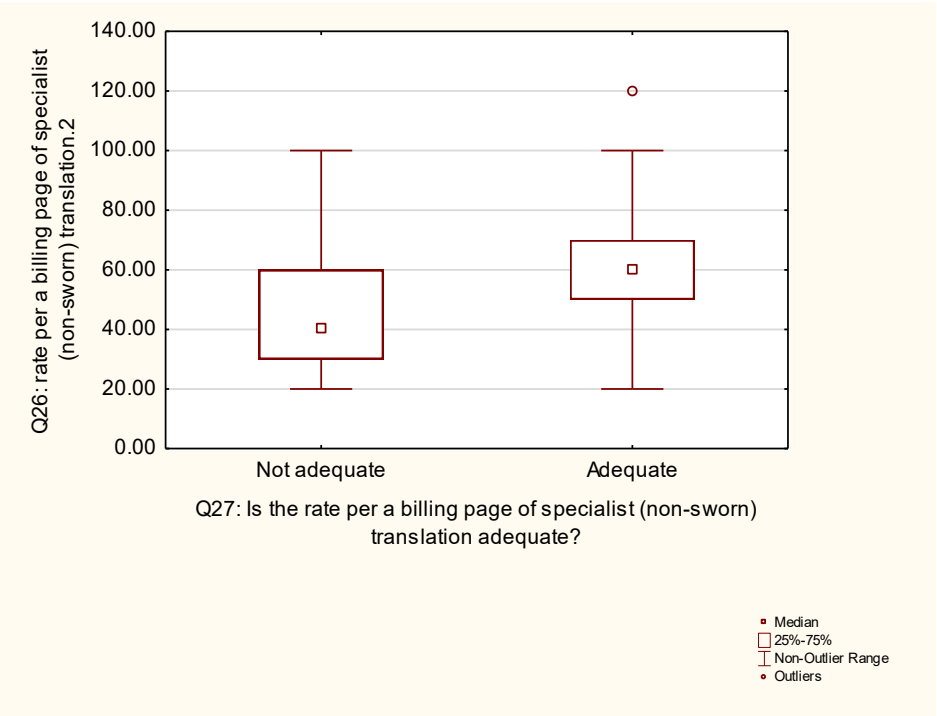
3.3. What rates would be adequate?

In questions 25 and 27, the participants were asked to provide the amounts that would satisfy them. Table 2 and Figures 18 and 19 show the actual earnings per page (Q24/26) for non-specialist translation and the respondents' proposals of rates that would be satisfactory to them (Q25/27). On average, the expected rate was 16 % higher than the current earnings for non-specialist translation and 22 % higher for specialist assignments.

Table 2

Actual and expected rates per page
– descriptive statistics (in PLN)

Variable	Valid N	Mean	Me-dian	Min.	Max.	Std. Dev.
Q24: rate per a billing page of non-specialist (non-sworn) translation	221	43.17	40.00	20.00	70.00	13.38
Q25: What amount would be adequate for rate per a billing page of non-specialist (non-sworn) translation?	77	51.31	45.00	25.00	120.00	18.98
Q26: Rate per a billing page of specialist (non-sworn) transla-tion	219	53.56	50.00	20.00	120.00	19.70
Q27: What rate would be ade-quate for a billing page of specialist (non-sworn) translation?	108	68.16	60.00	35.00	150.00	24.07

