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Translation, hegemony and accounting: A critical research framework with an illustration from the IFRS context

Jenni Laaksonen

Tampere University, Faculty of Management and Business, 33014 Tampere, Finland

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ABSTRACT

Translation research in accounting has in the past decades recognized the significance of translation for international accounting communication, but only recently started to discuss the relevance and legitimacy of the approaches in which translation is used and studied. Generally, translation in accounting has been seen as a technically challenging task that serves an assumedly neutral functional purpose. This perception is problematic in that it neglects the multifaceted cultural, political and societal implications of translation. In order to expand the theoretical repertoire of translation research in accounting, this paper introduces a critical lens that questions the seemingly neutral use of translation in various contexts. Drawing on the influential work of translation theorist Lawrence Venuti, it is argued that translation both reveals and factors in intercultural hegemonies, imbalances and asymmetries. To explore the relevance of Venuti's theorizing for accounting, the context of IFRS translation is examined. Attempting to become a global institution across cultures and languages, the IFRS indeed depend on translation in their diffusion. The IFRS context is, however, embedded in current linguistic and cultural hegemonies: the dominant position of the English language and the canonical role of Anglo-American accounting. Combining a critical theoretical conceptualization and empirical data from the translation work of Finnish-language IFRS, this paper illustrates how translation in accounting is not a technical exercise but can entail linguistic and cultural conflicts between dominant and marginal (ized) concepts, traditions and values. Above all, this paper shows how applying a different theoretical lens to translation can yield critical insights.

1. Introduction

Translation is vital for international accounting communication. It plays a pivotal role in multilingual corporate reporting (e.g., Nobes & Stadler, 2018), in the diffusion of international reporting frameworks (e.g., Kettunen, 2017; IFRS Foundation, 2018), and in conducting and reporting research (e.g., Andrew et al., 2020; Kamla & Komori, 2018). Crossing both linguistic and cultural borders, translation is a multifaceted phenomenon with cultural, political and societal implications (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990; Robinson, 1997; Tymoczko, 2009; Evans, 2018). Still, accounting research has mainly perceived translation as a technical issue in need of practical solutions that would somehow create assumedly neutral communication and correspondences between different languages and accounting traditions (e.g., Aisbitt & Nobes, 2001; Doupnik & Richter, 2003, 2004; Nobes & Stadler, 2018). What this approach has neglected is the "ethical obligation to be mindful of [translation's] implications" (Evans, 2018, p. 1863). There is indeed a pressing need for more critical research agendas (Evans, 2018; Evans & Kamla, 2018) and for theoretical approaches on which to build them.

E-mail address: jenni.laaksonen@tuni.fi.

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Drawing on the influential work of translation theorist Lawrence Venuti, this paper presents a theoretical framework that goes beyond the technical views prevalent in extant accounting research. It approaches translation as an intercultural activity that plays a substantial role in the formation and maintenance of linguistic and cultural hegemonies. For Venuti, translation is never a neutral process; instead, “the selection of source texts for translation and the development of discursive strategies to translate them inevitably involve taking sides to a certain extent, aligning with some constituencies and institutions more than others” (2013, p. 156). His conceptualizations of different translation approaches are eminently ethical in their quest for linguistic and cultural diversity (see also Laaksonen & Koskinen, 2020); therefore, they are valuable in shifting the discussion from narrow understandings of translations’ functionality to questions of the intercultural relations of accounting. This study follows Venuti’s understanding of translation approaches as “fundamentally *ethical* attitudes” (Venuti, 2008, p. 19, original emphasis) and of *ethics* in translation as pluralism and anti-hegemony. Drawing on Venuti’s work, thus, has the potential to surpass the uncritical approaches prior research has largely taken on translation and focus on the pressing linguistic and cultural imbalances of accounting: the dominance of Anglophone and Anglo-American influences. By introducing a theoretical framework that could be used in different areas to explore how translation and translated texts construct the hierarchies of international accounting, this paper aims to contribute to a new critical research agenda (Evans, 2018). To illustrate the framework’s use in one research area, this study adapts it to the International Financial Reporting Standards¹ (IFRS¹) context.

In line with the prevailing ‘technical paradigm’ of translation research in accounting, IFRS translation has been examined as a technically challenging task that should fulfill the assumedly neutral criteria of an Anglophone-oriented understanding of correctness (e.g., Hellmann et al., 2010; Huerta et al., 2013; Nobes & Stadler, 2018). Translation as a vital means of facilitating the institutionalization of IFRS in different-language environments has been recognized (Kettunen, 2017; see also IFRS Foundation, 2018), but the use of translation for this purpose and the related arrangements have not been pronouncedly questioned. Research has thus neglected the non-technical aspects profoundly present in this translation setting (see Evans, 2018; Evans et al., 2015; Mantzari et al., 2017, p. 185) in favor of a neutral, functional perception of the purpose served by IFRS translation, although the accelerating process of IFRS diffusion is a context in which the linguistic, cultural and political hegemonies of accounting are evident (e.g., Camfferman & Zeff, 2018; Chiapello & Medjad, 2009; Chua & Taylor, 2008; Sunder, 2011).

Consequently, the decision to translate the standards is typically secondary to the decision (or obligation) to comply, and thus the framework applied here does not aim to present translation as a means to circumvent the IFRS project as such, but as a significant aspect and a critical topic of examination within the system. What drawing on Venuti’s work can bring into this discussion, and translation research in accounting more generally, is an emphasis on the conflict between the dominant and the marginal. In the IFRS context, it can produce new knowledge on different forms of the known hegemony: its consequences for linguistic equality and diversity, the ways in which translation arrangements may affect non-hegemonic languages and traditions, as well as the conflicts that need to be addressed in this supposedly ‘technical’ work. An examination through this framework questions whether a ‘harmonization’ project is to mean all-encompassing homogenization (see Alexander, 1993, 2001; Evans, 2010, p. 452) and whether jurisdictions wishing to adopt the standards are, in linguistic and cultural terms, treated as equal partners with the Anglophone ones. This use of the framework is illustrated through an exploration of the overall setting of IFRS translation and an interpretative analysis of translation work for Finnish-language IFRS.

This paper thus contributes to the emerging area of translation research in accounting by expanding its theoretical repertoire. Furthermore, this study’s empirical illustration differs from the (few) extant empirical studies in that it does not focus on the practical or technical problems of translation but foregrounds ethical questions from the perspective of linguistic and cultural heterogeneity (cf. Kettunen, 2017; Nobes & Stadler, 2018). Examining an aspect previously unexplored, this paper also extends critical research on IFRS diffusion by shedding light on translation’s role in “the process by which we seem to inexorably move to a single set of international standards” (Chua & Taylor, 2008, p. 472).

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 first introduces Venuti’s work along with the main concepts used in the theoretical framework of this study. Thereafter, Section 2 continues by adapting the framework to the chosen illustrative context, namely IFRS translation. Section 3 presents an empirical illustration of the paper’s theoretical development. The findings of this paper are discussed in Section 4 and Section 5 concludes the discussion.

2. Building a critical lens for translation research in accounting: Venuti, translation, hegemony

2.1. Going beyond the technical approaches: introducing Venuti’s work to accounting

Lawrence Venuti is an influential translation scholar whose work is founded on translation as a cultural and political activity often conducted in imbalanced settings. Not only are the two sides of translation—the translating party and the translated party—different regarding their language and culture, but also their economic and political circumstances, and their motives for translation often depend on their positions in the global economy (Venuti, 1992, p. 13; Venuti 1998, pp. 158–159, 188). Venuti’s notion of hegemony in translation is a combination of linguistic and cultural as well as political and economic superiority, which is deeply embedded in intercultural relations and can be reinforced and/or resisted through different translation approaches (e.g., Venuti, 1998, p. 68; Venuti, 2018, pp. ix–x). Those translation practices that support or aim to establish hegemonies and cultural or linguistic canons Venuti labels *domesticating* translation, while those approaches that seek to break dominant patterns, embrace differences and question hegemonies,

¹ The acronym IFRS is here used to refer to both the complete set of standards and, when needed, to a single standard within the set. As the set, it comprises all standards that are part of what are now entitled *IFRS*.

he calls *foreignizing* (or *minoritizing*) translation (e.g., Venuti, 1998, pp. 71–72, 130–131). Venuti vouches for foreignizing translation for an ‘ethics of difference,’ in the name of diversity, democracy and heterogeneity; foreignization aims to resist assimilation by deviating from what is dominant and by bringing forth the marginal(ized) (see also Koskinen, 2012). Accordingly, Venuti condemns domestication because it is used to institutionalize certain cultural values and marginalize others.

Alongside the two main concepts, Venuti operates with several interlinked notions, such as *fluency* and *(in)visibility*. A fluent, invisible translation that uses dominant linguistic choices and draws on canonized values creates an illusion of a text that has not been translated. This illusion of originality keeps linguistic and cultural differences out of sight, in the sense that it aims to conceal the translation process and the conditions in which it took place. In contrast, foreignizing translation opposes this kind of fluency (Venuti, 1998, p. 99). Instead, it aims to remind readers of a text’s different origins by making the translation visible and attempting to achieve a subsequent acknowledgment and questioning of the underlying linguistic and cultural hierarchies (Venuti, 2008, p. 32; Venuti, 2019, p. 20). Fluency thus becomes an issue when it has been accomplished by neglecting minority or marginalized aspects and relying only on the dominant.

‘Domestication and foreignization’ is among the most widespread term pairs within translation studies, and Venuti is the scholar who instigated the significant attention that has been given to these theoretical concepts since the 1990s (Kemppanen et al., 2012, p. 7). While they have indeed become influential, they have often lost parts of their ethical significance in circulation (Laaksonen & Koskinen, 2020). What has become institutionalized is a reductive definition focusing on discursive practices that emphasize either the (geographically) ‘domestic’ or ‘foreign’ from the translating language’s perspective (see Paloposki, 2011). For Venuti, however, the concepts of domestication and foreignization represent *ethical* attitudes toward translation processes (e.g., Venuti, 2008, p. 19). They essentially form a question of hegemony and anti-hegemony, where the conflict is between the ‘dominant’ and ‘marginal.’

