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Approaches to didactics for technologies in translation and interpreting

Introduction to the special issue of *trans-kom*, Part I

Abstract

The field of professional translation has been particularly affected by the technological revolution and has led to new research, professional and didactic paradigms such as Automatic Translation (AT) and computer-aided translation (CAT tools). Technological and societal changes such as these need to be taken on board in academic translator training programs, so that future graduates become aware of both the challenges and opportunities that they represent, and can adapt their skills and practices accordingly. This is the framework for Part I in ***trans-kom***, volume 11, issue [2] (2018), and Part II in ***trans-kom***, volume 12, issue [1] (2019).

Modern life is changing very quickly and continuously as do the translation and interpreting market's needs and demands. Therefore, academics in charge of program designing in the field of translation studies have to ask themselves how to assess the future market in order to comply with the high responsibility toward future degree holders. Depending on bureaucratic constraints, program designers can not react immediately to all market changes and may have the feeling that program designing is always behind market development. Therefore, it is crucial to have a general view of the broad range of competences that the current market is asking for in order to plan further steps towards the professional future.

In the translation industry, technological change has had an ever-increasing impact on the way translation services are performed, though human intelligence, knowledge and skills are still the key factors in delivering quality translations and the growing range of language services which translators and translation companies can provide. Market needs have also evolved, with the continuing expansion of English as a lingua franca creating new exigencies that can only be met by reversing the traditional "mother tongue" principle in some translation environments.

Simultaneously, artificial intelligence and social media have considerably changed people's relation to communication in general and translation in particular, with machine translation applications and other language tools now commonly available on desktop and mobile devices. This is gradually impacting the translation process and many translation markets, and has changed the perception of translation among the general public and among translation studies students and graduates. Technological and societal changes such as these need to be taken on board in academic translator training programs, so that future graduates become aware of both the challenges and opportunities that they represent, and can adapt their skills and practices accordingly.

The business world also seeks to learn about the type of training their future employees receive and to communicate their needs in order to obtain better returns on their investments. Cooperation between both sides is therefore needed and having data is crucial for decision making.

A quick look at some recent studies developed, on the one side, by the EU Directorate-General of Translation and the European Master's in Translation Network (EMT) and, on the other side, by Language Service Providers (LSP) on university – job market/enterprise relations within the European Union will help us see the need and importance of mutual cooperation. In chronological order the studies are as follow: (1) Optimale (2011–2013); (2) Employment and the future of the profession (2015–2016); (3) LSP Network survey (2016–2017).

(1) *Optimale*

Optimale was a University Erasmus Network created by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the EU in order to carry out the Project *Optimising Professional Translator Training in a Multilingual Europe* (2011–2013). The starting point was not to discover the degree of linguistic and translation competence of the translators, but rather to focus on other competences that employers value and look for in their employees. A survey was developed and put online on 6 April 2011 and was available until 31 October 2011. 738 responses were obtained. The items considered were: Experience vs. knowledge; translation-related competences; specialization; technological competence; project management and customer skills; and marketing.

Being the focus of this volume technology, we will just briefly comment on the results of this specific item. For more detailed information, we refer to the articles by Valero-Garcés and Gambier (2014) and Valero-Garcés and Toudic (2014).

The analysis of the results about the use of technological tools indicated a clear contrast between the need for what we know as standard computer-aided translation (CAT) tools or competences related to machine translation (MT) and the technological knowledge of these new advances in the industry. For example, MT systems, or processing and converting files was considered essential or very important by three quarters of those surveyed, while the use of voice-recognition applications or the possibility of pre- or post-editing machine translated texts did not yet seem to be important requirements. However, it is interesting to note that although only 1 out of 10 surveyed require voice-recognition technology, a significant 28 % of those interviewed require MT post-editing skills, which reflects a growing interest in the integration of MT in the translation process. The data also indicated that language service providers (LSP) were interested in other tools associated with communication tools (ICT), like web pages, mobile telephones or localization with over 34 %.

(2) *Employment and the future of the profession*

Employment and the future of the profession was a project developed by the European Commission Directorate-General of Translation and the European Master's in Translation Network (EMT) Board (2015–2016). The main objective was to understand the reality of access to the workforce for university students belonging to the EU DGT EMT Network. To this end, a survey was developed aimed at graduates of the European Master's in Translation Network. 1519 responses were obtained from 46 universities and 22 countries. The survey included 25 closed questions and 3 open ones. The items considered were: Training; employment; time required to find work; salary and level of satisfaction; internships; tasks during the internship.

