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TRAINING MEDIATORS: THE FUTURE

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Training Mediators. An Introduction

Cinzia Spinzi

1. Preamble

Training in translation has been extensively covered in the literature. Another publication on this topic might be superfluous or redundant if it were not for the fact that new claims and tremendous changes coming from the translation service market and resulting in calls for improvement of the translation pedagogy. The continuous increase of the levels of connectedness from local to global scales, such as the multinationalization process of language service providers, the constant demand for highly-trained professionals, the standardization of working conditions and the advent of the neural machine translation (see Froeliger this volume) are all challenging the practice of translation, its organisation and, inevitably, its supply.

Paradoxically, in an era where automatization has been threatening the end of the translation profession, at the same time the need to encourage much more “authentic experiential translator training with a view to helping translation students develop real-life skills” has been called for (Pietrzak, 2019).

The primary necessity is to equip trainees with the effective and adequate tools to manage market demands, which also are changing, if not fragmenting, fast into specialized branches, such as remote interpreting, post-editing, technical communication, to mention just a few.

Against this backdrop, this issue intends to provide insights into the training of translators, cultural mediators and interpreters to see to what extent their traditional roles and training are relevant to real world employment in the near future. Other issues concern the provision of the training, whether or not the academic training should coexist with vocational training and to what extent the current academised training has resulted in an increased status for the profession. Furthermore, when it comes to technology, what is the relationship between technological developments and training? Finally, is cultural mediation still in its ambiguous, vague and uncertain terminological, ethical and economic (but not only) position?
2. Contributions to the volume

This volume takes up some of these challenges in the attempt to explore the complex interrelationships between the various trends and questions mentioned above, the competences and skills required by the market and the role and the potential of the European Union’s Master in Translation (EMT). In each case the aim is to apply the findings to translation teaching.

Starting from the fascinating opening dialogue between two experts on translation education, the volume follows a theme-based structure and has been divided into three sections: competences and skills with reference to the EMT; forms of audiovisual translation; mediation and interpreting. A study on collaborative translation completes the collection.

Section 1: Competences and skills

The first section is introduced through the dialogue between Don Kiraly and Gary Massey. Kiraly is one the most well-known scholars on the theoretical foundations and practical applications of collaborative approaches to translator education. He discusses training challenges with Massey, equally known for translation education research and the interprofessional interfaces between translation and related fields. First, they discuss the role of technologies in the translation process, its repercussions in the training and the correlated question of the relationship between the education provided and its applicability in the real world. The two scholars observe that the use of the technology has certainly transformed the translator’s resources, accelerated the process of translation and facilitated problem solving; however, this does not imply the end of the profession but more the need to revisit its conceptualisation and resources. Kiraly quarrels with the idea that computers can surpass humans as this would imply replicating and exceeding distinctive human properties such as high-level cognition and interpretation. Although the scholar recognizes the dynamic character of TS as a discipline, he is more cautious about the process and the need to adapt to market changes. If machine translation has to do with mechanical transcoding, translation is something more, or better, as the authors point out “computers can only transcode, whereas human beings can translate”, translate strategically (from Liu), or transcreate (from Katan).

So what distinguishes translation from the automatic transfer is to be found in the human ability to interpret, to create, to adapt and to negotiate
meanings, basically, to mediate. This leads to the main challenge of education, a topic extensively covered by Kiraly’s publications, whose social constructivist approach to translation training develops through a self-conscious, dynamic, empowering process. There is much that the authors agree on, not least that education gives us a holistic solid foundation in general, whereas training implies the abilities to use particular tools. Education is then at the very core of a definition of the translator’s status and of translation as a full-fledged profession. An emphasis on the personal and interpersonal skills is claimed with a consequent competence modelling reorientation towards central skills such as creativity, interactivity and so on. This leaning on education rather than on training leads us to the opening paper of this first section focusing on EMT’s competence model.

**Nicolas Froeliger** provides an overview of both the key trends that are shaping the translation market and their impact on the translation profession. The author calls for a truly international translation studies which might overcome the current state of ‘provincialism’, to account for the globalizing evolution of the market and the industrialization of the sector. For him the profession of translation and interpreting, despite its old origins, is now in the process of becoming institutionalized and, in this process, the EMT is playing a crucial role. Although one of the strengths of the project has been the promotion of interconnections between the players, a negative point is the lack of recognition by about half of the language service providers operating at European level. On the other hand, the cornerstone of the EMT concept of quality is its “competence wheel”, where the previous 2009 group of six competencies have been substituted by a multi-componential model of five main areas of competence in the 2017 framework. Visually speaking, a shift is visible from a wheel to a chain with language and culture as prerequisites. Froeliger addresses what he sees as some shortcomings of the updated version, but in the main he champions the reviewed framework also as a valuable reference point to explain the translation profession to students. The author also mentions the Competence Awareness in Translation (CATO) project which is developing further academic and pedagogical applications of the framework. In conclusion, Froeliger claims more visible professional associations, more solid translation programs and a broader view on the issues at stake to give the discipline sustainability and flexibility.

Inspired by proposals and challenges arisen in a European workshop held in 2018 in Brescia, Italy (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), **Mirella Agorni** highlights the importance of specialized training for translators in the sector of tourism communication. She underlines the need for more
attention to the language used in this specialized domain (which also covers a number of other specialized domains) and, hence, to professional translator training. The rationale behind this approach lies in the fact that though tourism may be a global phenomena tourism texts are anchored locally. This local authenticity and also domain interdisciplinary should then be a major element in translator training. Agorni also highlights how tourism training has so far disregarded translation, whereas the study of other disciplines (e.g. management, marketing, law) has been privileged. This lack of interest is considered by Agorni as a theoretical gap in Tourism Studies research. Reasons for this are to be found in the dominance of Anglo-American tradition in tourism research and in the English target texts which are, thus, inevitably mediated through an Anglo-American cultural perception. The author’s aim is to encourage a debate on the need for innovative programmes of study which might include courses on practices of mediation and intercultural communication so as to reflect the multi-disciplinary nature of tourism communication. This need is real and urgent if fashionable notions such as inclusiveness and accessibility are taken into account.

The main issue at stake in Juka Eskelinen’s paper concerns another important relationship in the translation chain, namely the one between translators and subject experts. In other words, the author focuses on the interaction activated by translators who approach experts in companies in order to gather contextual information relevant to a particular specialist discipline. Drawing upon Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus (the non-discursive elements of culture that influence our thoughts or behaviour), field (the social contexts where rules and practices engender particular ways of being and thinking) and capital (anything that is designated as being of value in a field) and the concept of T-shaped expertise, Eskelinen analyses six interviews with in-house native-Finnish translators from two companies. The texts they translate are specialized, focusing mainly on legal and technical subjects. The areas investigated in the interviews cover mainly three themes: background, personal working methods and co-operation with experts and sub-themes. The author shows that the way interaction is conducted may affect the quality of information translators gather and thus translation results. In some cases, translators maintain their habitus as experts, in other cases they project themselves into the subject expert’s habitus. Eskelinen’s paper contributes to improving translator training by suggesting the incorporation of original or simulated activities in cross-disciplinary interactions in the translation curricula. The final aim of such training is a translator whose habitus includes that of the linguistic expert
and of the professional capable of interaction with experts in other subject domains; and so becomes a T-shaped expert.

Section 2: Forms of audiovisual translation

Emilia Di Martino’s paper opens the series of contributions in the field of AVT. The author addresses the issue of combining academic research on AVT and its effects on both real life and on the research itself. The attempts to do so have not been successful so far because of two difficult challenges: first, to understand the needs and range of possibilities of those involved in the AVT process along with how to improve communication among all the stakeholders; and secondly, to delineate ways to popularize the results of the research. Her study aims to make research on AVT ‘translational’, which implies increasing the social impact of research through practical applications of the results into the profession, as happens with translational medicine. The tension between the theoretical aspects of research and its practical approaches, in other words between university and industry, has always existed; and for this reason networks and research partnerships between the two worlds should be encouraged. The author adds that industry and university should aim at detecting the practical trickle-down effects of the specialized areas of research and develop a ‘common language’ to make practical use of it. In order to enhance this process Di Martino suggests a three staged-action plan where specific activities (e.g. focus groups) may be used to gather information about end users’ experiences, observations and expectations that in turn are useful to researchers to fine tune research to meet those expectations. This leads the participants to share a common language to describe similar experiences, a sort of specialized language or common jargon (stage 1 and e). In stage 3, the author focuses on the way to disseminate research. Firstly, she discusses the two channels already used for popularising AVT research (academic description and journalist reporting) and suggests a continuum between the two forms that might be seen in forms of reliable popularisations such as the reviews. Receptive studies, of course, may verify if end users actually appreciate and/or consult the type of ‘serious’ popularisations identified.

The following papers reflect how the audiovisual translation community is moving forward in the increasingly networked globe, and how translation as a discipline is broadening as a response to the market stakeholders. The authors themselves discuss the new challenges for training within a translation course.
The issues discussed in Anna Matamala, Pilar Orero, Anna Jankowska and Carme Mangiron’s paper come from research on Audio Description (AD), an intersemiotic transfer mode also considered as “a form of assistive audiovisual translation or inclusion service” (Perego 2019: 114). Originally conceived for a specific target audience today, AD is likely to be extended to other vulnerable users such as children, the mentally disabled, immigrants and so on. Given the complexity of this service, audio describer training requires a specific range of skills and competences. These have been isolated, classified and presented in the ADLAB PRO Erasmus + funded project. After describing the aims of the project and the methodologies (such as questionnaires and interviews) used to identify the essential competencies, in the second part of their article the authors sketch an ideal course design and present a wide array of learning materials. The six modules described have been designed to accommodate different cultural contexts and levels, and also for both vocational and academic training.