From this vantage point, this paper argues that Venuti’s work has the potential to expand the theoretical repertoire of translation research in accounting and to do so in a way that contributes to an agenda of critical and even ethical examinations instead of prevailing technical ones (Evans, 2018). Despite the ‘technical’ nature of accounting, as opposed to the mainly literary texts of Venuti’s empirical examples, accounting does not appear to be a neutral arena of translation. Scholars have questioned accounting harmonization because of its reliance on cultural homogeneity (Alexander, 1993, 2001) and have discussed how power relations between cultures may affect how accounting concepts travel and vocabularies change (Evans, 2010; Kosmala-MacLulich, 2003; Labardin & Nikitin, 2009; Parker, 2001). Moreover, questions of linguistic diversity and translation have recently surfaced in discussions on the practices of accounting research (Andrew et al., 2020; Husillos & Larrinaga, 2019; Kamla & Komori, 2018). It has been proposed that accounting research relies on an Anglophone, unproblematized view of translation (Evans, 2018), which neglects the consequential effects of translation when acting as a distributor of dominant concepts and paradigms (Venuti, 1998, p. 178). It is thus argued that a research framework not necessarily developed for ‘technical’ texts is useful for broadening the scope of accounting translation.

Despite the tensions in intercultural accounting communication, existing research focusing on translation has mainly concentrated on the (undefined) quality or functionality of terminology translations from the English-speaking perspective, highlighting translation as a problematic activity that potentially distorts the original Anglophone meaning (e.g., Aisbitt & Nobes, 2001; Douppnik & Richter, 2003, 2004; Huerta et al., 2013; Nobes & Stadler, 2018) or imposes non-Anglophone understandings on ‘international’ accounting concepts (Nobes, 1993). Accounting scholars largely expect translation to result in full equivalence and assume this can be neutrally achieved through technical approaches, such as word-for-word translations of English into ‘other’ languages (Laaksonen, 2020). Translation issues in conducting research are also typically approached through technical tactics such as back-translation (e.g., Davidson & Chrisman, 1993, 1994; see also Nobes & Stadler, 2018), even though non-Anglophone conceptualizations of accounting phenomena are likely to require approaches other than those focusing on English-language wordings (Pan et al., 2015). Even broader examinations of translation as a complex phenomenon have so far mainly concentrated on its practical problems (e.g., Kettunen, 2017; Baskerville & Evans, 2011; Dahlgren & Nilsson, 2012), leaving ethical implications out of the spotlight.

Thus, prior studies have not sufficiently addressed the linguistic and cultural effects of translation processes on accounting. These effects stem from a wide range of translation-related choices. Venuti’s domestication and foreignization are comprehensive approaches that resonate with both macro (e.g., the very choice to translate a certain text) and micro (e.g., discursive choices, such as terminology use) levels of translation. In Venuti’s work, these concepts are not set to include specific translation practices or textual solutions, and they do not form a black-and-white dichotomy (e.g., Venuti, 2008, p. 19; Venuti, 2018, p. xiii). This dynamic nature of the concepts may give them an abstract air, but it entails a focus on the ethical effects of translation in intercultural relations. Foreignization thus relies on opposing those practices that use translation for hegemonic interests (Venuti, 2008, p. 266), and the repertoire of these resistant practices may vary. Hence, a Venutian framework does not provide readily available translation choices but requires an evaluation of the relation between the translating and the translated party and any hierarchies that translation might sustain or unsettle. The key aspects of Venuti’s domestication and foreignization are summarized in Table 1, although it is emphasized that, despite the simplified presentation, the two approaches do not form two opposing ends in the sense that translation solutions could simply be characterized as either domesticating or foreignizing².

Table 1 demonstrates domestication’s bond with dominance and hegemony, whereas foreignization is concerned with minorities: the marginalized or excluded. While Venuti’s main empirical thesis is his criticism toward Anglo-American translation practices, which

² It is acknowledged that presenting a summary of Venuti’s concepts in a simplified table format is problematic in the sense that it may, despite the outspoken emphasis on the contrary, encourage a straightforwardly dichotomous understanding of the framework. As Koskinen (2000, pp. 93–94), in the context of Venuti’s concepts and the more general tendency to characterize translation theory through dichotomies, puts it, “[t]ranslating as an activity is not either/or, it is both/and.” Hence, it is hoped that the summaries provided are considered as easy-to-access references to the theoretical framework of this paper, not as its comprehensive representations. The both/and nature of the framework is further elaborated in the empirical section.

Table 1
Illustrative summary of domesticating and foreignizing translation in Venuti's theorizing.

	Domesticating translation	Foreignizing translation
Choice of text and translation arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - translates and publishes texts that (are made to) match dominant canon and values; avoids disruption of status quo - requires and expects conventional (canonical) translation solutions - conceals translation and differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - translates and publishes texts that challenge existing canons and/or introduce minority and marginal values and discourses - allows innovative and heterogeneous translation practices - makes translation visible
Textual practices and discursive solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assimilates minority contexts into the dominant one or imposes dominant traits on them in terms of language, tradition, values and worldviews - favors dominant fluency by maintaining standard discourse and lexicon; (only) employs elements established in the dominant canon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - challenges and questions dominant conceptualizations and language use; embraces minority or marginalized understandings - resists fluency in the narrow sense of the dominant perspective; employs non-standard discursive elements
Reviews and reception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accepts and praises translations that do not show or conflict with dominant expectations or values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - appreciates diversity and innovation; allows and invites marginal contexts to show

he illustrates with numerous case studies where translation enforces (dominant) Anglophone worldviews and assimilates minor cultures into the major Anglophone ones, the context of Venuti's empirics is not meant to limit the applications of his work only to situations where the dominant culture is the translating one, nor to cases in which English is the translating language (Venuti, 1998, p. 4). Instead, Venuti emphasizes the significance of contextual situatedness in his theorizing (ibid., pp. 186–189). In this paper, non-Anglophone accounting jurisdictions are considered minority constituents, as they are in what might be called a subordinate position in the global accounting context where Anglophone and Anglo-American hegemonies shape the terrain.

2.2. Applying Venuti in accounting: the IFRS context as an illustrative example

In the IFRS context, the tensions of the current hegemonies of accounting are already evident in the IFRS mission; minority elements and heterogeneity might be by many considered outside the scope of a harmonization project. Here, the IFRS context was chosen as an illustration of applying Venuti in accounting because of its demonstrativeness. Due to the expectation of 'uniformity,' it would be easy to assume translation is so constrained by practical issues that its role is best reduced to a technical exercise. Hence, examining the IFRS context has the potential to demonstrate what may, based on most extant studies that have focused on international regulation, appear to be unexpected effects and aspects of translation (see also Evans, 2018). The rest of this paper thus aims to explore the applicability of Venuti's theorizing in accounting to see how it can challenge the current research approaches in this ostensibly technical area of translation and in the single most regnant project of accounting translation more specifically. First, the general conditions of IFRS translation are explored, after which the empirical section more deeply examines the context of one translating language.

2.2.1. Choice of text: hegemonic and non-hegemonic parties of IFRS translation

Prior research has established that neither is the setting in which IFRS are produced and adopted neutral, nor is the use of English as the official IFRS language unbiased. IFRS are set by the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB), which is a part of the IFRS Foundation, a UK-and US-based private organization that has been labeled a hegemonic constituent in the global accounting arena (e. g., Botzem & Quack, 2009; Chua & Taylor, 2008). While undeniably succeeding in attracting adopters, the diffusion of IFRS has also been subjected to critical perspectives concerning, *inter alia*, the idea of a single monopolistic set of standards across the world (Sunder, 2011) and the assumed neutrality of circumstances in which IFRS are adopted by 'minor' constituents (Aburous, 2019; Mantzari & Georgiou, 2018; Mantzari et al., 2017). Thus, "the decision to comply with IFRS can also be motivated by coercive and hegemonic pressures," (Mantzari et al., 2017, p. 185) with less powerful states seeking legitimacy from the dominant countries (Aburous, 2019; Alp & Ustundag, 2009) or driven by pressures from major transnational organizations such as those providing corporate financing (Camfferman & Zeff, 2018, p. 296).

The standards are produced and published in English, but are also applied, after translation, in numerous local³ languages. Participation in English-language standard setting may not be as accessible for non-native speakers (Evans, 2018, p. 1848), and the use of English as the sole official language of the IFRS Foundation is seen to limit conceptual imports from non-Anglophone traditions (Evans et al., 2015, pp. 26–27). Moreover, English has been established as the language in which local companies from minor economic areas need to publish their reports if they wish to enter the global capital markets (Jeanjean et al., 2010). While it may feel natural today, this 'naturalness' is not neutral, nor is it a truly voluntary linguistic choice (Parker, 2001, p. 133). In all, IFRS production and translation have consequences for smaller language communities (Evans et al., 2015).

In terms of accounting traditions, IFRS are seen to suggest a supremacy of Anglo-American accounting practices and to assume that these 'superior' standards would be applicable to all accounting cultures (Hellmann et al., 2010, p. 108), while national regulations are

³ 'Local' is here used as opposed to the 'global' English.

expected to step out-of-the-way of standards produced by an organization based in major Anglophone countries (Perry & Nölke, 2006). The impact that Anglophone and Anglo-American cultures have (had) on the IFRS is indeed undeniable. The bond between IASB and US and UK accounting is evident (Botzem & Quack, 2009; Botzem, 2014; Camfferman & Zeff, 2018; Chua & Taylor, 2008; Palea, 2015; Perry & Nölke, 2006), and while geographical imbalances in the IASB composition have mitigated in the past ten years (Camfferman & Zeff, 2018, pp. 298–299), critical accounting research still considers the IASB to include a select group of actors (Botzem, 2014, p. 934). The general dominance of Anglo-American accounting within the IASB is seen as a conscious choice (Botzem & Quack, 2009). In all, the ‘internationality’ of IFRS does not seem to be a legitimate claim (Chua & Taylor, 2008).

In sum, the initial setting of translation has the IASB (IFRS Foundation) as the translated party, with IFRS as the source text, and the translating parties are non-Anglophone jurisdictions that adopt the standards and decide (or need to) to acquire a local-language translation. The standards are culturally-embedded source texts that come from a hegemonic source context and are then translated in non-hegemonic locations. In these circumstances, the choice of text (that is, the choice to translate the IFRS source text into IFRS target texts) is far from voluntary for the translating parties. This creates a biased demand for translations and resonates with ‘relations of dependence’ between the translating and translated cultures (Venuti, 1998, p. 4). IFRS translations are chosen to be what Venuti calls global bestsellers, here not by consumer-oriented commission choices, but by outside pressures from more powerful constituents should the adopters wish to be able to comply in their own local languages.