Being also the focus of this volume didactics, we will just briefly refer to the results obtained under the heading of training. For more information see Krause (2017) and Valero-Garcés (2017).

Students were asked which competences acquired during their studies had been the most useful in their work. It should be mentioned that L1 (also called A language or mother tongue) knowledge/skills were included for the first time. This was in response to comments from LSP studies as well as to complaints from some translators of the EU DGT regarding certain deficiencies that were being found in novice translators. It was also due to the need to call for applications and hire native English translators, as this language is used for communication by many EU citizens, but its use in official documents (to give an example) is not always at the desired level.

A list of 17 competences was developed, generally based on the results of the previous study on the competences that LSP most valued and those that trainers considered essential or that were present in their programs. These were: linguistic ability in source language; linguistic ability in target language; knowledge of other cultures; general culture; proficiency in computer assisted translation; computer skills; general translation; specialized translation; personal management skills; terminology; information extraction; editing skills; post-editing; digital editing; project management; synthesis skills; technical drafting skills and others. The results indicate that the higher percentage was for source and target language skills, which were ranked first and second (68.12 % source language skills and 66.73 % target language skills); they were followed by general translation (54.02 %) and specialised translation (43.28 %), general knowledge (42.09 %), knowledge of foreign cultures (38.60 %) and CAT tools proficiency (38.80 %) and terminology (35.18 %) (Krause 2017).

The rest of the competences attained levels below 30 %. The ones of least use were post-editing, synthesis and design layout skills. This is nonetheless surprising in the case of post-editing at that time. However, at present LSP are increasingly requiring this training, as evidenced by some comments from LSP representatives to members of the EMT network in a March 2016 meeting in the Directorate-General of Translation headquarters of the European Commission in Brussels (personal conversation). This could be indicative of a new competence to be acquired.

(3) *LSP Network survey (2016–2017).*

Every year the European Language Industry conducts a survey to offer a broader view of the translation market. In 2016 this LSP network was integrated by EUATC (the European Union of Associations of Translation Companies), ELIA (European Language Industry Association), GALA (Globalization & Localization Association), FIT Europe (the Europe International Federation of Translators), and being supported by the DGT through the LIND (Language Industry) project and the EMT network. The survey also broadens its scope to the audience of individual language professionals. The survey received 866 valid responses from 49 different countries, including many outside Europe. The objectives of the survey, as explained on the EUATC official website, have not changed compared to previous editions:

> The survey [...] was not set up to gather exact quantitative data but to establish the mood of the industry. As such it does not replace other local, regional or global surveys of the language industry but adds the important dimensions of perception and trust, which determine to a great extent the actions of industry stakeholders. (EUATC 2016: 2*)*

Some clear trends emerged from this survey: the increasing importance of machine translation and the still dominant role of technology as well as the tendency to outsourcing linguistics and non-linguistics tasks. The importance of machine translation (MT) has increased notably within the last two years and what is even more important for program designing is the fact that LSPs using MT usually provide their clients with full post-edited output. Results also indicate that CAT tools have become an indispensable tool to nearly all LSPs – only 7 % of the respondents do not use any form of CAT tools, while 84 % of LSPs use some form of translation management or workflow system. What other technologies are concerned, quality control automation (38 %) and voice recognition (30 %) seem to play a role in LSPs' work ambience. As Krause (2017) points out, taking into account that quality control becomes more and more important and that time is money it could be worth thinking of introducing some of those systems into academic teaching.

Some conclusions resulting from these three studies in relation to training and technology could be:

- CAT tools are part of a translator's daily life.
- Machine translation is increasing rapidly but it should not be considered a threat to translation professionals but a chance for creating jobs in pre- and post-editing.
- Outsourcing and crowding have to be taken into account.
- Academic translation programs should be adapted to the market tendencies.

With this in mind, after a consultation process involving the EMT network membership and language industry stakeholders, the EMT has been involved in developing a new framework of competences. This has now been adopted as the EMT competence framework for 2019–2024.