The following article written by Estella Oncins, Carlo Eugeni and Rocío Bernabé deals with another neighbouring area of AVT: interlingual subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing (SDH). The authors highlight the specificities of this type of mediation, considered a key concept in the field of media accessibility, and present the results of a survey concerning the skills required of real-time intralingual subtitlers and their role as mediators in several fields of everyday life. Given the logical levels of cultural mediation (Katan 2009), the needs of the end-users and the existing technologies in the field of re-speaking, professionals in this field are expected to master specific skills and competencies. The authors argue that real-time intralingual subtitlers are mediators who are acutely aware of the sociolinguistic dimension of communication. They will also be fully schooled in accessibility, and in the impacts of Human Computer Interaction. Technology is indeed so pervasive that we can talk of Human-Aided, Real-Time Subtitling and even of Automatic Subtitling. The authors report on how technology impacts source text, mid text and target text. So, although the quality of the reception varies according to the setting), techniques such as velotyping or respeaking will improve the quality of the mid text. Finally, the creation of the target text will result in other variables affecting the impact, given the fact that the editing is still human-based. In order to fill the gap in the training of the real-time intralingual subtitlers, the authors present the Live Text Access (LTA) project outcomes with particular reference to those from the skills survey. The proposed competence-based training areas aim to provide professionals with not only
the by now recognised linguistic and cultural aspects of the mediation process, but also with competencies related to vocational practices, such as entrepreneurship and service competence, such as job-related task planning, risk management, service portfolio development and so on.

Another specific area of AVT, respeaking, is the main thrust in the following article written by Annalisa Sandrelli. The aim of respeaking, based on voice recognition technology, is to provide live intralingual subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing in many settings. This process becomes interlingual when respeakers listen to live input in one language and simultaneously ‘repeat’ it to a speech recognition software that turns it into written subtitles in another language. Since interpreting and subtitling skills confound in this technique, the author offers an outline of the cross-overs between respeaking, subtitling and simultaneous interpreting. Her research shows that while a background in interpreting may help, subtitlers can also become proficient respeakers. However, given the multifaceted character of respeaking, the author suggests a modular approach to training which provides subtitlers with “live performance” skills, and interpreters with subtitling competences, such as text segmentation, oral punctuation and dealing with written text. Moreover, she underlines the potential of interlingual respeaking in terms of access service to multilingual content to foreign and hearing-impaired audiences on television, at conferences and other live events, with a view to contributing to the creation of new employment opportunities in the language industry but above all to building social equality.

Following on from Di Martino’s suggestions regarding AVT, the next article looks at reception studies, a recent area of research which focuses on target audience needs and expectations.

After outlining the main contributions to research in this field, Elena Di Giovanni concentrates on experimental research on subtitle reception using eye tracking technologies. Relying on these technologies and questionnaires, the author examines a recent experiment on the reception of New Girl, an American TV series subtitled by young Italian viewers with a view to assessing audience comprehension of both verbal and visual elements. Both independent variables (e.g. three different screen sizes: mobile, tablet and PC) and dependent variables, e.g. viewing speed) are taken into account. As for the comprehension test, her results show that the viewing speed parameters set by Netflix were too fast for Italian viewers and caused high levels of frustration. With regard to the eye-tracking experiment, results show eye movements when faced with difficult language or ambiguities due to translation errors. This is symptomatic of the high
cognitive effort required by viewers. With regard to training, the final aim of this study is to highlight the great potential of reception studies in the training of audiovisual translators, and more specifically of subtitlers. She suggests exposing trainees to subtitled clips with different viewing speed to elicit feedback about their intake of both visual and verbal information. The author concludes by recommending this bottom-up approach to complement the traditional top-down approach in subtitling courses.

Section 3: Mediation and interpreting

The last section features contributions on cultural mediation and interpreting in different settings. Denise Filmer’s pilot study examines the status quo of intercultural mediator (ICM) training and discusses this professional figure in the light of the national and local legal frameworks. The territory considered for the analysis is Sicily (Italy), an island whose geographical position has always made it the destination for migrant and for full-scale emergencies. Drawing upon ethnomethodological and phenomenological methods, the author investigates ICM perceptions on the (in)adequacy of their practical experience compared to the training they received specifically with regard to migrant arrivals. She argues that a clash is visible between the competences required for ICMs by Italian law and by the Sicilian authorities with the profile of technician as designated by the European Qualification Framework.

In terms of course provision, at the local level, only two vocational and regionally authorised courses offer free training for the unemployed and for those seeking first employment; otherwise fees are required. At the academic level, the undergraduate courses in Applied Languages with Translation (Mediazione linguistica) offered at the University of Catania show gaps between need and offer as far as the optional subjects are concerned. For example there is no possibility to study anthropology due to the Education Ministry’s financial but also bureaucratic constraints.

In order to carry out her analysis, ten intercultural mediators from different training backgrounds, ethnicities, and life experiences were contacted for the analysis. The first set of questions aimed at defining the ontological question of the contours of this professional figure still seen today as a bridge-builder. Even though the use of terminology to label this professional figure (such as cultural or intercultural mediator) is still vague, what clearly emerged is the awareness of the ICMs’ educational inadequacies with respect to the needs required on the job, such as a basic background in psychology, a combination of theoretical background and
practical skills; stress management skills and so on. Most of the informants reported that these competencies should be provided only by universities, which would give the mediator real professional status at the same level as the other stakeholders’ status involved with the reception of immigrants, such as doctors and magistrates. Soft skills are then as necessary as hard skills. The author concludes with a number of difficult questions that can be seen as a clear criticism of the mediators’ state: themselves working without adequate training, without official or legal recognition, not to mention the non-existent economic reward, capped by the dilemma of evaluation and accreditation.

Raffaela Merlini’s paper starts from her previous research on a major ‘zone of uncertainty’ in mediated healthcare interactions, namely empathy and its impact on the profession. In this contribution, she refers to interpreters rather than mediators to examine dispositional and interactional empathy through a protocol research based on an empathy test (measured on Davis’ Interpersonal Reactivity Index), classroom role-plays and student feedback on the videoed role-play performances. Merlini’s research starts from the premise that the binomial professionalism/emotional detachment that has always been a traditional ethical feature of both conference interpreting and dialogue interpreting is now being called into question. Examples come from the field of medicine where the adoption of a narrative-based approach, with empathy as a tool to help and enhance diagnosis, has led experts to start conceive empathy as a communicative skill that can be taught and trained. Coming to her research protocol implemented in two subsequent healthcare interpreting MA courses, at the University of Macerata, results from the empathy test showed first of all a lower empathic disposition of the male students. Then, findings from the cross-analysis of simulated interactions and feedback reports demonstrated a lack of systematic correlation between the two types of empathy under investigation. In other words, findings showed that the classroom environment was not a major inhibitor to the students’ expression of compassion; that topic variability may ideologically affect neutrality (abortion was the topic of the simulated case); that students relied on non-verbal cues of discomfort, and, finally, that students were concerned about their interactional control. A more reflective learning and education is then required to move beyond as Merlini says “one’s own reflected image and truly “seeing” the other by entering their own world”. This is the real essence of empathy.

The last paper of this section, co-authored by Federico M. Federici, Minako O’Hagan, Sharon O’Brien and Patrick Cadwell aims to fill the
gap in translator training in the crisis communication literature. Informed by research carried out within the EU H2020-funded International Network on Crisis Translation, this analysis focuses on material design and on the process of delivery with a view to developing complementary “translation training” skills in MA-level students of translation and interpreting. The article critically reflects on entire modules delivered at different times, in different universities through an active approach. This includes, for example, seminar presentations delivered by students, which rely on self-reflective practices and allows trainees to be more pro-active in learning. The final purpose is, first to equip graduates with skills to manage urgent and constrained circumstances, such as children who are used in perilous rescue operations (e.g. sudden earthquakes); and second, to operate effectively and ethically in multilingual crisis settings through supporting linguistically vulnerable groups.

This article reports on the first two phases of the design and revision process, by focusing on how findings concerning urgent needs from untrained translators led to a re-organization of the initial learning objectives and pushed towards a “translator trainer” approach.

The last paper in this volume is written by Tanja Pavlovic who reports on a case of collaborative translation in a particular place, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) where the lack of financial resources and translation education institutions make translation services and training much more complex. Indeed, universities are the only providers for translation training in BiH. The article explores the practical applications of in-class collaborative translation activities at an institution of higher education in BiH. Following Kiraly’s model of introducing authentic experiential work in translation education, she reports on the main features of collaborative vs. individual translation. Her findings demonstrate differences in terms of problems and their solutions between these two processes of translation performed within this institutional setting.

3. Conclusions

This issue was proposed as a reflection on translator training and education. Now, as a surgeon should have a detailed knowledge of anatomy before using the scalpel, so translators should know the fundamentals upon which to develop their skills. Translation is the essential link not only between languages but between diversely able communities, between victims and emergency rescue workers, between impersonal robotic language and
personalised human communication. Education and training are then critical to moving humanity forward. If training refers to the skills necessary to produce a suitable translation attained through instruction and practice (see Pym 2012), then translation education (mainly at the undergraduate level) should focus mainly on raising awareness, increasing reflectivity and resourcefulness (see Bernardini 2004).

What has clearly emerged from all these studies is an urgent need to review translation training to adapt to the rapid changes and evolution of the market demands. The greatest need is to create training in conjunction with other disciplines. The various branches in the area of translation cannot exist as isolated services but necessarily make use of the skills developed in neighbouring fields. The support from other disciplines such as sociology and psychology, now seems essential as well as a continuous dialogue between university and industry.

More empirical research in receptive studies should help to foster the dialogue between these two worlds, the results of which will allow programmes and curricula designers sketch the key characteristics of the future training that is in much need of reorientation to align them with the current technological and market trends.

Translators, mediators and interpreters are embedded in a complex network of social and professional activity, which inevitably leads to a more collaborative view of society. This has significant implications for the skills and competencies students need as full-fledged social agents. If we want to give the profession an official full-fledged status, on a par with many others, then the training must start at the academic level through self-reflective practices which help students become more “self-reliant since they realise and express their own ideas, attitudes, strengths and weaknesses, which in turn can serve as invaluable feedback for translation trainers” (Pietrzak 2016).

This undeniable collaborative perspective in translation will be the central theme in Cultus 2021.

References

The Future of Translator Education: A Dialogue

Gary Massey  
Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland

Don Kiraly  
Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, Germany

Gary: We have been asked to talk about training translators and language mediators for and in the future. Perhaps I could start by first comparing notes with you on translator and interpreter roles and to what extent these roles, and the training – or rather the education – behind them, are relevant to employment in the real world, now and in future.