2.2.2. IFRS translation arrangements

Translation arrangements in the IFRS context relate most profoundly to translation availability and the responsibility thereof. In its official translation policy, the IFRS Foundation “recognises it is crucial that users of the Standards have access to the Standards in their native language. Therefore, the availability of high-quality translations is vital to the adoption and consistent application of the Standards globally” (IFRS Foundation, 2018, p. 11). However, availability is not guaranteed. The foundation controls the ‘official,’ that is, IASB-approved translations of IFRS and has a designated Translation, Adoption and Copyright (TAC) team for this purpose. The TAC team has established a two-part translation process that includes translation work, typically carried out by outside translators, and a review process by a committee of accounting experts from the translating jurisdiction led by a coordinator and referred to as the review committee (RC). Translators in the official process need to be arranged by the translating partner, whereas members of the RCs are appointed by the translating partner and approved by the foundation (IFRS Foundation, 2018, p. 11). All RC members are expected to commit to the foundation’s mission (ibid., p. 14). The same applies to the RC’s coordinator, who is required to “support and promote the objectives of the Foundation” (ibid., p. 15). There is no monetary compensation by the foundation for translators, RC members or coordinators, which requires either extensive voluntary work from experts and translator(s) in the translating context or means to fund the (continuous) translation work.

According to the IFRS Foundation’s policy, the RCs work “under the Foundation’s central coordination” (IFRS Foundation, 2018, pp. 11, 13) throughout the translation process, and the TAC team approves all translations before publication. Despite this control assumed by the foundation, the responsibility to initiate, organize and fund IFRS translation is on the translating party (i.e., the jurisdiction wishing to translate the standards; see IFRS Foundation, 2018, p. 11). In addition, “[t]he translating partner accepts responsibility for the quality of the translated Standards and their acceptability in the jurisdiction(s)” (IFRS Foundation, 2018, p. 11). In terms of translation availability, the foundation lists 17 non-English languages on the translations tab of its website⁴. Concurrently, the IFRS Foundation website advertises IFRS as “now required in more than 140 jurisdictions, with many others permitting their use.”⁵ The gap between available translations and complying linguistic and cultural areas is, to a considerable but not nearly exhaustive extent, explained by the European Union providing translations for all its official languages (24), meaning that the 2005 EU adoption of IFRS delegated a significant amount of translation work to the union. In total, the foundation and EU combined offer up-to-date translations in 37 different languages; the overlap is explained by some EU languages producing translations according to the official process of the IFRS Foundation.

Thus, the IFRS Foundation takes no responsibility over the availability or quality of translations, nor is there any other constituent accepting this responsibility outside the EU. The unbalanced burden of translation work then falls in the hands of ‘minor’ languages (see Evans et al., 2015; Parker, 2001, p. 137). If non-Anglophone jurisdictions are required to comply, be it by legal demands or hegemonic pressures, the (un)availability of IFRS translations creates an unequal setting in which some countries have better opportunities for compliance than others (see Abd-Elsalam & Weetman, 2003), since not all have the same capacities to conduct a translation process of this magnitude (Alp & Ustundag, 2009, p. 690). For non-EU countries especially, translation availability is a key question in need of a responsible party (Abd-Elsalam & Weetman, 2003, p. 80), but this question might not merit the attention of the most powerful constituents who are able to comply in their native English (Evans et al., 2015).

In all, the IFRS Foundation appears to approach translation with both ostensible respect and anxious neglect. It acknowledges translation as a vital factor in its mission; at the same time, it refuses any authority of translation. It appears to support linguistic diversity by emphasizing the significance of compliance opportunities in different languages, but actually resorts to monolingualism by

⁴ <https://www.ifrs.org/issued-standards/list-of-standards/#bound-volumes—translations> (accessed 4 Jun 2021). The languages listed on the website do not appear to include translations that are not available free of charge (such as the Finnish translation discussed in this paper). According to the foundation’s statement, translations are provided free of charge “where it is practical to do so,” with the explanation that “as the translation process is funded by product sales, in some cases providing translations free of charge would dilute the funding available to produce the full translations” (<https://www.ifrs.org/issued-standards/unaccompanied-standards-faqs>; accessed 4 Jun 2021).

⁵ <https://www.ifrs.org/about-us/> (accessed 4 Jun 2021). Also, Nobes (2013) provides an examination on the varying understandings of ‘IFRS adoption’ in different jurisdictions.

giving sole authority, from its point of view⁶, to the English-language original (see Venuti, 2013, p. 59). The foundation appears to be in a secure position when it comes to translation: its texts are desired for translation, and it has reached a position in which its ‘controlled’ translations are considered the reliable, legitimate ones (see Abd-Elsalam & Weetman, 2003, p. 68). At the same time, its clinging onto control over translations speaks for the interpretation that, for an institution relying on the assumed ‘sameness’ of each language version, translation with its inherent interpretations can prove intimidating.

The identity-forming power of translation always threatens to embarrass cultural and political institutions because it reveals the shaky foundations of their social authority. . . . The authority of any institution that relies on translations is susceptible to scandal because their somewhat unpredictable effects exceed the institutional controls that normally regulate textual interpretation . . . (Venuti, 1998, p. 68).

Faced with loss of control and the likely rise of local interpretations, different institutions may resort to different tactics. Those trying to maintain a hegemonic position are likely to reduce translation to a second-order representation: “a derivative, fake, potentially a false copy” (Venuti, 2008, p. 6). Moreover, IFRS Foundation’s official translation policy communicates an attempt to control or even prevent any differences in these second-order representations of its original text:

The purpose of translating the Standards is *not to interpret or explain them, but to render the English text into another language*. This means that translators and review committee members *may not add to, reduce or alter the substance and content* of the Standards as approved by the Board. Grammatical and syntactic adaptations to improve the readability of the translated text are acceptable. (IFRS Foundation, 2018, p. 12, emphasis added.)

While this guideline resonates with the restrictions typical for translations of legal texts, it also highlights the canonizing nature of IASB-controlled IFRS translation. Since accounting concepts are culturally embedded (e.g., Evans, 2004; Hellmann et al., 2010), communicating IFRS *unaltered* across different languages and cultures appears a task that could only rely on maintaining the only accepted understanding, the Anglophone canon. Translation is indeed made visible by the foundation, but in a way that enfeebles non-Anglophone understandings of the standards.

2.2.3. Textual practices and discursive choices—from the IFRS source text to a target text

In the RCs’ work, translators and committee members can make (often overlapping) linguistic and cultural choices in the textual and discursive practices they employ in translation. A significant part of this work, terminological choices represent the core of cultural transfers between different traditions (Venuti, 2009, p. 158), as accounting concepts travel from one location to another (e.g., Parker, 1989, 2001). An approach unwelcoming to hegemonic influences may, for instance, seek to employ translation solutions with terms and conceptualizations relevant to the translating tradition, even if marginal in the international context. Moreover, terms and phrases translated with this approach may use, *inter alia*, linguistic structures and word choices that follow the (minority) conventions of the translating tradition and deviate from the Anglophone expressions of the standards. In sum, a translation approach resisting hegemonic accounting canons would analyze the desired application of the standard in question and then construct a translation by using local, non-hegemonic linguistic and cultural elements to instigate what is anticipated by the RC as a comparable application of IFRS (see Parker, 1989, p. 23; Sunder, 2011; Laaksonen, 2020). This way of translating would not inscribe the target text with the source culture’s values (Venuti, 1998, p. 11) but would contribute to granting visibility to and retaining pre-existing minority conceptualizations and practices (Venuti, 2009, p. 157). Thus, it would value the significance of minor cultures and their conceptual advancements, which, while usually marginal in the dominant IFRS discourse, can also contribute to high-quality financial information. Employing such a tactic benefits from an expert RC, since adapting translations to local accounting contexts requires an understanding of both the original intent of IFRS and those local concepts, traditions and linguistic formulations that would contribute to a comparable application (Baskerville & Evans, 2011, p. 5).

In contrast, a translation approach that reinforces the existing canons relies on using and referring to the dominant Anglophone tradition and discourses to construct meanings for IFRS terms (see Venuti, 2009, p. 165; Kosmala-MacLulich, 2003). For instance, this approach may utilize unchanged or slightly modified English-language terms or establish completely new terms that efface existing concepts of the non-hegemonic tradition (see Venuti, 2008, p. 103). Thus, this approach contributes to an assimilation of the minor culture into the dominant culture (see Evans, 2010, p. 452) by instilling dominant conceptualizations of accounting in minor contexts. Linguistically, this type of translation may closely adhere to the source text and thus contribute to a homogenizing effect by following the standard language use of not the local language but the dominant English (see Venuti, 2008, pp. 47, 121; see also Dahlgren & Nilsson, 2012, p. 47). In other words, this approach amplifies the harmonization process that is the IFRS mission to a level of linguistic and cultural homogenization (Venuti, 2008, p. 160; Evans et al., 2015; see also Evans, 2010; Labardin & Nikitin, 2009), neglecting non-canonical values and worldviews and diminishing the value of minority accounting traditions and advancements, even if they would effectively lead to an acceptable context-specific application of the standards (see Sunder, 2011, p. 291).

However, like other aspects of the framework, the discursive solutions employed in translation are not simply either hegemonic or non-hegemonic (Venuti, 2018, p. xiii). Even more so, a translated text is not either or in its effects, but it is bound to contain solutions that are domesticating, foreignizing and often both. In the end, the Venutian desire for heterogeneity could not propose solutions from, for instance, a certain minority perspective only, as it would impede the aim of visible differences (Venuti, 1998, p. 11). Through

⁶ In contrast to IFRS Foundation’s approach, all translations published by the EU have an equal legal status.

strategically questioning (Venuti, 1998, p. 13) the dominant notions of fluency and functionality, translations can build on more democratic and diverse solutions.

2.2.4. Whose fluency? IFRS translation reviews by accounting scholars

For Venuti, a central part of assessing a translation process is, when possible, examining how translations are read and reviewed. In IFRS translation, studies on users' translations reception are scarce. In the context of European accounting harmonization before IFRS, Kosmala (2005) demonstrates how Polish practitioners interpret *the true and fair view's* Polish translation differently from the British understanding and how this difference remains even when the translation more closely adheres to the English-language wording. Aburous (2019, p. 8) points out that not all users trust IFRS translations in general to be as reliable as the original English-language standards (see also Abd-Elsalam & Weetman, 2003, p. 68). Combined, these studies emphasize that responses to translations of international accounting concepts are local phenomena that need to be studied locally. Most 'translation reviews' are, however, produced by accounting scholars who examine translations from afar⁷. Reviewers and readers only tend to become aware of the translation when they notice a disruption, something that does not seem standard or representative of familiar values (Venuti, 1998, p. 77; Venuti, 2013, p. 110). Similarly, accounting scholars as translation 'reviewers' appear to pay attention to translations when they notice a disruption in fluency *from their point of view*—when something in a translation does not appear to reflect their understanding of the concept. This understanding is often hegemonic in the sense that international scholars are familiar with IFRS and its Anglo-American origins and are expected to thrive in the Anglophone academic world (see Andrew et al., 2020). Thus, the hegemonic notion of fluency competes with a 'local' fluency experienced by IFRS users in minority contexts (see Venuti, 1998, p. 187).