Figure 18

Comparison of the answers to Q24 (actual rates)
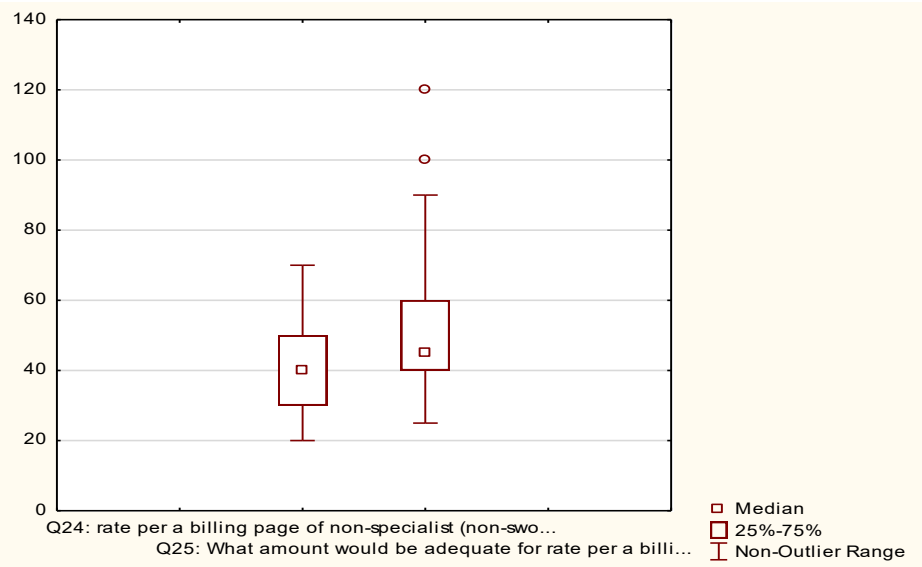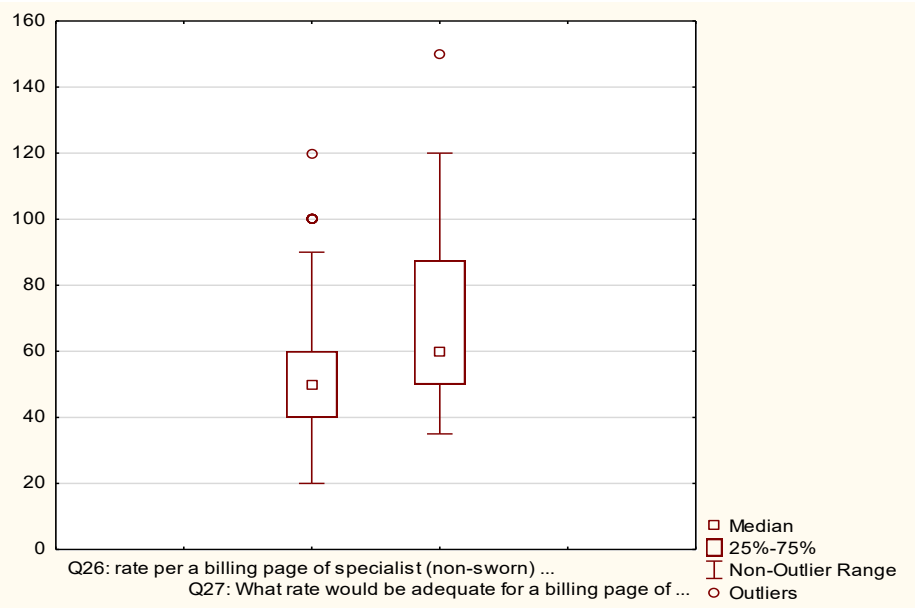and Q25 (satisfactory rates)

Figure 19

Comparison of the answers to Q26 (actual rates)
and Q27 (satisfactory rates)

In order to find the threshold where the majority of participants started declaring that their rates are adequate, we checked how the answers to the question about satisfaction with earnings are distributed among those earning from PLN 20 to 100. Table 3 shows that the threshold of earnings satisfaction is at the level of PLN 40 gross for non-specialist translation and at the level of PLN 50 for specialist translation. Though the answers are not unanimous, we can say that these are the minimal rates that would satisfy the majority of translators.