As explained on the EMT website:

> The main goal of EMT is fully in line with the EU priorities for higher education: improve the quality of translator training in order to enhance the labour market integration of young language professionals. The EMT competence framework, drawn up by European experts, is at the core of the project. It defines the basic competences that translators need to work successfully in today’s market. More and more universities, also beyond the EU, use it as a model for designing their programmes.
> (European Master’s in Translation (EMT) explained n.d.)

The framework contains five main areas of competences: Languages and cultures, translation, technology, personal and interpersonal, and service provision. Within each of these areas, a number of skills are considered to be essential or important within the context of a Master’s degree in translation.

Under the heading of technology we read:

> This competence includes all the knowledge and skills used to implement present and future translation technologies within the translation process. It also includes basic knowledge of machine translation technologies and the ability to implement machine translation according to potential needs. (European Master’s in Translation. Competence framework 2017: 9)

Developing this competence implies how to:

- Use the most relevant IT applications, including the full range of office software, and adapt rapidly to new tools and IT resources.
- Make effective use of search engines, corpus-based tools, text analysis tools and CAT tools.
- Pre-process, process and manage files and other media/sources as part of the translation, e. g. video and multimedia files, handle web technologies.
- Master the basics of MT and its impact on the translation process.
- Assess the relevance of MT systems in a translation workflow and implement the appropriate MT system where relevant.
- Apply other tools in support of language and translation technology, such as workflow management software.

The main challenge is how to integrate new market needs and tendencies in translators’ training programs. Following Krause (2017), in order to be able to accomplish all these very specific tasks, translation faculties need to get in touch with domain specialists and to co-operate at the same time with the language industry and other translation faculties. As joint programs often become difficult to put into practice because of bureaucratic obstacles and financial constraints, telematic co-operations could be a good solution. Within the Universities itself any co-operation with other faculties e. g. Law or Economics should become a matter of course in order to provide the domain knowledge. At the same time, translation students may acquire many skills by doing collaborative translation projects, while translation programs provide specific courses for machine translation programs, pre- and mainly post-editing, (automated) quality control and project management in order to underline the importance of these fields. Shared platform work with other European translation faculties could disclose the way to multilingualism giving translation students the chance to have a broader portfolio for C- languages increasing their competence-spectrum. In this way translation students could take profit of all language competences they have – and not only of the languages taught within the faculty, including second-generation bilingualism. At the same time lesser used languages will gain visibility all around Europe. This approach comes back to the prerequisite of language competences. If translation students master all their C- languages well, they should be able to transfer all other competences learned throughout a translation master to other languages.

Summarizing, the field of professional translation has been particularly affected by the technological revolution and has led to new research, professional and didactic paradigms such as Automatic Translation (AT) and Computer Aided Translation (CAT tools). This is the framework for Part I in ***trans-kom***, volume 11, issue [2] (2018), and Part II in ***trans-kom***, volume 12, issue [1] (2019).

Part I includes the following articles. They illustrate some of the options, solutions, experiences and approaches developed so far for the integration of technology in the training of future professionals for the translation market.

Fantinuoli and Prandi, in *Teaching information and communication technologies: A proposal for the interpreting classroom,* discuss the emerging technological trends in the field of interpreting and proposes a general framework for organizing a teaching module dedicated to this subject as well as teaching activities designed to develop the skills needed in the modern interpreting world, focusing on computer-assisted preparation, remote interpreting and computer-assisted simultaneous interpreting.

Ketola and Bolaños in *Social media platforms in translator training: Socialising or separating?,* discuss the overall potential of social media platforms in translator training and reflects on how online courses can be designed so that the pedagogical benefits of e-learning tools are duly exploited.

Plaza Lara and Grau Lacal, in *La localización de videojuegos: propuesta didáctica para la clase de traducción,* after describing the competences of video game localizers and defining a theoretical framework to teach it, present a didactic proposal for the training of future localizers.

Stengers, Kerremans and Segers, in *Integrating virtual conference tools in interpreter and translator training,* present the preliminary results of a project to assess the use of virtual meeting technologies in the master programmes of interpreting and translation at Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB).

Sánchez Gijón and Presas in *Tecnologías de la traducción en la formación de investigadores,* analyse translation technologies in their dual function as both research object and research tool to point out the constraints of these programmes when they are used in translation research, and to draw some conclusions on the role of translation technologies in researchers' training.

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