Accordingly, many accounting scholars only approve of translations that seem familiar to them, often those that appear closest to the English-language originals (see Laaksonen, 2020; Evans, 2018), and the ones that they are able to identify with, those that appear to reflect Anglophone canonical understandings (e.g., Aisbitt & Nobes, 2001; Dahlgren & Nilsson, 2012; Evans, 2004; Nobes, 1993; Nobes & Stadler, 2018; cf. Venuti, 1992, p. 5). For example, Nobes and Stadler (2018) examine translations of the IFRS term *impairment* and derive its meaning from its background "in the English-speaking world" (p. 1986). The authors dismiss the likely appropriate local applications of the concept (ibid., p. 1990); fluency, for them, relies on locating references to the Anglophone understanding of *impairment* in back-translated terms. The authors appear to judge all but one of the examined translations as 'impaired' because the wordings do not offer familiar features with which they could identify. In such reviews, translated IFRS terminology is expected to feel canonical to the international academic audience, even if it is aimed at local non-Anglophone users. In this case, more control for the standard-setter over the translation process was called for (Nobes & Stadler, 2018, p. 1985). Again, control seems to be needed to mitigate the fear of translation, revealing the impossibility of IFRS spreading 'unchanged' across languages and cultures.

Hence, "translation provokes the fear of error, amateurism, opportunism" (Venuti, 1998, p. 1), fears that prior research has indeed expressed: of technical error (e.g., Dahlgren & Nilsson, 2012; Nobes, 2006, 2013), of supposedly insufficient work as a token of amateurism (e.g., Nobes & Stadler, 2018), and of the inherent interpretation in translation as potential for opportunism (e.g., Evans, 2004; Nobes, 1993; Nobes & Stadler, 2018). This is perhaps best manifested in statements about how terminology translations and national applications demonstrate that countries managed to "impose their own culture on ... an alien concept" (Nobes, 1993, pp. 40–41; see also Evans, 2010, p. 447; emphasis added). Translation has thus unexpectedly exceeded its technical task, which may not have been anticipated by the dominant Anglophone constituents (see Evans et al., 2015, p. 23), and given non-hegemonic cultures a chance to 'impose' a minority view and refuse the Anglo-American one. Accounting scholars as 'translation reviewers' are then taking stances on whether this resistance has led to (un)desired cultural diversity. However, the issue is not black or white here either. For instance, Kettunen (2017) suggests that constructing translations through local elements may contribute to the institutionalization of IFRS, as these translations facilitate the standards' acceptance by target-culture users. Kettunen is thus more approving of the use of minority elements, even if perhaps motivated by canonizing the position of the standards. Hence, Venuti's notion of fluency needs to be interpreted through whether it has been achieved by unethically neglecting the significant aspects of accounting thought, tradition and terminology of different-language IFRS adoption contexts.

2.3. Synthesis of the theoretical framework as adapted to IFRS translation

While Venuti in 1998 (pp. 23–24) acknowledged the limitations of his literary-origin theorizing in the context of non-literary translations with practical constraints, he saw that non-literary translation could not remain behind its technical approach, but it would eventually need "to take into account its social effects, possibly the economic and political interests it serves." Following this, Table 2 (below) summarizes this paper's adaptation of a Venutian framework to the IFRS context. Because the IFRS setting differs from Venuti's empirical examples in that the dominant party is the one being translated, the labels of Venuti's conceptualizations are adapted to highlight the hegemonic conditions of this context more clearly. Foreignization is labeled *minoritizing* translation, which is the parallel term given to it by Venuti (1998), and domestication is labeled *canonizing* translation, which echoes the reinforcement of dominant canons (e.g., Venuti, 2018, p. xiv). Again, it is emphasized that the presentation is for illustrative purposes and should not be interpreted as a strictly binary framework. For instance, IFRS dominance makes translation not a truly voluntary choice, but the imbalance is further enforced if opportunities to obtain and use translations are unequal. Hence, while minoritizing translation arrangements improve the imbalanced compliance opportunities of different-language users, translations also contribute to the

⁷ It is noted that accounting scholars as 'translation reviewers' may have different motives, such as a specific research orientation; nevertheless, when they do appear to provide a 'review,' it is used here to illustrate the comprehensive context of IFRS translation.

Table 2

Illustrative summary of Venuti's theorizing as adapted to the IFRS context: key aspects of canonizing and minoritizing translation.

	Canonizing IFRS translation	Minoritizing IFRS translation
Choice of text and translation arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is motivated by institutionalizing Anglo-American accounting; uses translation for diffusion - is (only) concerned with the availability and authority of the original, dominant-language version - demands translation solutions that do not interrogate the dominant view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exposes the conditions and discusses their implications; does not unproblematize the setting - works toward equal availability and authority of marginalized language versions - allows heterogeneous translation solutions drawing on minority views
Textual practices and discursive solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enforces Anglo-American accounting thought and values onto 'other' accounting traditions - marginalizes non-English language use and non-Anglophone understandings; contributes to linguistic and cultural homogeneity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - questions and breaks patterns of Anglo-American dominance of accounting thought; promotes more democratic views on IFRS concepts - challenges the current canon; contributes to linguistic and cultural heterogeneity
Reviews and reception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - only accepts translations that reflect Anglophone conceptualizations, preferably with visible similarity to Anglophone linguistic traits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - approves of translations including minority elements and perspectives; appreciates translation reception as subject to local interpretations

canonization of IFRS by facilitating distribution, which already demonstrates the non-binary nature of translation effects.

Next, this framework is empirically illustrated in Finnish-language IFRS translation work.

3. Empirical illustration: Finnish-language IFRS translation

3.1. Data

The main empirical material in this study comprises data from the Finnish-language⁸ review committee's (RC) work. This empirical context is illustrative of the Venutian framework in the following ways. Both the Finnish language and accounting tradition represent what can be labeled 'minority' regarding the Anglophone and Anglo-American origins of IFRS. While Finnish accounting thought is not described in detail here, it has developed with influences from German and Nordic traditions and has been characterized by its reliance on a specifically Finnish theory of accounting before beginning to internationalize mainly since the 1990s. Other typical features include the roles of legal regulation and taxation, i.e., society as one of the main users of financial information (see Pirinen, 2005), a significant deviation from the IFRS origins. Although the Finnish context is naturally not representative of all IFRS adopters, it is potentially relevant, especially for other EU countries. Moreover, it can offer relevant comparisons for jurisdictions with different economic circumstances and motives for adopting the IFRS.

The data include minutes from the RC's meetings, material and notes collected by the coordinator, and printed email discussions between the coordinator and RC members about translation choices. Document collection took place through contact with the RC's coordinator in fall 2019, when the author spent three consecutive workdays at the coordinator's office with access to archived documents of the translation work conducted from 2001 to 2019. It was deemed most purposeful to gather all available documents so that all interesting 'leads' could be followed later in the research process. Initial focus was on arguments behind the RC members' preferred translation solutions, which was at an early stage explained to the coordinator, who suggested the use of minutes from terminology meetings and related email discussions⁹. This choice was further motivated by the consequential role of terminology translations (Venuti, 1998, p. 178). After data collection, all minutes from terminology meetings were reviewed; this showed that the coordinator had habitually started recording the RC's arguments in late 2007. Thus, the minutes to be analyzed were narrowed down to those from October 2007 to November 2019. The total number of minutes included in the analysis was 12; typically, the number of terms discussed in one meeting was between 20 and 35. Around the meetings, members communicated via email; the number of these messages relating to terminology translations varied depending on the number of viewpoints discussed.

As supporting data, the following material was included: documents with background information provided by the coordinator, such as timelines on the translations' organizing; the RC's internal guidelines; and forewords of published translations. To gain further insight into the work of the RC and the nature of the documents, two interviews were conducted with the coordinator, one at the beginning of the data collection period (ca. 90 min) and one at the end of the last day (ca. 75 min). Both interviews were semi-structured. The first one was (loosely) based on questions that had surfaced when reading the background information, while the second one was (loosely) based on questions that had risen during the days at the coordinator's office. Furthermore, several informal discussions took place throughout the three-day period, often initiated by the coordinator, who had come up with additional relevant

⁸ Finland has two official languages, Finnish and Swedish, and a number of indigenous and minority languages the judicial statuses of which vary. Thus, the empirical data of Finnish-language translation work is not illustrative of the whole Finnish context, even if it is often referred to as simply 'Finnish' for conciseness.

⁹ The emails typically give an expanded view on the argumentation of the members *before* or *after* RC meetings; the minutes also record those main arguments that affected the resolutions *at* the meetings.

perspectives after having time to ponder the themes introduced by the author at the first interview or in subsequent discussions. During the interviews and discussions, notes were taken—a choice motivated by the informality of the setting and the continuous nature of the discussions, as well as their supporting role within the data. Key findings were later discussed via email with the coordinator, who explicated some issues from the RC's perspective.

All interviews and discussions were carried out in Finnish, which was the first language of both parties, and all the documents were in Finnish, which is the working language of the RC. After the analysis, selected quotes from the material were translated into English by the author of this paper with an approach that does not prioritize hegemonic fluency, i.e., does not necessarily attempt to make the quotes sound like they had originally been in English.

3.2. Method for analysis

The data are analyzed through an interpretative qualitative analysis that employs a combination of close reading and thematic analysis. Simply put, the objective of thematic analysis is to identify and analyze recurring themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The analysis in this paper explores the data guided by the theoretical framework described and developed in the previous section, concurrently allowing room for themes that the framework has not introduced (see *ibid.*, p. 80, 84). It is emphasized that despite the critical and overtly heterogeneity-oriented approach of this paper, the aim of the analysis is not to evaluate whether the RC members have presented 'good' or 'bad' comments (see Tymoczko, 2009, p. 172) but to enhance our understanding of the conflicts and evaluations of translation effects in this context.