Table 3. Answers to Q25/Q27 grouped by answers to Q24/Q26

	Is the rate adequate?	PLN 20	PLN 30	PLN 40	PLN 50	PLN 60	PLN 70	PLN 80	PLN 90	PLN 100
Q24: non-spec. rate/page	No	76 %	58 %	26 %	18 %	29 %	13 %	-	-	-
	Yes	23 %	41 %	**73 %**	81 %	70 %	86 %	-	-	-
Q26: spec. rate/page	No	77 %	76 %	58 %	39 %	36 %	19 %	27 %	0 %	12 %
	Yes	22 %	23 %	41 %	**60 %**	63 %	80 %	72 %	100 %	87 %

3.4. How much do translators earn per hour?

To create an estimation of how the rates per page translate into hourly earnings, we should see additional data: how many pages per hour are translated (Q18-19). The data show that the speed of translation is not fast. If we multiply the median of the rate per hour by the median of the translation speed, we can see that translators can earn, in the case of non-specialist translation from PLN 40-80 per hour and in the case of specialist translation PLN 50-100 per hour (depending on how familiar they are with the topic). However, the range of answers (both regarding rates and speed) is wide, thus the earnings per hour might range from PLN 20 (if one translates slowly for the lowest rate) to PLN 240 (if one translates at the top speed and charges the highest rate – a rather unlikely scenario).

Table 4

Speed of translation

Variable	Valid N	Mean	Median
Q19: How many pages/h do you translate of an unfamiliar topic?	140	1.2	1
Q18: How many pages/h do you translate of a familiar topic?	237	2.3	2

3.5. How do translators perceive their financial stability?

Figure 20 shows that the translators are not unanimous in their perception of the stability of their earnings, yet with a preponderance of positive responses to Q48 confirming the feeling of stability. Subgroup analysis of responses showed again that the answers depend on the rates earned. Table 5 compares the rates in the groups that responded affirmatively and negatively to the question about earnings stability (Q48). Originally, Q48 allowed for scoring responses on the Likert scale from 1 to 5. However, for the purposes of this analysis, responses 1 and 2 have been classified as "disagree", responses 4 and 5 as "agree", while response 3 has been disregarded. Table 5 shows that those who perceive translation work as a stable source of income charge about PLN 10 more per page than those who answered negatively to Q48. The differences are statistically significant (Mann-Whitney U-test p= 0.000163 for Q24 and p=0.000492 for Q26).

Figure 20

Participants' answers to Q48: Translation work is
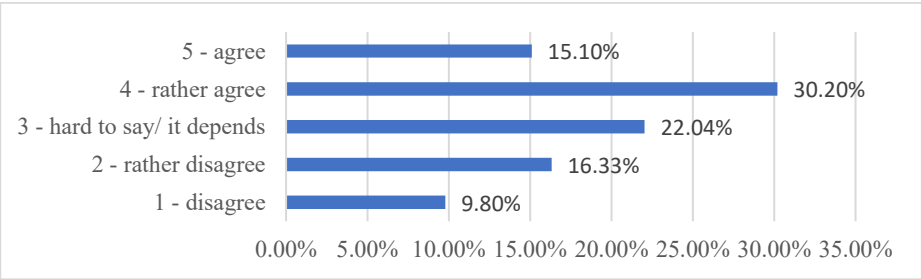a stable source of income for me (N=245)

Table 5

Comparison of rates per non-specialist and
specialist translation, respectively, in two cohorts

|	Q48: Translation work is a stable source of income for me (2 groups)	Valid N	Mean	Median	Min.	Max.
Q24: non-spec. rate/page	Yes	99	46.06	40.00	20.00	70.00
Q24: non-spec. rate/page	No	58	37.76	40.00	20.00	70.00
Q26: spec. rate/page	Yes	101	56.93	60.00	20.00	100.00
Q26: spec. rate/page	No	56	45.89	50.00	20.00	90.00

4. What factors affect the rates?

Further in our analysis we tried to discern the factors influencing earnings. In pursuit of this objective, we segmented our samples into distinct cohorts based on specific attributes of translators, such as experience, specialist education, certification, target language, employment form, and specialization.