Don: Having been translating myself for the past 40 years or so and having started before tools like mobile phones and the Internet existed, before home computers were commonplace and when even the fax machine was a new-fangled gadget, I have witnessed the advent of a wide range of technological changes that have come about over these many years. At the same time, while experiencing the ongoing emergence of this never-ending series of new tools over the course of my professional life as a part-time translator, I have also been training – and I hope educating – future translators. And I have found that my own teaching has evolved constantly, partly in response to what was going on in the translation profession. So I am quite sceptical about predicting the future of the translation profession.

I could not have predicted in 1985, when I started teaching translation, what the profession would be like ten years later. What kind of technology would we have? Would faxes be in every home? Would a PC be on everyone’s desk? How could I know? And when those changes and many others finally came about, I had to rather rapidly change my ways of working and my views on what it meant to be a translator, because there was no fixed skill set for translators to acquire. The knowledge and skills needed by professional translators have seen enormous and constant change over the course of these 40 years. And I believe that everything I have written about translation and translator education in that time reflects
this remarkable dynamic quality that I have experienced personally as a translator and teacher.

**Gary:** One of the things that I always ask myself when asked to make predictions about a technological future is the extent to which we can or should adapt to the technology or vice versa. This is a key question because those fax machines and PCs you mention were most definitely technological aids to human translators, who remained wholly in control of their work. The technologies quite clearly helped us to do what we were doing. They have given us the opportunity to do research quickly and efficiently, compare and re-use previous translations, be more consistent and to generally lower our cognitive load so that we can concentrate on solving non-routine translation problems. But now I have journalists coming up to me and asking: does neural machine translation (NMT) signal the end of the translation profession? My answer has to be: not the end of the profession, but perhaps the end of the profession as we have known it. Where do the human translator and interpreter fit in? Where and how should translators and interpreters position themselves in the current and future language industry? These are the real issues.

**Don:** From my perspective, cognition involves the thinking that can be attributed to a human being, but perhaps also to a computer, or software and hardware combined. One might well see the calculating work of computers as a type of cognition – a sort of mechanical, disembodied cognition. Perhaps there is not so much difference between the two of them and maybe the differences are not all that important. But from my own perspective, I firmly believe that it is what human beings can do above and beyond the mere computational work (e.g. interpret utterances and texts) that is the essence of true translation (rather than a largely mechanical transcoding process).

To my mind, transcoding (the mechanical replacement of linguistic units from a list with corresponding units from a parallel list) is not at the heart of translation at all. In the end, I agree with you that the translation profession will surely be different in the future, but it is certainly not going to disappear – unless at some point in our evolution we no longer need to interpret texts. And I do not think that translation will be able to be handed over to computers wholesale, simply because the human capabilities of making judgements, of having and using intuition simply cannot be attributed to or acquired by machines. In fact, I think we might have cause to be afraid of a world in which they could. Once machines can make
human-like judgements and decisions, what role will be left for mankind to play? We might come back to the view of singularity proposed by Ray Kurzweil (2005), a respected expert in this domain who has predicted that the merger of human intelligence with computers will occur within the next 25 years. Perhaps we need to take a close, hard look at that possibility sooner rather than later. Personally, I am not convinced that true “machine translation” (rather than “machine transcoding”) is just around the corner, but what if the Cassandras pointing to the imminent arrival of singularity are right?

**Gary:** I was also not suggesting that singularity was around the corner, but I am suggesting that the rules have already changed. We cannot just carry on training or educating translators in the way that they have been educated up till now for the same markets, because the markets are changing. There will be more work done by machine translation (MT) (or machine transcoding, as you have called it). It is a safe prediction that not only I make, but every industry player – a good reference point are the numerous publications released by TAUS.¹ MT is able to take on the bulk of routine communication, internal documentation for instance, and repetitive texts such as user instructions or documentation.

But what is also likely to happen is that, as the world begins to communicate more and more with MT systems, organizations and communities will want to position themselves differently from the mass. And the ability to do so will involve a type of adaptive, creative, intuitive, ethically grounded work, strategic and prospective, that MT, which, despite its deep learning algorithms, remains essentially retrospective, is not – or not yet – capable of. One of the key terms used in this context is transcreation, a rapidly growing branch of the language industry, while others refer more broadly to human added value.

**Don:** I absolutely agree with you and I think you even mentioned to me in passing not so long ago that you imagined that not too far down the road, although we may not have to do away with translator education altogether, we may see a smaller, more select group of translators entering and then graduating from our programmes, who will be doing much more complex, creative and interesting work than the ever-growing mountain of less challenging translation work that is on the market today. I remember translating all sorts of texts when I started out. Some of them more boring,

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some were more interesting, but it was all in a day’s work. There were no computers that could handle those tasks – that could transcode well enough to replace the interpretive capabilities of an embodied human translator. And only rarely was there anything even remotely similar to transcreation in what I had to do. But the percentage definitely increased steadily as time went by.

The shift in the role of the translator who finds that computer-based solutions are increasingly handling the more humdrum work, leaving him or her with more challenging tasks is a gradual but already far advanced process. It is not something that is going to come about at some point in the future; we are already in the midst of it. And I think the market is going to continue to change and shift, perhaps in significantly unsuspected ways. In any event, shifting sands of the translation market are like those in many other fields. We are clearly not alone in terms of the dilemma we are facing.

Just to take one general example: we might consider medicine. If you talk to any doctor who is involved in some area of specialization and ask about what kinds of procedures were being performed 20 or even 10 years ago, compared to those of today, they are certain to report radical changes, where computers have been taking and will continue to take over more and more of the doctor’s work. But no one is saying, “oh, we won’t need doctors anymore, the computer will do it, the machines will take care of it”. It is clear that we still need human efforts and judgements to program, correct and, well… humanize the work of the machines. And I hope that we, our children and our grandchildren will live in a world where computers are not telling us what to do, but are still working for us, under our watchful, mindful and ethical eye.

I hope that this will be the case with translation; because it means that this will remain a wonderful way to earn one’s living: mediating between individuals and cultures and contributing to the conversation of mankind in a world that will surely be increasingly dependent on collaboration if we have even the remotest chance of saving planet earth from our own egotism, avarice and, thus far, unquenchable thirst for economic growth. The other path forward that appears ominously appealing to some actors involved in the business of translation is to see it essentially as a mechanical transcribing task, with computers doing the bulk of the work and human translators helping out by tidying up a bit at the end. I hope for a balanced path forward, where we use the technology that emerges without allowing or expecting transcribing machines to replace eminently human capabilities like empathy, intuition and common sense with mere cybernetic computation.
**Gary:** I think that a growing part of the industry will involve post-editing (PE) MT output, which is considered tedious work by some, but which is by no means a trivial activity. What I have seen over the last few years is a diversification within the profession itself from which new profiles are emerging. PE is an activity that is regularly advertised now. It represents an established sub-profession of translation, and competence models are even being developed for it, such as the one proposed by your colleagues in Germersheim (Nitzke, Canfora and Hansen-Schirra, 2019). But at the other end of the scale, there is increasing space for activities like transcreation, indeed David Katan (2016) has even written about a potential “transcreational turn” in the profession. The term may be disputed, and Henry Liu, former President of the International Federation of Translators (FIT) and *Cultus* interviewee (Liu and Katan, 2017), has recently proposed an alternative, all-embracing term “strategic translation”. He suggests this term could cover those sorts of humanistic, interactive translations that are designed specifically to influence opinions and decisions. That said, it is a fact that the concept and the term “transcreation” is becoming increasingly established in the language industry (TAUS, 2019). Some core aspects of the transcreator’s task used to be termed localization, of course, until this itself became so technologized that it was no longer considered a form of intercultural communication exemplifying the added value of human cognition.

This brings me back to your earlier reference to “disembodied cognition”. Computers can be seen to extend our cognition, at least according to a framework such as the Clark and Chalmers’ (1998) extended cognition or the 4E (embodied, embedded, enacted, extended) model of cognition underlying Hutchins (2010) “cognitive ecology”. At the risk of sounding like an interviewer: Can you elaborate a bit on this?

**Don:** Well, this is clearly a topic that we cannot do justice to in this brief dialogue, but in a nutshell, 4E is the second-generation cognitive science view that has competed with the still dominant computational view of cognition for the past quarter of a century. While it is far from being the universal or even a dominant paradigm, it is definitely a strong contender in the field of cognitive science for understanding the nature of human cognition. While conventional models, based most commonly on mind/body dualism, look at the thinking human being essentially as a mind generated by the brain, with the body handling peripheral inputs and

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2 Personal e-mail communication (October 3, 2019).
outputs. Situated cognition, on the other hand, views the thinking human being as an integrated and, in fact, nested system of sub-systems. Indeed, it is the myriad links between the social, sensory, physical, emotional and affective sub-systems that are the very hallmark of thought.

While computer software functions on the basis of hardware to identify and replicate patterns, compute inputs and produce outputs, they have neither senses for interacting with the world beyond coded inputs, nor intuitions, nor empathy, nor ethical values that can yield the kind of meaningful and meaning-filled artefacts that only a somatic human being can produce. In simplistic terms, I would suggest that computers, as non-embodied data manipulators, can only transcode, whereas human beings can translate. Computers may fake communication surprisingly well (including via the medium of translation), but in my view, this type of communication is and may always remain a rather poor facsimile of cognition as situated in a human being embodied and embedded in myriad dimensions and relationships in the world.

Gary: So, to bring their true added value into play, human translators should engage in a process of mediation with all the hermeneutic, interpretative aspects that are associated with it. They should mediate between individuals or groups at all levels. The problem is that the difficulties of teaching people how to mediate should not be underestimated. Training our students to become post-editors, to adopt a set of routines in order to second-guess the MT systems they work with and for, is relatively straightforward. After a while, they get the hang of managing the output and can quickly automatize a large part of their procedural knowledge. And my experience is that there is a significant proportion of students who would want to do that kind of work. However, the major question for me is how to square the training aspect with a more holistic approach to empowering students to inhabit a set of roles and preparing them to perform an unpredictable range of future activities – in other words, educating them. It is quite difficult to reconcile the two approaches within a single programme of studies, as they place conflicting demands on students and staff.