In its understanding of translation, the analysis follows the argument that full equivalence in translation is generally not possible even in a 'technical' field such as accounting; instead, translation solutions need to be constructed (Evans, 2018; Kettunen, 2017; Laaksonen, 2020). Put differently, translation 'equivalents' are not chosen from an external supply, but 'equivalence,' such as translating for comparable IFRS application, is socially constructed (Laaksonen, 2020). This construction process involves 'taking sides' (Venuti, 2013, p. 156), linking it to canonizing and minoritizing ways of constructing this project of accounting harmonization, for instance in terms of linguistic and cultural heterogeneity and equality.

The analysis proceeded as follows. First, forewords for the Finnish translations were studied, as they provided examples of terminological problems and the RC's approaches. When the forewords discussed a translation that did not fall within the 2007–2019 period of the minutes, email discussions and the coordinator's notes were used. Second, minutes that recorded the RC's arguments were read closely, and arguments that appeared to echo the notions of minoritizing and canonizing translation were identified. Additional materials, such as email discussions relating to the same standards, were then read in a similar way to gain more insight into the arguments and resolutions, which the minutes recorded concisely. In addition, notes from the interviews and discussions with the coordinator, as well as the background material and forewords, were revisited several times. Third, more nuanced themes of minoritizing and canonizing were identified, and the RC's approaches and arguments were grouped according to the different parts of the framework. Moreover, under 'textual choices,' four aspects of terminology translation were identified, reflecting both the specific context of this translation process and the non-binary nature of the framework. The second phase of the analysis was repeated and the grouping of the third phase evolved several times. The following sections present the key findings.

3.3. Canonizing and minoritizing effects: linguistic and cultural conflicts in the Finnish RC's work

3.3.1. Setting and translation arrangements

The Finnish translation process is arranged according to the policy of the IFRS Foundation. However, the Finnish translations are currently also used by the EU, which results in a 'double status': for the IFRS Foundation, they are non-authoritative, albeit 'official' (i.e., produced according to their official process) translations; for the EU, they become language versions which are all equally binding. The Finnish RC¹⁰ follows the official translation process of the IFRS Foundation, with the exceptions that it has one member from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (an arrangement that stems from the EU collaboration), and one translator from the European Commission observes the RC's work and comments on the translations before their submission to the process to become EU law¹¹. The 'EU members' were added when translation work was first organized with the EU and the IFRS Foundation. Moreover, all suggested RC members have been accepted as well as all external expert members who have helped with translations concerning precise areas of accounting. The Finnish RC has a coordinator-translator who is an integral part of the RC's work. This double role has been approved by the foundation, as it deviates from the typical arrangement that employs an external translator. The translations are organized by the Finnish Association of Authorised Public Accountants, which publishes them by its for-profit division and sells, in agreement with the IFRS Foundation, the translations to fund their production (the coordinator-translator has a paid part-time position). The association is publicly committed to promoting the use of the IFRS (Pirinen, 2005).

The arrangements by which the translations are made and the texts' statuses as translations are granted substantial visibility in the

¹⁰ The Finnish RC has had several different compositions throughout its existence, but it is referred to as 'the RC' or '(the) RC members' regardless of the identities in each given time. In line with this, translated quotes from RC comments are not attributed to specific members, as the focus of the analysis is on the argumentation, not the person. Furthermore, it should be noted that the quotes in this paper do not necessarily represent the resolutions of the committee; i.e., not all arguments discussed here were successful when the committee voted on the solutions.

¹¹ Comments by the observing EU translator were excluded from the analyzed arguments because they do not represent the expert members' work under the IASB-controlled process.

forewords of published translations signed by the organizing association. They explain the IFRS translation project, discuss the institutional constraints that the RC faces in translating the standards (mainly the IFRS Foundation's translation policy and EU conventions), and list all RC members, thus making participants in the translation work visible. Moreover, the forewords demonstrate how the RC has to react to the Anglophone origins of the source text. Since the first published translation in 2001, forewords have encompassed passages on the terminological challenges of IFRS translation, including examples of terms for which it has been deemed purposeful to explain the solutions. These 'terminological problems' are attributed to the following three main aspects:

*"[T]he standards imply a mind-set that differs from Finnish accounting convention; terms defined in the standards do not precisely correspond to the Finnish-language terms that are already in use in Finland; some of the terms do not have an established Finnish-language correspondent."*¹²

This both highlights the source text's foreign cultural origins and subjects those origins to a local interrogation in which their features are entitled *problems* from the minority perspective. Hence, it produces a minoritizing comparison (see Venuti, 2019, pp. 10, 14–15): IFRS concepts are now seen to differ from traditional Finnish ones, instead of Finnish concepts being different from supposedly international ones.

In all, consistent translation work by the Finnish RC and efforts by the publishing association have contributed to the accessibility of a minority-language IFRS. The forewords explaining the translation arrangements also play a role in the translations' canonizing and minoritizing effects: the explicit discussions on translation problems that stem from the source text's Anglo-American linguistic and conceptual origins foreground the inherently canonizing nature of IFRS translation (see Venuti, 2009, p. 159) and take a minoritizing stance by unveiling these conditions. Due to the IFRS Foundation's policy, the translation's status as a lower-order text compared to the canonical English-language text remains¹³, and the distribution of translated IFRS can naturally be seen to reinforce the standards' dominant status. Thus, translation arrangements already highlight the non-binary nature of minoritizing and canonizing translation choices.

3.3.2. Terminology translations: negotiating language and tradition

In analyzing the arguments for terminology translations, four main notions were formed: user orientation, establishedness, advocacy and institutional constraints. In what follows, these are discussed in detail.

3.3.2.1. User orientation. A prominent aspect of the Finnish RC's work is an approach that is here entitled *user orientation*. In the first interview, the coordinator stated that the RC's main loyalty lies with the users of the Finnish translation, while it concurrently aims to produce translations that will be accepted by the EU's translation branch. As the translation's most important users, the RC considers preparers and users of financial information along with the Finnish Financial Supervisory Authority. This orientation holds it central to have representatives from all user groups in the RC to ensure that they will accept the translation once it is published. Appearing as a practical label for a translation approach, the notion of user orientation¹⁴ is however a complex combination of both minoritizing and canonizing motivations and effects, which require nuanced contextual examinations (see Venuti 2018, pp. xiii–xvi), also echoing different understandings of functionality.

By seeking the anticipated acceptance of users, the RC aligns with the IFRS Foundation's mission in that it promotes the diffusion of the standards. Consequently, the approach canonizes IFRS as a global institution, but it does not necessarily canonize solely Anglophone or Anglo-American understandings of the standards. Instead, this acceptance can be built on both dominant and minority elements in the receiving context. User orientation becomes minoritizing when it starts to question the linguistic and cultural dominance of Anglophone accounting traditions, interrogate the origins of its preferred solutions and challenge the potentially dominant-origin accustomations of the users. At its most implicit, it can be seen in RC comments that support the use of minority linguistic formulations because they are 'better Finnish' or 'more fluent Finnish.' However, favoring 'fluent,' 'concise' or 'easy to read' translations hides the negotiations underlying the translation process in case it leaves no traces of conflict for the readers to see. In non-hegemonic contexts, this may be an attempt to balance the power relations or a convenient way to make hegemonic values more acceptable—both intentions rely on making dominant influences less recognizable. In essence, user orientation is canonizing when it does not question linguistic or cultural dominance or react to it. In discussions on diversity, the RC is sometimes compelled to rely on the dominant view of the user perspective; it is committed to working for the acceptance of the standards, which may become a canonizing constraint in its solutions.

"This translation was chosen because it was noted that this is what people would use in practice anyway ..." (A recorded reasoning)

Thus, user orientation is inherently a compromise and is generally recognized as one by the RC. It highlights the non-fixed effects of translation practices and affects the RC's work in multiple ways, instigating negotiations in which the ethical questions of diversity in

¹² Due to space restrictions, the Finnish-language quotes are not displayed here alongside of the translations although it is noted that it would be a more democratic presentation. The quotes are available in Finnish from the author.

¹³ The non-authoritative status of the translation was still emphasized in the copyright section of the published Finnish translation in 2016, but the most recent publication (2020) no longer presents this statement, which may mitigate its effect (as it can now be found in the IFRS Foundation policy document only).

¹⁴ User orientation is a multifaceted notion also in the field of translation studies. It is only examined here as a context-specific aspect that was identified in the data. Suojanen et al. (2015) offer an exploration of user-centered translation from multiple perspectives.

reaction to linguistic and cultural hegemonies intermix with user expectations and their canonizing or minoritizing nature.

3.3.2.2. *Establishedness*¹⁵. One of the most prevalent aspects of the notion of user orientation is determining whether the proposed translation solutions are established in the receiving context. This ‘establishedness’ is, however, an equally complex notion with user orientation, and an illustration of how minoritizing and canonizing translation are not clear-cut categories with explicit motivations. Establishedness is an argument used in conflicts relating to both linguistic and cultural influences of the Anglophone origins of IFRS. It is generally a question of determining the prevalence of a linguistic formulation or an accounting conceptualization in the local sources of the receiving situation, that is, the Finnish IFRS context. However, in determining this, the RC members frequently engage in discussions on the origins of this establishedness: as dominant features may already be prevalent in, for instance, the Finnish IFRS practitioner’s language use or in the reporting of major Finnish companies, simply relying on what is ‘already established’ may entail further canonizing the dominant; however practical a choice it appears. When there is a dominant element already prevalent in the Finnish context, the RC members typically recognize that using it in the translation is a compromise made for practical reasons. Establishedness is deeply entangled with the notion of fluency and as such, it is not merely a question of prevalence in other texts but entails evaluations of what these other texts are, what kind of effects the reinforcement of their choices has, and which constituents it serves to align with them.

In other words, behind these ‘practical choices,’ the members acknowledge that they may be accepting the Anglophone dominance, be this acceptance reluctant, indifferent or welcoming. Establishedness, like the broader user orientation perspective, is a canonizing approach if it undisputedly accepts that a dominant element is what is now established in the Finnish IFRS context, markedly influenced by (Anglophone) internationalization. In contrast, discussions on establishedness also include minoritizing attitudes that challenge the supposedly neutral intrusion of linguistic and conceptual elements and question the origins of establishedness as well as the understanding of translation fluency as what is familiar in the dominant discourse. In other words, the ethical discussions on establishedness stem from conflicts between the dominant and the marginal—from situations in which RC members typically recognize that the inclusion of minority elements would be a pronounced choice, not a given. Both aspects along with their complex interrelationship are communicated already in the forewords, which state that “whenever possible, an established or generally used Finnish-language term has been used.” The conditional clause underlines how the RC members are mindful of source-text concepts that have no correspondents in the local tradition and carry out nuanced examinations, the preciseness of which often prevents them from using minority elements. In other words, the members are often unwilling to utilize markedly Finnish concepts established in the local tradition if there is a risk of lacking correspondence with the Anglo-American understandings. Concurrently, they recognize the compromises being made by not employing a Finnish perspective.