4.1. Experience

Regarding non-specialist translation, the Kruskal-Wallis test did not yield statistically significant results for Q24. The box plot illustrates a slight increase in earnings with growing experience, albeit not a remarkable one. Notably, the point at which earnings appear to exhibit substantial growth is at the 16-year experience. Following that trait, we examined the statistical significance between two groups: those with less than 15 years of experience and those with more than 16 years' experience. The Mann-Whitney U Test confirmed a statistically significant difference in earnings between these two groups (p=0.011610).

Figure 21

Rates per a billing page of non-specialist
translation in age groups – box plot
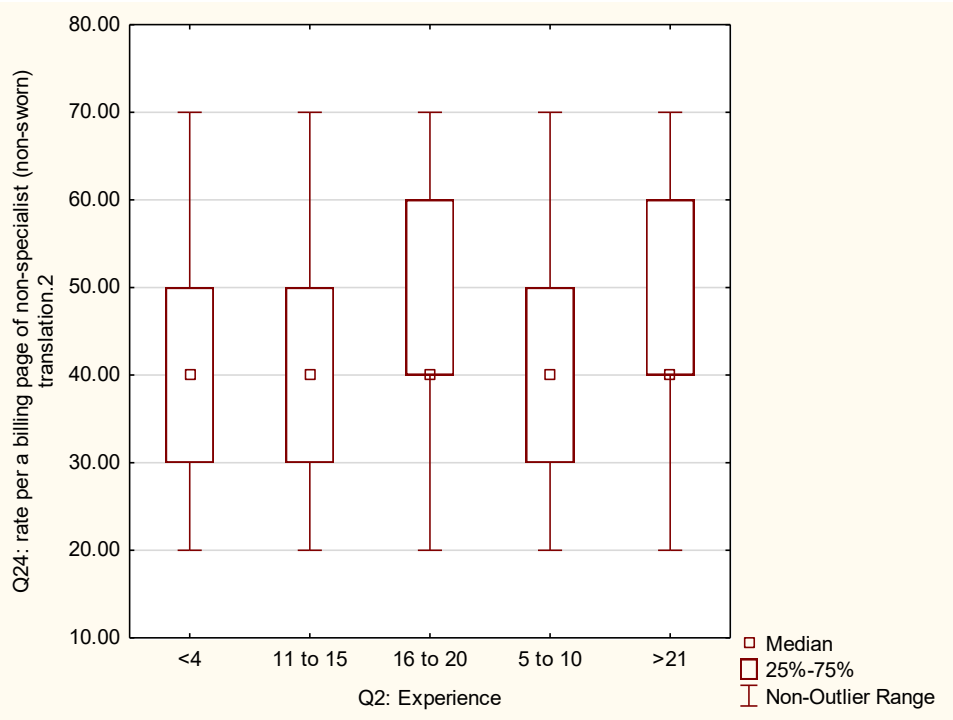
4.2. Specialist education

The fact that one has formal education in a specialist area translated by them appears not to influence the level of earnings. There is no statistically significant difference in the level of rates charged per page between those who have additional diploma in a specialization translated and those who do not (p-value = 0.9 for non-specialist translation and 0.8 for specialist translation rate; Mann-Whitney Test).

4.3. Certification

Obtaining professional certifications can enhance translators' credibility and earning potential since clients often prefer

certified translators who may command premium rates compared to non-certified counterparts. The differences in earnings of sworn and non-sworn translators are statistically significant both in the case of non-specialist (p=0.052410) and specialist translation (p=0.056164). As regards non-specialist translation, sworn translators' earnings are clustered between PLN 40 and 50, while for non-sworn translators the spread of rates is greater – between PLN 30 and 50. The earnings of sworn translators start at PLN 30, while those of non-sworn translators start at PLN 20. As for specialist texts, half of sworn translators earn between PLN 40 and 70, while non-sworn professionals earn from PLN 30 to 60; the lowest rate declared is PLN 10 lower than in the case of sworn translators. Interestingly, as we look at means, non-sworn translators earn more when translating non-specialist texts. However, when specialist translation is involved, the sworn translators earn significantly more.