Don: This question keeps coming up in publications on translator education: what is the difference between training and education? I have focused quite a bit on this question over the years and I have always insisted that education in general, and translator education in particular, need to be far more holistic, involving other sorts of skills in addition to ones that a
person can be trained to accomplish. To differentiate the two types of teaching, it has occurred to me that training is perhaps the word that we should use for acquiring skills that are needed in order to work with tools that are currently available and in use. So if you want to learn how to use a particular software program that can do machine-aided translation, you can be trained in that. The tool already exists and many of the ways of fitting these skills into our work routines have been specified, described and elaborated. Other people are using them already and you can go out and be trained so that you will be able to apply those skills as well. But what we cannot do, I think, is be “trained” for a market 30 years down the road or even 10 years down the road. I can only be trained in skills that exist today, and that may well be gone tomorrow.

It is not a matter of one or the other; I am convinced that we need both: education and training. We need education, which means acquiring a solid foundation in general, holistic competencies, skills and abilities, and then we need training in order to be able to use particular tools. Another way to frame this dichotomy might be to see training as preparation for iterative, routine tasks and education as preparation for solving problems that lie outside the box. It looks to me as if the balance in translator education may be leaning toward training: largely workshop-style learning of iterative features of software, for example, in lieu of education. I can see a struggle emerging between education and training and we will have to see where the chips fall in the future.

Gary: I think we agree that we would like them to fall on the side of education, because translation is not just a craft or trade but a fundamental attribute of human communication. What educators and their institutions must do is link the recognition of translation’s status to a specific profession at a specific time. This is our challenge, but also our motivation, so that students and professionals will grasp the roles, responsibilities, values and ethical positions incumbent upon translators as key communicative actors in society. Nevertheless, there are constraints, and these are related to expectations among both our student populations and the potential employers at the end of their education. The EMT’s competence models (EMT Expert Group, 2009; EMT Board, 2017) are sometimes cited as examples of the negative side of translator training, because of their emphasis on technology and routine activity. To be fair, the 2017 Framework, despite clearly up-valuing technological skills, that is, MT and PE, does emphasize personal and interpersonal skills much more strongly than the previous model. But the most obvious change that has occurred
between 2009 and 2017 is that language and cultural skills are considered prerequisites. It seems to me a little risky to assume that students already master the basic cultural dimensions needed to fulfil the multiple mediatory roles they will have to adopt in future before they enrol on our courses.

**Don:** I suppose one could test for that sort of knowledge, perhaps when choosing the students who would like to begin studying in our programmes. And there may also be a difference between BA and MA students in that MA students tend to be a bit older, and may well be a bit wiser in general. The ones that I have worked with tend to be more mature and more interested in cultural issues themselves. So, it may not be something we have to worry as much about as we might have thought. We assume that it is our task to identify whether they have the cultural knowledge that they need. But we could say the same thing for training in computer-based tools, as well. We could say, well, those are going to be prerequisites, because that is all “simple” learning in terms of complexity thinking. If you think about it, for our digital native students, learning how to use a particular software program tends to be extremely easy compared to acquiring a complex understanding of intertextual and intercultural relationships.

To my mind, this is where they need education, because it involves discussion, reading texts from different sources, comparing, talking about them, interacting with them, and not simply acquiring basic skills of how to manipulate a computer-based program or the like. So personally, I think you are probably right that we need to make sure, however we do it, that the cultural side of things is not lost. In the end, culture is always involved in every text in myriad ways – more in some texts than in others, for sure. But still, to my mind, the ability to work with culture and understand the nature of cultural processes is essential. They do not have to have a large set of correct answers to multiple-choice questions stored away in their heads that they could put down on a piece of paper. But they do have to be capable of thinking in cultural terms and of doing the necessary research, when necessary, to deal with a particular new text or even domain.

After all, in the course of a translator’s career, it is normal to change one’s area of specialization a number of times. That certainly has been my experience. So, we come across a new field that we know very little about and we need to delve into it and learn its language. So why not expect our graduates to also be able to do that on their own and encourage them to do so? We do not have to teach students everything they need to know. And in any event, I do not believe that instruction is always the best way to teach if we wish them to learn about culture. They also need to experience, to
read on their own, and to discuss with us and their peers. Maybe writing papers, and perhaps giving presentations are useful techniques. The seminar format may be the best generic instructional format we have, as limited as it may be, but doing research projects, living abroad for a year as part of their studies and experiencing culture with a small “c” and culture with a large “C” as well, attending classes in a foreign country, for example, or going to museums – these are a few of the things that one can do to learn about culture. I would be very sad indeed if that were all to be lost and if we were to say that all that you need to translate is to be able to manipulate a computer program.

I do not see how PE is going to work, by the way, without the post-editors having acquired a strong ability to translate themselves. Going back to something you said before, I do not think you can post-edit unless you can translate. But I think this is the direction some institutions are taking. Culture seems to be shrinking in most programmes as a portion of translator education. At the same time, actual human translation is shrinking in terms of the quantity of work one must do to get a degree. And all the while, PE is growing by leaps and bounds, as if we could replace the ability to translate with the mere ability to post-edit. I do not think it is a mere ability at all. I think it is a highly complex competence that depends on experience with the practice of translation.

**Gary:** Indeed, this has always disturbed me. Up until now, post-editors have been translators. To my knowledge, there are no BA or MA programmes solely and exclusively for post-editors. The concept of being able to do “just” PE strikes me as peculiar, simply because if a client requests a PE job, then the post-editor needs to be able to compare and evaluate the MT output against the source document, and to know the various strategies and approaches to translation that can be deployed to achieve functional adequacy.

**Don:** It seems to me that we usually think of post-editors of necessity being human beings. We do not yet often think of computers as doing the post-editor’s work, but do correct me on that if I am mistaken. I wonder if this does not go back to the visceral or intuitive contextualization capability that we use when we are doing PE and comparing the communicative effect of one text with another. I think a lot of this is related to that gut feeling we have when we decide, for example: no, that expression does not work. Most of the time, it is not that I have a rule in my head, and I choose to apply it
here while the computer has not. I have a gut feeling: that expression just does not work.

We normally have an enormous amount of cultural knowledge in the two different languages, cultural in all sorts of ways, even if we are dealing with a text on gardening or wine-growing. These topics can be closely related to culture, too. We also have lots of knowledge, that is, factual knowledge and domain knowledge that also plays into that process of PE. And we do not have many computer systems that can do that. It seems to me that they are missing the visceral dimension. They have been trained by people to do a particular set of basic, quite simple and non-creative tasks, even though they are getting more complicated at least and perhaps they are even becoming somewhat complex in the most recent developments where machines appear to be actually learning. I would hate to hazard a prediction about where things are likely to stand even ten years from now.

**Gary:** As you mentioned briefly earlier on in this discussion, we are not just talking about translation, we are talking about the full gamut of human endeavours, encapsulated by what Kurzweil (2005) calls “the singularity”, that point in time when artificial intelligence surpasses the capacity of the human brain. When we reach the singularity, I think we can all pack up and go home. We are currently in what TAUS (Joscelyne, 2018: 8) refers to as the convergence era, in which separate technologies start sharing resources and interact with each other synergistically on various devices: “When convergence comes to full maturity, translation will be universally available on every screen, in every app and on every signboard”. The convergence era is changing jobs within the translation profession, diversifying profiles. But from another perspective, the ubiquity of translation and translated resources is leading to an increasing convergence among hitherto distinct professions, with specialists in domains such as organizational, technical and accessible communication having to interact with translation experts – and vice versa.

I would also like to briefly come back to another point you have made. You mentioned that PE might presumably also be a domain for automation. This is actually happening already. As Ana Guerberof Arenas (2020) confirms, there are automated PE systems going by the telling acronym APE (Automated PE), which basically learn from post-editors as they work. But the human being is still irrefutably needed in the loop. As we know, every act of communication is culturally and socially embedded, which needs to be transferred into another socio-culturally embedded situation.
Traditionally, translation has been done by an individual or a group of individuals working together on a source text that has been produced in another place and time by somebody else in another place at another time for another purpose. I wonder, though, whether the future might not be one closer to an intercultural mediator’s role of negotiating between stakeholders who represent different cultures, in various modes and media, synchronously and or asynchronously. We would then have to trim our teaching programmes accordingly. We are training people for the markets and needs of now and the future. How can we feed the current market and anticipate future ones, melding what has been with what might be?

My instinct is to go for the lowest common denominator, which is not necessarily to concentrate on the technological or professional what but to teach people how to work and how to learn. This is why we have been progressively deploying, alongside collaborative project-based learning, process-oriented teaching methods whereby teachers and students can record and observe the ways in which they tackle translation assignments and exactly how they identify and solve problems as they do so. We find this a very insightful complement to more traditional product-oriented discussions and assessments where we can only guess at the strategies adopted and used in interlingual and also intralingual mediation. If we are looking at what we want to do in future, I think we need re-weighted competence modelling that puts adaptivity, creativity, learning, interactivity, consultancy and so on at the centre; and the particular skills in which service they are employed – translation, PE, revision, etc. – at the periphery. Nitzke, Canfora and Hansen-Schirra’s (2019) tentative model of PE competence does just that.

**Don:** Yes, absolutely. Given the virtual absence of formal educational programmes specifically for translator educators, it is certain that many teachers have not actually been trained as translation teachers. It is surely the vast majority in fact, and some will not have been trained as translators either, but having attended foreign language classes many times in their lives, may come into the classroom with a conventional, transmissionist approach to the subject matter: “I’m here to feed you knowledge”. And to me that is a major problem that will remain unless we do something about it proactively; and unfortunately, there is not a lot being done, I am afraid, to encourage people to think in terms of education rather than simply training.

I think young people are reacting to the continued application of this model for education or training instead of education by not attending our
programmes. For example, at my own university, where the programme in Translation and Interpreting Studies has lost one third of our student body in five years. We do not know why, but there are a lot of hints in student behaviour, student comments, reactions to our website where we advertise our programme of studies and so on. They suggest that part of it is weariness at seeing the same teaching approaches used that were used to train these young people’s parents or even grandparents decades ago.

**Gary:** Presumably, it also has to do with the conceptualization of what translation is. My experience is that when you do talk to people who are outside of translation studies and the language professions, they often have a somewhat simplistic view of translation. The translator is seen as a conduit running between two languages. Language skills tend to be equated with translation skills, so if you know a language, you can translate, instantaneously, without reflection. That is why we get paid by the word, rather than by the hour. I think student numbers also have to do with the way in which translation is remunerated. The profession is not considered financially attractive. But I think you are right when you say that the way in which the educational institutions continue to communicate their often dated models of education, and of what translation and interpreting represent, coupled with a downwardly-spiralling profession in monetary terms, has led to a decline in student interest.