From the perspective of linguistic hegemony, a dominant understanding of establishedness within IFRS translation may carry over English-language traits, such as linguistic structure or vocabulary in the ‘general words’ of the terminology (see Huerta et al., 2013), which do not introduce new conceptualizations as such but can contribute to linguistic change (see Dahlgren & Nilsson, 2012). In the RC’s work, this entails arguments that stem from welcoming or questioning dominant linguistic patterns, such as the use of loan words that mimic the Anglophone expressions of the standards, a typical example of balancing dominant and minority views of linguistic establishedness. For instance, the word *transaction* in the term *transaction price* (IFRS 15) spiked a discussion on the choice between an evident loan word (*transaktio*) and a Finnish term (*liiketoimi*) that carries the same meaning, inspiring arguments that differed in their willingness to align with establishedness if it meant less linguistic diversity.

“I believe the term [transaction] is quite established and well understood in Finland.”

“[I support solution] A, but I would still like to translate the loan word transaktio [into Finnish].”

Ultimately, the RC concluded to choose *transaktio* as the translation and recorded the reasoning in detail.

“It was deemed established enough [in the Finnish language] and it is consistent with IFRS 13.”

Hence, whether RC members aligned with the use of Anglophone-resembling words or questioned their use as an ostensibly evident solution, they identified the choice as a meaningful one that needed to be rationalized, and when the members recognized they were making a compromise, it was explicitly discussed and often the resolutions were carefully recorded. However, instances like this also provoked comments that did not necessarily favor the use of words that would bear the most resemblance to the English-language ones but rather did not see the minoritizing approach of some members relevant from the more practical user orientation perspective. This could be interpreted through several comments relating to various IFRS terms that overtly questioned the relevance of explicitly attempting to differ from the English-language text.

“Here, digging up a Finnish correspondent is artificial.”

“[This word is] apparently established; Finnish-language experts [in the group] could comment on if we must try to translate this into Finnish.”

¹⁵ Some of the English-language conceptualizations of empirical phenomena in this paper are not what might be called the most idiomatic English; however, in the spirit of this paper’s theoretical approach, they are used as examples of ‘minority elements’ reminding the reader of a non-Anglophone empirical context. This applies to, for instance, the term ‘establishedness,’ which is a direct English-language formulation of the Finnish-language notion ‘*vakiintuneisuus*’ (‘the state of being established’).

“[It] is the established term, whether it is originally Finnish or not.”

Often, there were compromising responses that somewhat unwillingly acquiesced to the ‘practical’ solutions.

“[This solution is] OK, although it does not sound like the most natural Finnish.”

The notion of establishedness also entails reactions to the cultural origins of IFRS, that is, the influence of Anglo-American accounting traditions, which affect the ways in which international financial reporting is conceptualized. In the RC’s work, this conceptual aspect of establishedness is founded on multiple sources of local material: Finnish legislation, Finnish authorities (e.g., the Financial Supervisory Authority and the Finnish Tax Administration), Finnish-language accounting research and university education materials and usage by Finnish accounting practitioners. However, the situation is like that of hegemonic linguistic influence: Anglo-American concepts may have influenced concepts used by local sources, and ‘established in Finland’ does not automatically mean ‘minority element’ in the IFRS context. For instance, referring to local practitioners’ use may mean referring to Anglophone conceptualizations that practitioners have adopted, for instance, to stay on top of IFRS developments. Like with the linguistic questions, the RC has noted this, often consenting to the recognized influence of Anglophone concepts instead of deliberately seeking to challenge their dominance. For instance, the RC decided to keep *underwriting* (IFRS 17) in its English-language form, and one of the reasons was its usage in a local banking and insurance company’s Finnish-language materials. Some references are, however, more minoritizing in nature than others. For example, referring to Finnish accounting legislation can be seen to emphasize reliance on Finnish accounting thought, which the law prominently reflects (Lukka & Pihlanto, 2014; Pirinen, 2005). An inclination to include minority elements from local legislation in the translation was frequently present in the RC’s comments.

“The [Finnish] Accounting Act uses [this term], wouldn’t this be a splendid opportunity to get some uniformity?”

Furthermore, establishedness is complex in the sense that its connection with fluency makes it a deceitful ally. Fluency from the minority perspective is explicitly minoritizing only as long as it challenges the dominant notion of fluency and draws attention to this interrogation (e.g., Venuti, 1998, pp. 81–87; Venuti 2019, pp. 15–17). This was exemplified by the term *private equity securities* (IFRS 10), which introduced a concept (*private equity*) from the Anglophone IFRS discourse that was not part of the Finnish tradition. One of the proposed solutions was to translate *securities* into Finnish and leave *private equity* in its English-language form, while another proposal translated the whole phrase but included *private equity* in parentheses, which resulted in insightful comments about establishedness and user orientation.

“Do we want to translate private equity into Finnish or keep the English term in which case this would be [private equity—*arvopaperit*]. However, I support [the solution with the parentheses] because it brings in the English term, too, in which case there should be no ambiguity for the reader.”

“[I support the solution private equity—*arvopaperit*] at least until the Finnish term has become established.”

The suggested use of unchanged Anglophone terminology does not necessarily reflect a desire to highlight dominant conceptualizations. As members doubted that users would understand the new term in the specific way required by IFRS, they wanted to guarantee access to the dominant version of the term. This appears a minoritizing approach in the sense that it seeks to make differences visible and in so doing, it contributes to linguistic heterogeneity under the prevailing hegemony, but by choosing to include the original term in the translation, the RC is canonizing the Anglophone conceptualization even if not explicitly planning to. The comment about using English-language terms until the new, translated Finnish-language terms are established implies that the use of the dominant language is acceptable until the local language adapts and is able to communicate the term effectively (cf. Parker, 2001, p. 135). While this tactic also uses linguistic minority elements, conceptually it can be seen as planting a new concept into the target language (and culture) and waiting until it becomes canonized enough to conceal its origin in the dominant context (see Venuti, 2008, p. 1). This could also be characterized as an assimilating approach because it does not profoundly challenge the dominant but aims to plant it in the receiving context, which defeats the innovative aspect of minoritizing.

3.3.2.3. *Advocacy.* The RC’s arguments start to shift toward noticeably ethical questions of heterogeneity when they reflect attitudes that are less related to the notion of user orientation, or the idea of establishedness therein, and more concerned with the minority position of the Finnish language or conceptualizations of accounting in the Finnish context. In this regard, arguments advocating for minoritizing or canonizing approaches are not motivated through the user perspective; rather, they are concerned with the inclusion of minority linguistic traits and understandings of accounting concepts or willingly adhering to the dominant forms of accounting thought and language. A minoritizing approach is oriented toward diversity within the IFRS context, also in the sense of including local societal values. In contrast, arguments advocating for canonizing translation are explicitly in favor of not disrupting the dominant discourse and thus contribute to a more homogenized IFRS context globally. It should be emphasized, however, that in the Finnish RC’s work, the explicitly minoritizing arguments are by no means anti-IFRS; first, they are anti-homogenization and, for instance, oppose the assimilation of Finnish into Anglophone language use or question the dominant conceptualizations’ relevance in the Finnish societal context. Accordingly, these arguments pay special attention to the functionality of the translations, but from a stance that questions whether it should be defined from an Anglophone point of view. Therefore, they are pronounced reactions to the linguistic and cultural hegemonies that the RC encounters through translation, but they do not question the need for international standards as such. In other words, this advocacy for minoritizing translation questions the narrow, dominant understanding of IFRS translation

fluency.

Oftentimes, RC members argued that some of the translations were ‘better Finnish’ or ‘easier Finnish’ than others. The attitudes behind these comments appear to differ in their level of intentionality: while some are casual comments (‘this sounds more fluent to me’), others express an explicit interest in keeping the language of the translation ‘more Finnish’ for the sake of retaining Finnish-language traits. For example, the use of loan words instigated comments that were not interested in the establishedness of the words but the inclusion of minority elements instead of the most hegemonic-mimicking ones. In the case of *relevant activities* (IFRS 10–12), one of the proposed translations by the coordinator for *relevant* was the loan word *relevantti*, which competed with a Finnish-language solution, *merkityksellinen*. Here, some members were straightforward with their approaches, and deviation from the dominant form in favor of local words won the vote.

“Preferably a Finnish expression.” (member comment)

“The majority ... wanted to choose the Finnish-language term, although relevantti was regarded as potentially more precise.” (recorded reasoning)

This is one of the aspects that demonstrates the presence of a minoritizing attitude, which pronouncedly seeks to include minority elements that would otherwise be easily cast aside as ‘more different’ than the similar-appearing loans. However, the hesitation about the potentially greater preciseness of the loan word appears to reflect Evans (2010) proposition that foreign-language terms are sometimes considered more sophisticated. From a Venutian perspective, this view is influenced by linguistic dominance.

The minoritizing attitude was not the preferred approach of all members or in all instances. In some cases, imitating the structure of the English-language term was deemed favorable, with comments that supported the proposed solutions because they were ‘direct translation[s].’ In the case of *Revenue from Contracts with Customers* (IFRS 15), the proposed translations included both a typical Finnish compound word solution (*Myyntituotot asiakassopimuksista*) and a literal translation in which the English preposition *with* was incorporated by using a Finnish postposition (*Myyntituotot sopimuksista asiakkaiden kanssa*). Several RC members provided comments that explicitly favored imitating English-language wording.

“I feel this is closest to the original”

“[Solution] A is identical to the English-language one.”

Arguments like this demonstrate an attitude that considers it most appropriate to copy the Anglophone structure of the phrase, i.e., adhere to dominant linguistic form, the effect of which is linguistic homogenization. Put differently, identity with English-language phrasing is considered as intrinsically valuable. This was also the case with some terms, the inherited foreignness of which was deemed so difficult to translate that some members started questioning whether it was worth the try.

“Is the use of [the English-language term] completely forbidden in the Finnish language?”