Figure 22

Comparison of rates charged by sworn
and non-sworn translators – box plots
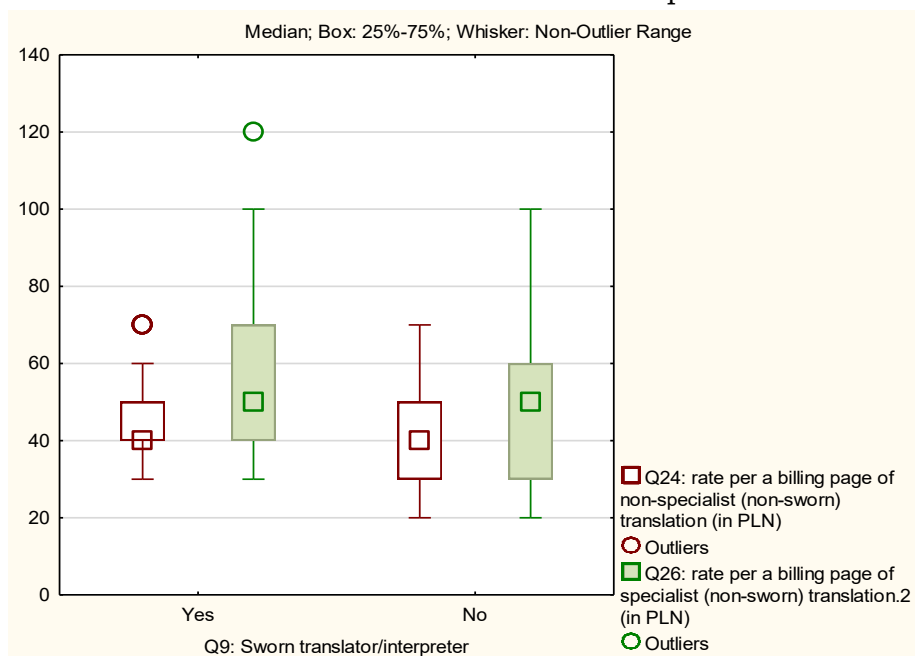
4.4. Languages

Table 6 shows how much translators of different languages charge on average per page of non-specialist and specialist translation. The table includes languages that received a minimum of two answers. Results are statistically significant with a 90 % confidence level (p=0.1). The data suggest that the rate is influenced by the wealth of the country and the popularity of the language.

Table 6
Rates charged for one page translation
of different languages

Language translated	Count	Mean (in PLN) for non-specialist transl.	Mean (in PLN) for specialist transl.
Romanian	2	35	50
Russian	9	39	50
Ukrainian	3	40	40
English	112	40	50
French	14	41	55
Italian	11	42	45
Portuguese	3	43	60
Spanish	7	44	60
German	24	45	50
Slovak	10	51	55
Turkish	4	55	65
Hungarian	2	55	70
Czech	6	55	65
Norwegian	2	60	100
Japanese	2	70	100
Estonian	2	70	80

4.5. Form of employment

As regards the question about the form of employment, more than one answer could be selected, which created some

limitations of statistical analysis. The Mann-Whitney U test was applied, which tests whether a statistically significant difference in rates exists between a given form of employment and the other responses pooled together. In-house translators were excluded from this analysis, since their employment contract usually states the amount of monthly remuneration irrespective of the number of pages translated. The differences for all forms of employment except *working for a small translation agency* are statistically significant. The differences are clear both in the case of non-specialist and specialist translation. As regards non-specialist translation, the difference between the lowest declared mean rate – of a large agency employee and the highest rate of the self-employed is as much as PLN 11.5 per a billing page. As regards the range of rates, in any form of employment, the rates start at PLN 20 but for translators not working for an agency they top out at a much higher ceiling. As for specialist translation, the difference between the lowest rate (a "large" translation agency) and the highest (self-employed) is even more visible, i.e. PLN 15.5. Again, working outside of translation agencies offers a higher chance of better income.