**Don:** I think all of these innumerable factors are interlinked in all of the phenomena we have talked about so far, which makes it very, very difficult not only to effectuate change, but also to predict what is going to happen in the future. There are simply so many factors involved and who are we to say that one particular factor will be more important than another? I think this makes the job very difficult to prepare for education ten years down the road. We can do it for today and for next year perhaps, but years away? I would suggest that five-year plan are already very ambitious plans I think are very ambitious given the half-life of technologies in our industry.

**Gary:** Do you think that the profession has itself to blame for a situation it has brought upon itself?

**Don:** Partly, yes! We cater to the tools that are being produced for us and we become slaves to them and then make our students slaves to them. So, I think that is one part of the problems. And the translators themselves, at least this has been my experience in Germany, tend to be very concerned
about their territory. So, they do not want to communicate, they do not want to share, they do not really like to have apprentices work with them, because all of that means competition. They do not want us to work on authentic projects. The national translators’ association has even warned translator educators at universities not to undertake authentic projects because that means taking work away from professional translators. But at the same time, in Germany, one would never be surprised to have some kind of a worker come to the house, like a plumber, for example, or an electrician, a roofing specialist or a painter – accompanied by an apprentice. It is the normal way of doing things for many, many different areas of work and professions – but not for translation. In our domain, it seems that apprentices are simply not welcome.

This means it is very difficult to acquire real experience before you are actually employed on the market. You can only acquire second-hand experience through your teachers, because you cannot get to work with professionals yourself. So I think there are lots of ways in which we are cramping our own style, making things difficult for ourselves, as teachers, and for our students, to see the profession from the inside. I am always shocked as a translator with decades of experience and joy having come out of all those years, when I hear young people say, “I don’t want to be a translator, how boring. That’s what DeepL can do” – and I think no, that need not be the essence of a translator’s working life! At least it is not mine today as a translator on today’s market. I find it just as thrilling and enjoyable, as enlightening and as much an invaluable learning experience as I did 40 years ago.

Gary: So the profession is not particularly outward looking, but rather inward looking and defensive in many ways, and it also has a very conservative conceptualization of translation. A couple of years ago, I and a colleague, a specialist in organizational communication, surveyed Swiss translators about potential and actual interfaces between translation and corporate communications (Massey and Wieder, 2019). As part of it, we asked the translators how they saw their roles. The participants could give multiple answers on whether they saw their role primarily as one of being faithful to their source texts, their authors, and so on. The results were sobering.

Acting as mediators, co-creators and givers of feedback turned out to be lowest on their list of priorities. Instead, they prioritized roles that came close to, shall we say, the traditional conceptualization of translation. The translator as somebody who is wholly faithful to the source text, somebody
who will of course consider the functional parameters of the brief, but who will not take an especially active role. This is possibly one reason why we are seeing the continued commoditization of the profession. I feel that one of my jobs as an educator is to educate people to think differently, is to educate the translators of the future to actually take on an active role of language mediation, consultancy and risk management.

**Don:** Yes, I definitely agree. I like that idea of consulting linked to mediation; that sounds very appropriate. Just changing the name could raise the status of the profession, because the image of the “translator” has not changed much over the past half century 60 years when translator education began to develop. Even the term translator sounds outdated. So, why not call our graduates consultants as their skills shift away from less challenging, simpler tasks to more challenging, complex ones. Language consultancy sounds like a profession and something to aspire to. We may not get the numbers of students we have had in the past to take on this new job, because some might well be intimidated at the thought of taking the kind of responsibility needed to be a consultant. But we might see an increase in the calibre of our students; we might be able to attract young people who are outgoing, people who want to effectuate change in society, within companies, within the translation process, in all sorts of ways.

**Gary:** There is an increasing need for multilingualism, for obvious demographic and socio-ethical reasons. Indeed, a huge irony for the human translation profession is that the spread of free but high-quality MT seems to have increased the visibility of translation and multilingualism to an extent that the profession itself had been unable to do alone. This has led to the type of intra-professional diversity we have already touched on, for instance in the case of specialist PE profiles, but it has also witnessed the emergence of interprofessional interfaces, such as with the growing field of international organizational communication.

There are numerous Swiss companies, which are by their very nature multilingual, who have not been using multilingual (human) resources in corporate communications. Instead, they have been creating their communications strategies and plans in German-speaking Switzerland and then using the traditional end-of-process model to have their output translated. Co-creation, transcreation, multilingual text production, intercultural mediation – these are all foreign concepts to them. But they could be so much more efficient and effective if, both strategically and operatively, they had people with the sort of skill sets that today’s translators
possess working together with the communications specialists from the beginning. To me, this is one way in which the future market for language professionals will develop.

**Don:** You have made a very valuable point and that is creating, adapting and differentiating between different skills and different professions, different job descriptions. Perhaps we should stop calling our programmes *translator training programmes*, because first of all you have mere training on the one hand and then you have got “just” translation. Young folks today, 19-, 20-year olds, most of our students do not want to just sit and translate. They know that there is so much more involved and if we could tell them they will be learning many things with just one of those things, a small part of the whole picture, will be translation. But they will also be project managers, terminologists, intercultural mediators, and more. But now, in many programmes they are essentially told, “you don’t need to take courses in culture, in history, in literature”, so they do not take them. But if we can explain that their job may well include all these super interesting things and not mere PE of some computer’s work, maybe we will be able to attract a different calibre, a different kind of student – young people who would like to be educated university graduates and not just trained post-editors who do not necessarily need a university education.

**Gary:** I agree wholeheartedly. But the translators, or mediators, or language professionals or whatever we choose to call them will need to be assured adequate compensation. At the last EST Congress in Stellenbosch, a very interesting example was presented by Juliet Vine and Elsa Huertas Barros, who have been conducting a didactically-oriented study on transcreation (Vine and Huertas Barros, 2019). Companies they have been looking at are shying away from the term translation, or even actively denigrating it, and designating their work as transcreation simply because they can charge differently. They project themselves as providers of a consultancy service, not a commodity. They know perfectly well that human translation is not transcoding, that transcreation is indeed a key feature of what translators have been doing all along, but if you call it transcreation, people are more willing to pay by the hour. So perhaps we need to re-brand translation so that it receives both the respect and the monetary rewards it deserves.

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Don: I think that is a healthy perspective. And if one wanted to be “just” a translator, one could still be educated and trained as a translator. We can also modify our educational systems so students could be educated and trained to handle a variety of tasks related to and including translation. It seems to me that the computer is not going to be able to take over the role of transcreator, at least not in the foreseeable future. This is not a profession that is going to be here today and gone tomorrow.

Gary: Let us return to translator education and training. The EMT network has set increasing store over the years in work placements. You are a great advocate of authentic experiential learning, and we have just finished contributing to and editing a volume on the subject (Kiraly and Massey, 2019), so I would like to hear your views on this.

Don: As you know, I co-initiated and participated in the European Graduate Placement Scheme (EGPS), an EU-sponsored project to create a system promoting translation-related work placements within the EU. I found it wonderful, because previously, my own university had no structured or integrated prevision for work placements at all. The occasional student would somehow manage to find and complete one, but there was no system for organizing them or coordinating them in any way with our curriculum. There was no pedagogical grounding for doing them, either. Students simply went off and did whatever was asked of them of the company for very little money. I will never forget the young man in our degree programme who wound up painting offices as his only task as a translation work placement student.

And so we created the EGPS programme, envisaging it as a one-semester integrated work placement component towards the end of our five-year programme of study. If you have a three-semester programme and two semesters are a work placement, there is something wrong there, because their education is lacking. We need that work placement, I think, at the end, as icing on the cake. But I do not think it can replace an education. I believe we need our institutional settings to lead the student through the stages of basic knowledge acquisition and discussion and reflexion on practice in a safe setting, before they go out and do a work placement, which then should be a key stepping stone to getting a job. In my models that appear in a number of recent publications, I depict the period of time spent on the job as the time when the separate sub-

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4 See http://www.e-gps.org/project-description/. For a detailed description of the project, see also Astley and Torres Hostench 2017.
competences that we attribute to different courses and modules in our programmes come together. (Kiraly, Rüth and Wiedmann, 2019).

This is illustrated very nicely in the model of competence development proposed by Stuart and Hubert Dreyfus (2004), where expertise may well begin as separate sub-competences but eventually comes together as a single interwoven, integrated and holistic super-competence. My conceptualization of translator competence draws upon and parallels the Dreyfus model. As an experienced translator, I do not see myself as having separate sub-competencies as a translator that I can clearly distinguish from each other. Perhaps the idea of sub-competences is useful for heuristic reasons, as students get started in a programme of studies, and as universities need to design curricula that are suited to commonly accepted (largely linear and highly reductionist) structures.

But, by the time students begin a work placement, they are undertaking all sorts of multi-facetted tasks and are not just focusing on, or developing, one particular sub-competence at a time. It is precisely in an authentic work placement where the heuristic sub-competences they have been developing in the early stages of their programme of studies are merging into a single, holistic capability for handling the myriad aspects of a professional translator’s work. So this is the moment when all of these capabilities and skills can really start to interact with each other in a very significant way, in a real working environment. Protected as it may be, underpaid as it may be, it is still a stepping stone to the real world. And I think clients are likely to appreciate students who have that little bit of work experience and then go on and accumulate years and years of it on the job.

Gary: Your reference to the Dreyfus model reminds me of your own (co-)emergent model of scaffolded competence development from direct instruction through simulated learning and on to authentic project work (Kiraly 2019). The fractal or scalar nature of that model, which describes learning at all levels from the individual right up to that of the community of practice, has the distinct merit of placing student competence development within the broader framework of learning organizations and communities. It is a model that is now playing a large part in guiding our whole organizational development strategy here at Zurich5. In my capacity as the director of the Institute, I see it as my role and contribution to shape and channel the affordances by which learning occurs not only with a view to educating our students, but also to developing our teachers, the

5 The IUED Institute of Translation and Interpreting at ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences, https://www.zhaw.ch/en/linguistics/institutes-centres/ied/
institution as a whole and, wherever our work interfaces with the community of practice we serve, the language service providers and the stakeholders who avail themselves of language-mediation services (Massey, 2019). I see complete congruence between Kolb’s (2015) experiential learning cycle or spiral, classic and current organizational learning models and the action-research spiral, first proposed by Lewin (1946).