Comments like this were often met with blatant responses by some members who were overt about the value of at least employing minority linguistic elements, even when the substance of the translated concept could not be inferred from local tradition.

“We should try to form and establish a Finnish-language correspondent and not use the original English-language terms as clarifications, not even in parentheses.”

This approach advocates for minoritizing translation by challenging both source and target contexts; it requires innovation from the receiving situation to build new concepts inscribed with local intelligibilities and subject the hegemonic source-context understanding to local interpretations in this process. Yet, if this construction only follows the dominant logic, it will communicate dominant values in a superficial minority wrapping.

Hence, the RC’s task is not simply to change the words (or render the English unchanged; see IFRS Foundation, 2018, p. 12) but to consider multifaceted effects. For instance, the RC sometimes specifically considers a translation’s effect in the Finnish context, such as with the term *overlay* (an approach regarding changes in IFRS 4). It was kept in its original form because the RC concluded it was a temporary term in a temporary rule, and (due to the small circles of Finland’s IFRS sphere) the members were convinced there would be no need for the term in Finnish during its effective period. Hence, the RC decided that there was no need to ‘protect’ local terminology from an Anglophone influence, as it would not actually affect the local vocabulary (cf. Evans, 2010; Labardin & Nikitin, 2009).

The RC has also noted that terminological translations may contribute to societal implications, such as changes in the values that the standards communicate. One source for the traditional role of accounting in the Finnish society is the national legislation, which was drawn on in the case of translations of *depreciation* and *amortization*. The RC noted how the Finnish term *poisto* covers both *depreciation* and *amortization*, as Finnish accounting does not traditionally distinguish between these two. As a solution, the RC decided to use *poisto* for both Anglophone terms when there was no risk of confusion and a specifically Finnish term, *hankintamenon jaksotaminen* (‘periodical allocation of acquisition expenditure’), when it was necessary to distinguish that the assets in question were intangible. This translation echoes the theoretical background of Finnish national accounting legislation, thus reflecting a local conceptualization of the accounting phenomenon (see Lukka & Pihlanto, 2014), yet ensuring a comparable application of IFRS. A somewhat similar solution was to continue translating the term *statement of financial position*, which was to replace *balance sheet* in IFRS terminology, as *tase*, the traditional Finnish word for *balance sheet*. The RC rationalized this choice by referring to the long history of *tase* and its appearances in other local texts, but also by confirming with the IASB that a change in translated terminology was not necessary, as the substance of the concept had not been altered. Hence, the employment of a central minority element was affirmed by

approval from the dominant party. While the IASB approved of the Finnish RC's solution not to introduce a change in terminology but to continue using *tase*, the RC members interpreted this as a significant discussion reflecting a choice between traditional accounting thought and foreign conceptualizations, and this choice is one of those that have their justifications included in the translations' forewords. The issue has also been raised by accounting scholars criticizing that the RC had the opportunity to not change the wording and choose a minority term, even if it would lead to a comparable application (Nobes & Stadler, 2018, p. 1985). Thus, amid the canonizing expectations placed on translations, the choice indeed appears as meaningful as the Finnish RC considered it to be.

The RC has also overtly discussed the effects of cultural or conceptual influence. According to the coordinator, in the past decade, the Finnish RC has noted a shift in the standards and a trend toward an increased use of American concepts. In particular, IFRS 9 (Financial Instruments) was considered conceptually alien by the RC, and the coordinator speculated whether this might be related to the IASB-FASB collaboration in some phases of the standard's development. According to the minutes of the IFRS 9 terminology meetings, one RC member had 'read American literature' to understand some of the concepts. Here, finding Anglo-American references instead of local ones is a secondary choice; it is not something the members would seek to do, but something that they must do to be able to interpret and translate the supposedly international source text. Furthermore, a market orientation not traditional in Finnish accounting was explicitly discussed by the RC, and some translation solutions can be considered reactions to these foreign values. An illustrative example is the translation of the term *measurement*. The RC engaged in a discussion on rather philosophical questions about the theoretical background of measurement and the role of professional judgment in accounting, and eventually decided to translate it as *arvostaminen* (the Finnish-language term for *valuation*) when it refers to recognizing assets, and only use the translation *mittaaminen* (*measurement*) in certain contexts, such as hedge effectiveness. This translation choice can be interpreted as refusing a major philosophical shift toward market orientation: the use of *measurement* instead of *valuation* in English-language standards is said to reflect the superiority of fair value accounting over depreciated cost (Nobes & Stadler, 2018, p.1985). It indeed appears that the RC refused a dominant-origin change in accounting thought (see Palea, 2015; Mantzari et al., 2017, p. 198) and decided to prefer a domestic understanding (which, it considered, would lead to a relevant application in the local context).

This shift, the Anglo-American market orientation observable in IFRS, has caught the attention of the Finnish RC on several occasions. For instance, one of the reasons why the term *highest and best use* (IFRS 13) was deemed difficult by the RC members was as follows:

“... [N]ow a completely new term comes into the valuation vocabulary and it is a market perspective.”

This is also illustrated by the RC's difficulties in producing translations for market-related terms traditionally not present in Finland, such as in the case of *dealer markets* and *broker markets*, where the RC members sought to construe translations by comparing the terms with Finnish ones, which have traditionally required less nuances. Situations like these may require introducing new linguistic expressions in the local language by building conceptual references only to the dominant traditions, thus contributing to a change in local accounting thought and the way to conceptualize accounting. These need not be fundamental expressions of societal values or core ideas of accounting thought; the practices and effects can be more subtle. In the careful interpretations by the Finnish expert RC members, however, their perceptive comments also marked fragile differences.

3.3.2.4. Institutional constraints. In the context of IFRS translation, the limitations set by the official translation policy appear significant. In the Finnish RC's work, both the IFRS Foundation and the EU introduce constraints that affect translation solutions. The effect of EU requirements is somewhat subtle in the data. The coordinator explained that sometimes some proposals for translation solutions are 'automatically' left unrepresented in the meetings because all members know they would not be accepted by the EU. Both IFRS Foundation policies and EU requirements affect translations in terms of the required consistency of terminology; however, the coordinator noted that should there be a conflict between EU and IFRS terminology, the Finnish RC will prioritize the internal consistency of IFRS. Adhering to the scope of this paper, the key implications of the IASB-introduced constraints are presented.

In contrast to the official translation policy of the IFRS Foundation, the central coordination is not pointedly present in the RC's work. The committee does not, according to the coordinator, need to actively consider the official policy's wording, and the foundation does not comment on the content or language of the Finnish translation. Nevertheless, the guidelines of the IFRS Foundation can be seen to have certain, even subtle, influences on the RC's solutions. For instance, the requirement to render the English text unaltered without any interpretations may lead to solutions that adhere to the dominant features of the source text or unconventional ways of presenting regulation texts, and it may also hinder the employment of local conceptualizations, even when they would communicate comparable applications. This also relates to the complexity of the original language of the standards. When the RC members felt insecure about the exact meaning of a phrase, it was sometimes deemed safest to copy the original linguistic choices, that is, to deviate from the original as little as possible.

One example of the constraints is the case of *revaluation*, which was translated word-for-word (*re + valuation*) into a new term, *uudelleenarvostus*, even though the Finnish vocabulary also has established terms for recording changes in value. The RC rationalized the choice by noting that the English-language term is more precise, as it includes the possibility of recognizing an adjustment in both directions. Nonetheless, a combination of the local terms *arvonkorotus* (recognizing a higher value) and *arvonalennus* (recognizing a lower value) would have carried the same meaning (combined as *arvonkorotus tai -alennus*). In general, however, solutions that build on local terms in such a way are hindered by the format of the standards and the prohibition of adding anything; it would often be difficult to justify, for instance, longer phrases that explicate how to interpret IFRS concepts through knowledge of local traditions (see Baskerville & Evans, 2011, p. 57).

Furthermore, the coordinator noted that the Anglo-American origins of the standards are not only visible in the terminology, but

also in ways to express things, such as in the Illustrative Examples sections of the standards. Strictly adhering to the constraints of the guidelines, i.e., following the original presentation unaltered, differs from Finnish textual conventions and introduces the dominant ways of formulating accounting texts, thus reinforcing the canonized way to perceive accounting and its regulatory discourses. In cases such as these, institutional constraints also prevent the use of minoritizing, alternative (or innovative) textual practices.

4. Discussion

The aim of this paper was to introduce a theoretical framework that would extend the available options for translation research in accounting into the inclusion of critical perspectives (Evans, 2018). In particular, this paper has introduced an approach that sees ethics in translation as a question of pluralism and contribution to anti-hegemony. In this regard, the work of Lawrence Venuti, whose theorizations have been only briefly referred to in prior accounting literature (see Kamla & Komori, 2018; Evans, 2018), proved relevant for translation in accounting, including the in many ways constrained context of IFRS translation. Contrary to the common view of accounting as a merely technical area of translation (see Evans & Kamla, 2018), it has been shown how this framework helps to shift research foci from the ostensibly neutral questions of technical translation accuracy toward ethical (and critical) questions of the intention and effects of translation. Moreover, despite the constraints and predetermined nature of translation in the IFRS context, it was shown that with a critically oriented framework, questions other than technical and practical do not appear so elusive. It is no wonder that Venuti's notion of translation as resistance to hegemony may be difficult to envision in the linguistically and culturally dominated context of IFRS, where decisions on adoption and compliance are separate from decisions to translate and the fact that translations may not be used by all local-language practitioners might seem like a reason to question the consequences of textual choices. However, this paper has demonstrated that the IFRS context is not immune to the effects and consequences of translation either; rather, research approaches within the topic have been limited.

First, the paper shows that when using a comprehensive framework, research on translation becomes broader in its perspectives. The concepts of minoritizing and canonizing translation along with a broad understanding of translation processes provide new insights by examining aspects such as what gets translated, for whom, and what does not get translated; whose interests translation arrangements serve (see Evans et al., 2015); and how translation choices can be interpreted and published translations reviewed in reflection on the prevailing linguistic and cultural hegemonies. For instance, the arrangements and translation availability are an aspect that has appreciable consequences. In the IFRS context, prior research has implied that, while there is a considerable need for translations by different-language users, even when translations are available, they are not necessarily trusted as much as the original standards (Abd-El salam & Weetman, 2003; Abourou, 2019). It may be that the trust issues are related to the translation arrangement, in which translations hold no authoritative status in the eyes of the IFRS Foundation, which makes users without full professional English skills second-class compliers. This is one significant aspect where narrow understandings of translations' functionality as correctness from one perspective lead to lesser functionality through a lack of linguistic accessibility.