Table 7
Rates for non-specialist translation (Q24)
in selected forms of employment

Q13: What is your form of employment?	Valid N	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	p-value
I am self-employed	155	45.03	40.00	20.00	70.00	**0.0014**
I work with a "large" translation agency	23	33.48	30.00	20.00	50.00	**0.0003**

| I work with a "small" translation agency | 12 | 38.33 | 40.00 | 20.00 | 60.00 | 0.1992 |
| I am a freelancer | 98 | 41.33 | 40.00 | 20.00 | 70.00 | **0.0543** |

Table 8
Rates for specialist translation (Q26)
in selected forms of employment

| Q13: What is your form of employment?	Valid N	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	p-value
I am self-employed	157	55.92	60.00	20.00	120.00	**0.0022**
I work with a "large" translation agency	23	40.43	40.00	20.00	80.00	**0.0005**
I work with a "small" translation agency	12	47.50	50.00	30.00	70.00	0.3007
I am a freelancer	94	50.53	50.00	20.00	100.00	**0.0427**

4.6. Specialization

To compare rates, we only took into account specializations chosen by at least five translators. It is worth noting that 42 % of

respondents indicated that they were unable to choose a single specialization (they accept texts from different fields for translation). Although differences in rates between specializations are visible, the statistical test did not show the results to be statistically significant (Kruskal-Wallis p=0.6207). The data suggest that the highest rates are charged for technical translation, followed by literary and medical translation. Specialization makes translators more valuable to clients as niche specializations have less competition, which allows translators to establish significantly higher rates, irrespective of the geographic location.

Figure 23

Box Plot of Q26: rate per a billing page of specialist (non-sworn) translation.2grouped by Q10: Main specialization (selected)
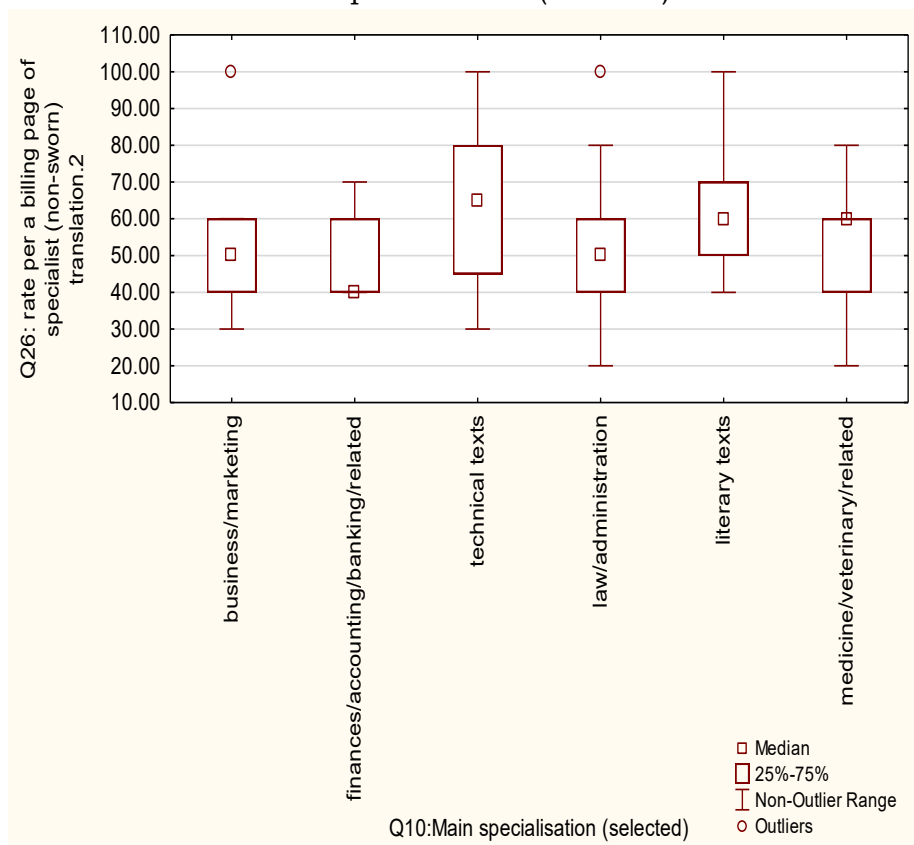
5. Does level of earnings affect professional well-being?