This has led my institution to foster action research on authentic experiential learning as a motor of staff and organizational development. We have even seen that, when client organizations are involved in the learning scenarios, they can have nascent transformative learning effects on the community of practice itself (Massey and Brändli, 2019). Most importantly, however, it provides a framework for teacher development and education, which is sorely needed. Strangely enough, translation teacher development has been an almost completely neglected field of translation didactics, our recent Special Issue of the Interpreter and Translator Trainer (Ehrensberger-Dow, Massey and Kiraly, 2019) being very much the exception to the rule.

Don: It is, of course, particularly gratifying to me to see my learning model have this sort of impact on an entire institute for translator and interpreter education. The fractal nature of the model I believe is perhaps its most important features as it places responsibility for education in the broadest sense on every actor in the learning process, from the overall institution itself to the various departments and on down to teams of lecturers and each individual one – as well as the student body and each individual student as well. Presumably, much of mere training in the use of existing tools may well be able to be handled in a linear, reductionist manner.

But education, as an exceedingly multi-faceted process of development and growth at every level of the learning community and in a plethora of domains from the linguistic and technical to the professional, interpersonal and ethical, demands a far more complex perspective. For this reason, I have found the complexity thinking concept of “emergence” – the essence of self-generated growth in complex systems – to have special significance in promoting innovation in education for language mediators.

Gary: We could go on, but I think time has run out and we have to stop here. Thank you, Don, for this truly interesting conversation.

Don: Thank you, Gary. This has been a most enjoyable and enlightening discussion.
References


At a Certain Stage, one has to Deliver\textsuperscript{1}: Why Professional Translation Masters’ Matter

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Abstract

This paper starts by describing and deploring the persistent provincial nature not only of translation studies, but also of translation teaching, as opposed to a developing translation market that is to a very large extent globalized and changing fast. The author then attempts a description of the present state of this market, before proposing a brief historical outline of translation teaching, in order to show that, until recently (say, the early 1990s), this factor was of small importance and scale. However, things changed in the 1990s, and even more so with the Bologna process, to the point where the Western part of the EU has too many translation teaching programmes and Eastern Europe too few. Professionalization was also not a universal factor in those programs. A major factor in correcting those imbalances has been the EMT project, and especially its set of competences (2009 and 2017), which occupy the last part of the paper. Altogether, these varied parameters can be said to outline an ethics for translator trainers.

One of the first things a legal translator has to learn is that, as Susan Šarčević puts it, “Unlike medicine, chemistry, computer science, and other disciplines of the exact sciences, law remains first and foremost a national phenomenon” (Šarčević, 1997: 13). This characterization is of course perfectly accurate, though subject to modulations (what about international organizations, treaties, and the like?). It is also used as a way to justify what we could ironically dub the extraterritorial nature of legal discourse, as

\textsuperscript{1} The author would like to thank his esteemed colleague John Humbley for this expression, uttered during a student’s master’s defense, in 2015: it said it all…
opposed to just about any other discipline or genre. Indeed, it operates as a
warning: translator beware, if you are not, first and foremost, a lawyer! This is
debatable in itself. However, legal discourse is not the only genre to attract
such judgment. In my former life as a translator, I personally heard it from
all kinds of other professionals, and it is in fact commonplace in our field.

This denotes two time-honoured trends.
The first one consists in questioning the legitimacy of translation as such.
The second one, which is to be observed both in the translation sector and
in translation studies, is a passion for separating and differentiating; for
insisting on the niche character of a host of translation-related activities,
domains or fields of expertise; for focusing on micro-details and individual
situations—which has seldom precluded anyone in the field from uttering
broad generalizations.

Thus, for a very long time, to paraphrase Šarčević (ibid.), Unlike medicine,
chemistry, computer science, and other disciplines of the exact sciences, translation teaching
and translation studies have remained first and foremost a local or, at best, national
phenomenon. Indeed, until recently, both curricula and research were
organized on a national, or even subnational basis: if you were studying
translation in France, all theoretical components of the curriculum were
composed of French-speaking authors; in the German-speaking world, it
had to be German authors (or authors based in German-speaking
countries), etc. There would thus be a most telling sociological study to write
about not so much what professionals with a degree in translation, and even
translation studies scholars, have read regarding translation studies, than
about what they are not even aware of, in a world that is, admittedly, lush
with conferences and publications. I personally have been exposed to
numerous, occasionally brilliant, theses or papers on translation which
superbly ignored Nida, Baker, Toury, Hermans, Vermeer, Venuti, Cronin,
Chesterman… and the list could go on forever. Strangely enough, and
despite repeated attempts, translation studies do not translate happily; our
theoretical maps are highly idiosyncratic, and considerable events. For
instance the rift that split open the Anglophone translation studies
communities between the followers of Mona Baker and Gideon Toury, at
the beginning of this century, have gone perfectly unnoticed elsewhere.

This is a second paradox for a discipline that is meant to make
communication possible across boundaries of all kinds. The same was for a
long time true for translators’ associations (for obvious legal reasons). And,
until recently, the situation was even worse with professional translators
themselves, who quite often were at best wary, or even defiant of translation
studies or translation teaching. The common thread to those situations is
what we could call the curse of provincialism, which is turning into a genuine danger for the profession, for translation studies, and for translation teaching in this era of globalization and industrialization of the sector.

To counter this, we need to focus on the broader picture, as quite a few scholars already have (such as Chesterman, Gambier, Pruné and Even-Zohar) or to envisage translation in and across other regions, or periods of time (e.g., Tymoczko, Ballard, Balliu), to the point of exploring the conditions for the emergence of a truly “international translation studies” (Susam-Saraeva, 2016).

The provocative components of the call for papers that fed this issue of Cultus are thus to be welcome: personal pride is best set aside in either translation or translation studies, it has sterilizing effects. “To what extent are traditional translator/interpreter roles and training relevant to real world employment in the near future?”; “what relationship can we imagine the mediator should have with technology”; “As to the training, how necessary is it? Who actually provides it? To what extent should universities be involved?”; “to what extent has this investment in undergraduate and graduate training resulted in increased status for the profession? And for that matter, to what extent is the European Union’s ‘Master in Translation’ a way forward?” (Cultus 2019): those are highly relevant questions, and ignoring them would come (and sometimes does come) at our students’ expense. Remuneration aspects aside, it is our ethical mission to confront those issues: at a certain stage, one has to deliver, even as individual trainers or as translation programme heads. That means overcoming the comforts of provincialism, and acknowledging that there is a globalizing world out there—and one that is changing fast. And since we have a responsibility for students who are in the crucial process of choosing a job or profession, i.e. who are in the midst of existential choices, some degree of reciprocity may quite simply be fair.

I will thus try to advocate the relevance of (professional) translation programmes by first reflecting on the way the market is trending, before briefly attempting a long-term perspective on translation teaching, which should lead us to consider the present (European) situation, and especially the EMT (European Master’s in Translation) project — and its much discussed framework of competences. Is it the right recipe to guide the translation profession into an admittedly uncertain future? And honesty compels me to add a proviso: although I will attempt to sketch a broad view of the situation, the sources I intend to use in that endeavor still remain largely national (and even conspicuously French…) and rather patchy at the moment. The reader is free to blame it on personal incompetence and
national character of this author, of course, but it may also be construed as a symptom of the above-mentioned fragmentation: right now, aggregate measures are few, non-interoperable and often statistically fragile.

1. The translation market, now and tomorrow

For one thing, there is a big difference between, on the one hand, translation training and translation studies (persistent provincialism) and, on the other hand, the translation professions’ market. Indeed, the latter has little consideration for national barriers: in this regard, it is way ahead of us. So what have we observed in recent years in this market?

- first, and this is contrary to many people’s impressions, an overall growth in activity: of the order of 8% per year, according to the Common Sense Advisory (CSA, 2019) survey. Indeed, the annual compound rate is 7.9% for the period 2009-2019. This amounts to a size (turnover) of 49.6 billion dollars for 2019 (ibid);
- which is accompanied by a consolidation phenomenon: large LSPs (language service providers, the term which has superseded the “agencies” of yore) tend to buy out smaller ones, in a real race for size and economies of scale;
- as part of this process, some of those LSPs are now full-blown multinationals, and some of them have gone public;
- this growth is taking place in a fast-changing world, with sectors and professions that are taking a beating (audiovisual translation, for example2), others that are developing at a rapid pace (post-editing, terminology, project management…), others that can be deemed mature (localization, literary translation), and yet others that are now declaring their independence (technical writing/communication, for example);
- after a series of technological breakthroughs, machine translation (MT) is no longer confined to research laboratories: in 2018, that is two years after the advent of neural machine translation, more than 50% of LSPs in Europe now claim to use it (EUATC, 2019);
- this progress, however, has two far-reaching psychological consequences. For some, it raises disproportionate expectations (the Reuters France press agency, for example, recently decided

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2 See for instance Froeliger and Audinot, 2013, for a detailed account.
it could spare on its workforce by replacing human journalists by neural machine translation\(^3\)). For others, it is the cause of unreasonable fears (many translators who have yet to understand that machine translation is based on translation memories whose origin can only be human if we want to maintain an acceptable level of quality);

- between those two extremes, one thing remains certain: this development has started to reshape large swathes of the translation sector;

- at the very same time, migratory phenomena (including inside developing countries) are intensifying, which give rise to new needs in sectors and language combinations that until recently were not institutionalized in the least (see for instance Bellos, 2012, on the Sofitel case in New York, for example);

- one can also observe a slow narrowing of the divide between translation and interpretation, which is fed, among others, by the rapid development of distance or remote (yes, there is a slight distinction) interpreting\(^4\), a practice that is already commonplace in the USA, and gaining ground elsewhere;

- the geopolitics of translation and translation studies is also changing, and at a much faster pace, with, for example, the PAMCIT (Pan African Masters Consortium in Interpretation and Translation) project in Africa, or the creation of no less then 253 translation masters in China over the past 10 years, which is already making itself felt in project management, for example;

- we are also witnessing an, albeit modest, increased legitimacy of translation training in the eyes of professionals\(^5\), which, again, was not obvious until two or three decades ago: the world of translation had done very well without diplomas for a very long time;

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\(^4\) See among others http://blog.sprachmanagement.net/remote-simultaneous-interpreting-muss-das-denn-sein-und-geht-das-ueberhaupt/

\(^5\) Two sets of figures to substantiate that claim: in the impressive (though mainly restricted to France) survey conducted by Société française des traducteurs in 2014 (SFT, 2015), 60.44% of the 1,400 respondents stated that they held a degree in translation (as against 52.07% in 2008), and the 2019 EUATC Language Industry Survey shows that awareness of a pan-European translation program network such as EMT (European Master’s in Translation) is at 53% among language service providers, an admittedly still modest share, but the figure was seven percentage points lower the year before (EUATC, 2019, p. 30).
- this is accompanied by a trend towards the standardization of working conditions, with the publication of standards of practice (e.g. ISO 17100: 2015 series), the use of certification, the increased relevance of translation degrees as a proof of competence, with a concomitant race for quality, to which we will come back later on;

- finally, the role of professional associations, bringing together companies: EUATC, the European Association of Translation Companies or ELIA, the European Language Industry Association) at European level;

or, nationally, for example, CNET, the Chambre nationale des entreprises de traduction;

or freelancers. In France, in particular the Société française des traducteurs, SFT, which increasingly, and not insignificantly, now advertises itself as a translators’ union, has taken on a new importance with more members, more initiatives, more visibility.