Second, through its empirical section, the paper has shown that in the Finnish-language IFRS translation work, even within the narrow scope of discursive choices, questions and effects of hegemony exist. Perhaps the most significant finding of the empirical illustration is the clearly observable negotiations of language and accounting tradition in the RC's arguments: the members recognize the question of dominant and minority elements as a conflict and a meaningful choice; they discuss and argue it; and they often take explicit stances. While not all of their arguments are overtly motivated by questions of linguistic and cultural heterogeneity, there is a distinctive inclination to explicitly rationalize translation choices that touches on the underlying hegemonies. Thus, the empirical section indicates that the linguistic and cultural imbalances entangled in this paper's Venutian framework are eminently recognized in the practical work of IFRS translators and accounting experts, and even the ostensibly technical goals of translation include evaluations of ethical effects, such as those regarding the asymmetric distribution of accounting thought (see Evans et al., 2015, p. 3). In this light, the requirement that IFRS would be 'rendered unaltered' across languages (see IFRS Foundation, 2018, p. 12) is essentially a statement that canonizes the English-language version and limits translation choices on the textual level.

However, the Finnish-language case is not illustrative in terms of, for instance, imbalances relating to translation availability—this aspect has been excellently covered by an association that has been willing and economically able to take on the task and by RC members who have donated excessive amounts of their time. Moreover, given the illustrative role of the empirics, examinations of the wider societal context in which Finnish-language IFRS translation takes place are limited in this study. Hence, more in-depth examinations in other contexts could compare with the one in this paper, extend our understanding of this phenomenon, and add to the diversity of research settings. This could include, for example, jurisdictions with stricter or more accepting attitudes toward Anglophone influences and, importantly, contexts in which conditions of translation production are more pressing. Moreover, a limitation of the IFRS context, which was chosen as an illustration because of its known demonstrativeness, is that it did not reveal any new hegemonies as such. To reach the full potential of the Venutian framework, it should also be used in translation settings where asymmetries are not as evident to begin with. Moreover, linking this perspective of ethics as anti-hegemony to questions of ideology (Venuti, 1992; Evans, 2018) can also open new research avenues.

As a critical approach surpassing solely practical or technical views of translation, the framework can provide new insights into previously examined contexts as well. In this paper, this entails both the topic of IFRS translation and the specific case of Finnish-language IFRS. The work of the Finnish RC has been examined by Kettunen (2017) but from a different perspective that sheds light on the practical problems of constructing translations, focusing in its motivation on offering more information about "the processes and related practices that facilitate the use of these standards in non-Anglophone countries" (p. 38). In contrast, this paper is interested in how these processes and practices affect non-Anglophone countries, and while Kettunen aims to establish IFRS translation as a "contested area of expertise" (ibid.), this paper presents evidence of IFRS translation as a contested area of cultural and linguistic influence. However, Kettunen reports some interesting notions from the more critical perspective of the current study, and her work

has inspired competing comments in subsequent studies. For instance, this paper's proposition that the Finnish RC's use of *tase* ('balance sheet') as the translation for *statement of financial position* had an advocated minoritizing motivation behind it is supported by how Kettunen's interviewees described one RC member making a passionate statement in their meeting, declaring that a term with such an expansive tradition behind it simply could not be changed (p. 48); through the critical lens of this paper, it could not be changed in favor of a new dominant understanding of the term. Furthermore, Kettunen also noted that some RC members she interviewed did not see the value of translating terms that Finnish practitioners used in their English-language forms (p. 46), which in this paper reflects a canonizing approach to user orientation. Commenting on Kettunen's report, Nobes and Stadler (2018) have a negative interpretation of the Finnish RC's solutions: The authors feel that the RC's ability to control the translation led to a deliberate difference in meaning, which in this case was based on "a long-running preference for particular terms" (p. 1985). Seen from the perspective of this paper, Nobes and Stadler's comments demonstrate a canonizing approach in which minority elements should not be allowed in IFRS translations, regardless of whether local experts believe these elements secure the standards' desired application.

Most importantly, the Venutian framework can contribute to research areas that have not yet considered translation. Here, the analysis is proposed as relevant for critical research where the translation angle of IFRS diffusion has not been explored. For instance, scholars have interviewed IFRS practitioners to gain insights into the effects of existing hegemonies (e.g., Mantzari et al., 2017), but it is noteworthy that IFRS translators and expert RCs, especially, also conduct thorough interpretations of the standards. In the Finnish-language translation work, the RC especially noted a connection between an Anglo-American market orientation and difficulties in translating IFRS terms. This is consistent with the proposition that the adoption of IFRS may imply a shift in logic toward neoliberal values (Mantzari et al., 2017, p. 198). Based on this paper's empirical findings, translators and RC members play a significant role in delivering or effacing these shifts (see also Nobes & Stadler, 2018). Furthermore, translation evaluations by accounting scholars in the IFRS context reflect the way arguments for the monopolistic position of IFRS ignore political and social aspects (Chua & Taylor, 2008, p. 471) in valuing a technical, assumedly neutral Anglophone view on translation. This has also resulted in unequal opportunities for different-language users to use the standards, a problem briefly referred to in prior studies (see Abd-Elsalam & Weetman, 2003; Alp & Ustundag, 2009). In sum, IFRS translation is not just the outcome of prior political resolutions and technical linguistic choices but also a significant factor in the linguistic, cultural and societal effects that the diffusion of IFRS has on 'other' accounting cultures as well as on the homogeneity of the IFRS approach (see Sunder, 2011). Similarly, more (critical) attention should be paid to translation in other accounting contexts.

Despite its contributions, the framework applied here is not without issues. Its dynamic nature requires extensive information on the context in which translation is done to evaluate the intentions and (anticipated) effects in nuance. Inherently requiring simplifications, summarized presentations of adapting the framework (such as those provided in this paper for illustrative purposes) risk its further applications as a reductively binary approach, and Venuti's own writing may inspire such interpretations. If foreignizing (or minoritizing) is essentially defined as *opposing* domesticating (or canonizing) translation (e.g., Venuti, 1998, p. 99), the concepts alone without Venuti's extensive empirical examinations may indeed appear rather black and white (Koskinen, 2000; Laaksonen & Koskinen, 2020). In essence, the dynamic, non-binary nature of the theorization posits a request for assessing the perceptions and assumptions by which research is conducted. In this paper, seeing the use of local linguistic or conceptual elements as minority elements within the IFRS context is a pronounced perspective on what constitutes 'the dominant.' Put differently, it could be argued that non-Anglophone languages, such as the Finnish language explored here, are employing a canonizing approach if one were to choose a perspective that sees using eminently local accounting conceptualizations in non-Anglophone contexts as forming or reinforcing *national* hegemonic patterns (see Venuti, 2005). In contrast, this paper maintains that the most pressing imbalance in current accounting hierarchies and the IFRS context is between the dominant 'international' (i.e., Anglophone) constituents and the marginalized 'local' traditions, and in this setting, minoritizing translation should, above all, resist this canon; in other words, its quest is the survival of heterogeneity.

As a research-oriented paper, this study is most concerned with the heterogeneity of translation research in accounting. It proposes that accounting scholars should interrogate their approaches to translation research, translation evaluation, and translation as part of research. What constitutes 'dominant' or 'minority' in different contexts of accounting translation, and what does it imply? What has gone unnoticed because translation has been assumed neutral? Have translations been evaluated by taking sides openly, with critical awareness (Venuti, 1998, p. 30), or by employing a dominant perspective unchallenged (see Evans et al., 2015, p.1; Parker, 2001, pp. 145–46)? More empirical research on translation in accounting is undoubtedly needed (Nobes & Stadler, 2018), but it should escape the limitations of the currently prevailing technical paradigm (Evans, 2018). For example, the framework of this study could be adapted to situations where eminently Western-origin discourses of corporate social responsibility are translated in non-Western contexts or where minority locations translate their accounting communication for the Anglophone-dominated global markets. It may also be relevant where accounting texts might construct the field from the perspective of the dominant *within* the translating contexts (e.g., Venuti, 2005), for example in relation to gender minorities. Moreover, this lens could produce further discussions on how translation is approached as a research practice, such as in data translations and the treatment of non-English languages (see also Kamla & Komori, 2018).

In essence, the minoritizing approaches this paper advocates start with questioning the status quo, drawing attention to translation and what its ostensibly technical nature conceals, and experimenting with translation arrangements in different ways. Andrew et al. (2020) and Husillos and Larrinaga (2019) offer recent ambitious examples of this within accounting research practice, deeply entangled in English-language domination, to find more democratic measures. In different parts of translation processes, the setting can be challenged, the conditions interrogated as well as minoritizing attitudes and arguments demonstrated.

5. Conclusions

Despite the regnant approaches in extant studies, accounting is not a neutral, technical area of translation. Instead, ethical questions, such as the fate of linguistic and cultural diversity exist. Following Evans' (2018) proposal of a paradigm shift in translation research, this study has

presented and provided an exploratory application of a critical research framework, demonstrating how translation theory originally developed in eminently culturally-embedded literary translation can in the supposedly technical field of accounting make us see translation anew. It interrogates the questionably neutral view on the nature of translation adopted by the majority of prior accounting research, posing questions such as who translation serves, which structures it upholds or opposes, and how choices in different parts of translation processes affect the languages and cultures involved. In essence, it challenges the unproblematic, hegemonic perception that assumes either translation has no implications beyond its technical task or that the implications are irrelevant—as long as they do not affect the English-speaking constituents. Thus, this paper has shown that it is vital to minoritize research approaches and escape ethically limited ones so that they would not become canonized as a way of doing translation research in accounting.

For the IFRS context, which served as an example illustration, this paper has provided new knowledge on the consequences of the hegemonic setting recognized by prior critical research. Adding translation to the topics of research on IFRS diffusion shows, for example, how questions relating to the dubious conditions of adoption and compliance, such as translation policy, funding and availability, are highly consequential for the non-hegemonic constituents of IFRS yet played by the rules of the hegemonic ones. In this regard, the arrangements of IFRS translation are a major source of inequality as long as there is significant pressure to adopt, but no one to take responsibility for equal opportunities to do so in the local language, and no guarantee that complying by using a translation of the standards would be considered valid. Moreover, this paper has demonstrated that the 'practical' work done by IFRS translation review committees are a critical research locus where the conflicts caused by hegemony, recognized by accounting experts, are confronted along with their ethical and ideological implications.

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