To test this hypothesis, we compared the responses to the following questions in two groups: those who expressed satisfaction and those who expressed dissatisfaction with the rates.

Table 9

Comparison of responses

	Q25: Is the rate … adequate?	Valid N	Mean	Median	Mann-Whitney U-test p-value
Q48: I like the work of a translator	Not adequate	84	4.35	5.00	0.120150
	Adequate	146	4.53	5.00	
Q48: I feel valued.	Not adequate	84	3.37	4.00	**0.000057**
	Adequate	145	3.93	4.00	
Q48: Working solely as a translator is too exhausting.	Not adequate	81	3.10	3.00	**0.008147**
	Adequate	145	2.60	3.00	
Q48: Working as a translator gives me satisfaction.	Not adequate	84	4.14	4.00	**0.000946**
	Adequate	146	4.48	5.00	
Q48: The translation profession involves stress.	Not adequate	84	3.48	4.00	**0.023573**
	Adequate	145	3.14	3.00	
Q48: The translation profession is a valued and prestigious profession.	Not adequate	84	2.87	3.00	**0.011655**
	Adequate	146	3.26	3.00	

6. Study limitations

This research has some limitations. Firstly, the data were collected from one country, thus limiting the generalizations for other countries. The samples included in our study used self-report measures. Therefore, it could be possible that our findings were influenced by common-method variance. However, there is some evidence that common-method variance may in fact not be such a serious problem as many researchers have previously assumed (Spector, 2006). Furthermore, the application of self-report measures may be particularly appropriate for assessing job satisfaction and SWB, given the self-reflective aspect of the two constructs. The analysis did not assess the specific geographical location of translators in Poland (large cities versus towns and villages).

7. Conclusions

Generally, we observed great variation of rates. The results of our survey show that the translators' community is very diverse. In the translation market there are translators who earn well (in their own subjective opinion) and translators who feel that they are underpaid. About two-thirds of translators consider the rates they charge to be adequate for the effort they put into translation. Our survey did not show that variables such as experience, additional specialist education or specialization had a clear impact on rates. Factors that noticeably affect the rates are certification as a sworn translator (in Poland one needs to pass a tough state examination), the form of employment and translated language.

The results of our survey can be a motivator for translators to demand higher rates if they see themselves at the bottom of the scale in our survey results. This should also be a motivator to employers to offer their employees a decent salary for their work, since the results of our study suggest that the amount translators earn affects their professional well-being.

Considering that, although financial growth is a relevant objective for people, it does not always necessarily make people happier. The information on the opinion of translators and interpreters about their subjective happiness could be useful for the limitation of overall medical spending, which would improve their welfare. Workers who are more satisfied are more productive and healthier, which then positively impacts their well-being and improves their performance. The above considerations and understanding which determinants are crucial provide useful information on the well-being of translators and interpreters, a significant part of which being the financial aspect.

The interpreting and translation markets are currently going through a period of turbulent transition. The spread of remote translation and interpreting during the pandemic has accelerated, which is also related to salary expectations. This trend is further supported by the post-pandemic situation, which shows an increased interest in the demand for the services. Other studies should focus on the assessment of artificial intelligence, which may significantly impact on the translator/interpreter position. Further studies on international cohorts should be conducted to confirm our findings found on the Polish population.

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