In brief, we have the impression, all things being equal, of waking up in the immediate post-war world: everything is changing at a rapid pace, the very rules of the game are being redefined. For a long time, translation, as an activity, was relatively easy to define: the transposition of a text from one language into another. This amounted to fairly simple forms of practice, with varied forms of exercise.

In the meantime, one form of diversity replaced another: in the past, the differences were in the individual backgrounds, personalities, and therefore on the relationships with the various players in the field. Today, the profession is becoming more homogeneous in sociological terms, but the core activities are much more diversified. To this must be added the persistence of a great variability in the conditions of practice (professional status), income, and the very definitions of what is expected of a translator. Because of this evolutionary variability, stating general truths about translation is more hazardous than ever. At least, those who favour the provincial, niche-focused view enjoy the certainty of knowing inside out what they are talking about; whereas there is a risk, in attempting to capture the broader picture, to take leave from reality altogether… The risk, however, is worth taking if we want to be—and, more importantly, to remain—relevant.
2. Translation training, taking the long-term view

Trying to escape provincialism through reflecting on translation training in the longer term only leads to another paradox. On the one hand, there is a rich history of translation training programmes the world over, from ancient China to the present day. Important periods include the late Han dynasty (see for instance Xu, 2005), 8th century Baghdad, 12th century Toledo (see Ballard, 1992) and 17th century Ecole des jeunes de langues founded in Istanbul, now still extant in Paris under the name INALCO (Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales, see Balliu, 2002). On the other hand, the translation profession as such is a recent phenomenon, and one that has yet to reach its full development. Of course, mankind has always had a need for interpreters, in the first place, and then of translators, ever since the invention of writing. But among those, only a minute fraction actually devoted themselves to that sole occupancy for extended periods. One acted in the capacity of a translator or interpreter, according to circumstances. Those that had some knowledge of foreign languages could use it as an occasional source of livelihood: by its very nature it was an amateurish sector. And this century-old phenomenon has left profound traces in the way translation is still viewed today in our societies: something anybody with a decent enough grasp of foreign languages can take to. In other words, not a profession, but a mere activity. To have a regular profession, one needs agreed upon rules of conduct, regulatory bodies (professional associations, training programmes, official recognition (from government, from the scholarly world), a collective consciousness, and the like. Indeed, according to Wittorski (2014), professionalization is a three-pronged operation:

- to start with the obvious, it describes the process of forming a profession: “It is the process whereby an occupation is turned into a profession, with statuses, its own organization (professional associations, a professional order…) and of accepted procedures which can guarantee its recognition and place within society” (my translation);

- it is also about ensuring the long-term efficiency of the individuals involved, hence the need for post-graduation updating and updating of (one’s) competences (lifelong learning…), which presupposes a certain durability of the occupation in question (from Wittorski, ibid., my rephrasing);

- it is also about producing professionals through training. Hence the need for degrees that will make a difference in the market.
this context, “a professional is somebody who, at the end of his or her training is considered capable of practising the profession which he or she has been preparing for.” (Wittorski, *ibid.*, my translation).

This calls for two remarks. First, the three aspects are part of the same system: all three must interact. Second, at this juncture in the history of translation, this process is still in the making.

In fact, translation training as we know it today was born in Switzerland in 1941, with the creation of École d’interprètes (renamed ETI: *École de traduction et d’interprétation* in 1972, and more recently *Faculté de traduction et d’interprétation*). It grew on a modest scale in the late 1950s’, with the birth of ESIT (*École supérieure de traducteurs et d’interprètes*) and ISIT (then *Institut supérieur d’interprétariat et de traduction*, now *Institut de management et de communication interculturels*) in Paris, and that of ISTI (then *Institut supérieur de traducteurs et interprètes*, now a translation department within the *Université libre de Bruxelles*), and only became a large scale phenomenon in the 1990s’ and even more so after the Bologna process in 2005 (see, on all those aspects, Froeliger, 2012).

Thus, if we see things from the vantage point of the market, training is a recent phenomenon; or, to be precise, one that has only recently gained prominence. Translation is thus only now becoming institutionalized. As witness thereof, we can cite the publication of various regulatory documents on translation, such as the ISO 17100: 2015 standard, which mentions the existence of a degree as a quality parameter for translators (among other factors, it must be said). Yet, this recent phenomenon coincides – and possibly conflates – with tremendous short-term changes due to the coming of age of information technology (IT) and artificial intelligence (AI). There is thus a comico-tragic element in the present vagaries of translation training: at the very moment it is asserting itself, it sees its legitimacy challenged. This is sometimes the cause of Shakespearean self-questionings among its actors, which is where the European factor enters the picture.

3. The EMT network: purposes, achievements, future

What we have described thus far can be summarized in very simple terms: we are witnessing an increasing interconnection of players in the translation professions. One of the mainstays of this evolution since 2009
has been the EMT network, due especially to its competences framework.

The project itself was born as a means to correct a double imbalance. On
the one hand, there were too many translation programmes in the West
(in particular since the Bologna process began), many more than the
market could absorb, with varying degrees of quality (here to be construed
as a synonym for professionalism, i.e. the ability for graduates to find
decent jobs or assignments in the sector). On the other hand, training for
translators in the nine countries that joined the EU in 2004 (the infamous
“Big Bang”) was felt to be scant and clearly irrelevant to the needs of large
organizations such as the EU Commission, Parliament or Court of Justice.

And we are all aware that being able to interact in one’s national language,
however small in terms of speakers, is a core component of the European
construction, and of democracy in Europe. The EMT project thus was
designed as both a quality label, separating highly professional
programmes from the chaff; and as a hub for sharing good
practices,
achieving a level playing-field and reflecting on common issues. It was
launched under the auspices of the DGT (the EU Commission’s
Directorate General for Translation), which provided—and still provides—
the logistical support and European legitimacy to the whole project, as
well as taking the political decisions on where to set the cursor for
applications (assessed by external experts, every five years in principle, see
below).

At a 2009 conference (published in 2012), reflecting on what was at
the moment a very young innovation, I attempted a reflection on the
possible evolutions of this network: “This encouraging endeavor must
still be considered a strategic and political affair. There is a risk that it
proves either too lax or too restrictive for the various stakeholders, and
the European authorities will have to make the right choice between
strong involvement and withdrawal into themselves.” (Froeliger, 2012:
582, my translation).

What can be said about these issues, ten years after?

- Expansion, in terms of figures, has been steady but controlled.
  Some 32 programmes were admitted in 2009, a number that
  reached 54 two years later, 64 in 2014, and, since June 2019, 85
  (including 3 non-EU programs, two in Switzerland and one in

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6 This was an interim admission exercise, to make up for what was felt as flaws in the first
run.
The members of this network—and, more importantly, their programmes—have benefited greatly from this project. At long last, we, translation programme directors, were able to envision things on a pan-European level, and to make informed comparisons, using similar indicators. It was a milestone for most of us, thanks to regular meetings (at least two per year), and a variety of spin-off projects, the most notable one being OPTIMALE (Optimising Translator Training in a Multilingual Europe, now defunct). This has considerably levelled the playing-field, while enabling members to reflect on broader, occasionally non-European, terms.

This broader view also had national consequences. In France, it gave the impetus for reviving AFFUMT (Association française des formations universitaires aux métiers de la traduction), an association of translation programmes that can boast a number of achievements since then: free CAT (computer aided translation) software from the SDL company and software provider for its members, much better student and stakeholder information through a common website (https://affumt.wordpress.com/), better scholarly recognition through a translation studies portal (www.recherche-traductologie.fr), the creation of a “mention” (official classification) for translation and interpretation, alongside linguistics, applied languages, and foreign languages and culture, regular roundtables on questions of common interest (in 2019, how to accommodate MT in our curricula, as well as selection processes; in 2018, how do we deal with the ever increasing number of applicants with disabilities…). It is probably no coincidence if, in 2019, all five new French members of the EMT network had also previously joined AFFUMT. So, here again, interconnection is increasing. And rewarding.

Altogether, it is thus not exaggerated to consider the advent of EMT as groundbreaking. Although reactions have on the whole been largely positive, it has however not been met by universal acclaim. Recognition, for one thing, remains less than satisfactory: according to a recent EUATC (2019, ibid.) survey, only 54% of European LSPs are aware of the
existence of the EMT network. True, the trend is encouraging (the figure was 47% the year before), but still not overwhelming. Interestingly, the only real resistance to the process came from two actors only. Firstly, Germany, which boasts Europe’s largest economy and population, has been conspicuously underrepresented in the network ever since its inception. Two programmes were admitted in 2009, and that figure has remained the same since then. For the sake of comparison, in 2019, France has 15 programmes (7 in 2009); The United Kingdom, 14; Spain, 8; and Poland, 4. There is room for further investigation here.

Secondly, the EMT process and the ability of its members to train full-blown, immediately productive, professionals has been questioned and negated on repeated occasions. For example, comments have even been made during EMT conferences by representatives of LSPs themselves. The argument was simple: We (companies) find that graduates that enter the field still have so much to learn that it is impossible for us to pay them a decent rate until we have finished the job of training them… This discourse has been around for a while: it was commonplace in the 1980s and 1990s, before professionalization gained its full momentum. However, it turns a blind eye toward the huge effort made by professional programmes in terms of professional relevance, and is therefore outdated. In fact, it has even proved counter-productive, and has since been abandoned in favour of a more collaborative approach And I firmly believe that the main argument that helped translation programmes counter it was the EMT competence framework.

4. The EMT competence framework, 2009 and 2017

The focus on competences is part of an overall trend in the philosophy of higher education, not just in translation teaching. The general idea is that the ability to function inside a given profession can be broken down into a series of identifiable individual competences, that can be taught, in order to deliver learning outcomes. The concept of competence has thus started to replace that of talent, and also departs from many time-honored ways of teaching. It is defined by the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning as “the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study

9 Since those comments were always presented orally, the only evidence we can provide is the memory of the EMT representatives or conference participants that heard them.
situations and in professional and personal development.” (Education and Culture DG, 2008: 11). According to Guy Le Boterf (2002), it is itself made up of three components: knowing how to act, being able to act, and being willing to act, and comprises two levels: required competences (“those that are listed in the competence framework”) and actual competences (“those that are constructed by each individual”, Le Boterf, *ibid.*, my translation).

In translation studies themselves, the subject is hardly new. It started with the works of group PACTE, in the 1990s’ (see among others PACTE, 2000, and Hurtado Albir, 2008 and 2015) and can boast a very wide array of contributions since then (see Carré, 2017, for a review of those works). However, it remained first and foremost a research effort, with very little, if any at all, trickle-down effect on the way translators were actually trained for the profession.

By contrast, the EMT 2009 reference framework was a political endeavor, explicitly aimed at rewarding professionalization, through the award of a quality label. Since I already expounded on this in another publication (Froeliger, 2019, and also Schlamberger-Brezar, 2016), I will be very brief here. The general idea was to insist on the translation services provision aspect of the profession, which, graphically, was placed at the centre of a wheel comprised of five other groups of competences (language competence, intercultural competence, information mining competence, thematic competence, technological competence, some of which were divided into two parts):

![The EMT "Wheel of competences"
](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/emt/key_documents/emt_competences_translators_en.pdf)

*Figure 1: The 2009 “Wheel of competences”*
This amounted to 48 individual competences, of which only three were directly linked with language, another political message, meant to depart from the philological approach to translation (a tentative explanation for the low uptake of EMT in a few countries).

The success of this particular framework as opposed to its predecessors was due to its inclusion as touchstone for the EMT selection: to become part of the network, a programme had to prove (in detail) how it was preparing for each of the individual competences. It thus acted both as a sieve (to select the genuinely professional programmes) and as an awareness raiser, which, in the long run, may be its most beneficial effect. As a consequence, a number of programme directors were forced to reflect on those various competences (which was by no means a foregone conclusion), and some even reshaped their curricula accordingly.

However, this first EMT competence framework was not totally flawless. As everything European ever since the Vienna Congress (1815), it was the result of a compromise, which is not always conducive to clarity. It also contained some repetitions, and its use of metalanguage was not always perfect. Another, more important, problem was (is, and will be) the rapid evolution of the translation profession, which cannot but give rise to new competences. This is why a working-group was set up in 2016, in order to produce a new framework, with Daniel Toudic and Alexandra Krause at the helm. The revised set was made public in 2017, and subsequently used as one of the key components of the EMT 2018-19 campaign.

Generally speaking, it was more an upgrade than a complete change in philosophy. The number of items was streamlined to 35 (against 48), which is due, on the one hand, to treating the language and culture components as prerequisites: they are mentioned in the new framework, but considered as having to be mastered on entry. And therefore not counted. However, candidate programmes have to prove that the students they are admitting are being screened accordingly (with at least a C1, and preferably C2 level in their first two working languages). The wording was also slightly altered: instead of groups of competences; we now have very broad competences, broken down into skills (“the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems”, Education and Culture DG, 2008, *ibid*). Graphically, instead of a wheel with translation service provision as its axis, we now have a production chain, starting with the prerequisites (language and culture), building on the “translation” aspect proper, going on to technology, personal and...
interpersonal components, and reaching its conclusion with the translation service provision competence:

Figure 2: EMT competence framework, 2017, graphic organization

If we reason in terms of groups of skills or competences, then classification differences between the 2009 and 2017 versions are as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMT 2009 Framework</th>
<th>Number of competences</th>
<th>EMT 2017 Framework</th>
<th>Number of competences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Translation Service Provision Competence 1. Interpersonal Dimension</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Language and Culture</td>
<td>Treated as prerequisites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Translation Service Provision Competence 2. Production Dimension</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Translation*</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Language Competence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Intercultural Competence 1. Sociolinguistic Dimension</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Personal and interpersonal</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Intercultural Competence 2. Textual Dimension</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Service provision</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Information Mining Competence</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Thematic Competence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Technological Competence</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes “Ability to interact with MT”.

Table 1: The 2009 and 2017 EMT competence frameworks, broad categories

A major difference was also that candidate programmes did not have to ascertain that they were preparing students for each individual skill: there was thus a degree of leeway, which was a way to recognize the diversity of situations across the continent (see our introduction).
So far, few critiques have arisen regarding this new framework (though the following two should be mentioned):

- the first one gave rise to a long debate inside the working-group. It was about including a “Translation” competence as a subdivision of the “translation competence framework”. Some argued, first, that this entailed a risk of confusing subordinate and superordinate terms, and was therefore unclear; and, second, that this was giving the impression that all other skills were expelled from the translation part, whereas what was needed was the broadest possible definition for translation, thought from the professional side of the mirror. And therefore including all the other aspects. This was resolved in an addendum entitled “EMT Competence Reference Framework – Key Concepts and Definitions” (2017, circulated inside the EMT network only) in the following terms: “With regard to the distinction between subordinate and superordinate levels, we clearly state in the main introduction, and in the introduction to the translation section, that the overarching competence presiding over the whole framework is ‘translation service provision’.

- another critique stemmed from the students and programme directors the framework was submitted to: competence number 1 as such is so dense that it could be broken down into four or five elements, and therefore difficult to ascertain statistically (see below): “Analyse a source document, identify potential textual and cognitive difficulties and assess the strategies and resources needed for appropriate reformulation in line with communicative needs” (EMT, 2017: 8).

Granted, these are minor defects, and as I mentioned earlier, they did not preclude the network from taking in more than 20 newcomers after the 2018-19 exercise, which attests to its good health and increasing recognition.

This framework was thus explicitly devised, and reviewed in 2017. It then served as a baseline for EMT application. However, it could very well have another more lasting impact, in that it is a tremendous tool for raising awareness about those competences. As I mentioned earlier, it did serve that purpose for programme directors and teachers; but some of us also had the idea, in the course of time, to use it in the classroom, both as an indicator of progress (through surveys conducted at entry and on
completion of the program), and quite simply in order to explain to students what the translation profession is all about these days. This would then help them, in due time, to explain ‘translation’ to their future clients and employers.

This started in 2013 as a modest, in-house, endeavour (see Froeliger, 2019, ibid.), but has since been presented to all EMT members at the Vienna Conference (2018), and has now turned into a research project, CATO: Competence Awareness in TranslatiOn. In its trial phase, at the time of completion of this paper, the project involved 12 programmes throughout Europe, as well as representatives of the Société française des traducteurs. A possible development would be its extension to all EMT members, as well as to the professional world. It is meant both as an area of research and as a pedagogical tool; and could provide the theme for a translation studies conference in the not so distant future.

5. Conclusion

How is the world likely to evolve in terms of exchanges between countries and cultures in the next decades? Of course, answering this question in a straightforward way would entail more prediction than actual forecasting. What actually matters are the stakes involved in the various options we can, at the moment, discern. Three competing outcomes seem to be emerging: generalization of one or a few lingua(e) franca(e); all-inclusive machine translation (MT) and a more pluralistic diversity of situations for a wide variety of needs, such as trade, cultural exchange, law enforcement, citizenship, technical developments, cultural diversity, involving both a good grasp of present-day technology and of the human aspect of the task, what the French, in particular, increasingly dub biotranslation10. Though I would not claim to be an expert in that field, I would be tempted to put this, IA tools included, under the umbrella of the term mediation—and I think it is clearly the most desirable option for society as a whole. This, to me, is clearly the preferred option, not because it favours translators as mediators, but because it has the potential to deliver a better service to society. This is why we need competent, professional

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10 The neologism biotranslation (biotraduction, in French) has achieved increasing popularity in the wake of the Tralogy conferences that were held in Paris in 2011 and 2013 with the explicit aim to serve as an open space, an agora, where human translators, IA linguists, and trainers could exchange their views on the evolution of the profession. See for instance http://lodel.revue.inist.fr/tralogy/index.php?id=195, accessed November 20, 2019.
translators. In other words, the development and increased legitimacy of the profession is not an aim in itself: it is a means. To put this means in practice, society needs strong and visible professional associations, as well as solid and efficient translation programs. The combination of these two sources provides the continuous education, and therefore the sustainability that is so important in the translation fields—and whose importance can only increase, in translation as elsewhere. This will make it possible to accommodate—and influence—the rapid changes that affect the industry the world over. The EMT, and especially its competence framework, is therefore to be seen as a blueprint for the translation sector as a whole, and not solely for the EU (which is already apparent in its accepting several non-EU members in its fold with an observer status11).

The EMT project thus has a welcome stabilizing and comforting effect. This however, is not sufficient as such. We should not sink into utilitarianism, that is to consider that everything, in training, has to serve practice in an immediate way. We also need to take a broader view of the issues at hand, if only to ensure the sustainability of the whole edifice. In other words, in order to have an efficient translation sector, we also need strong, productive translation studies, with numerous PhDs that are in line with today’s and tomorrow’s agendas in this sector. There is a tendency, in academia, to pit those two aspects against one another: professionally oriented teaching and research. This tendency must definitely be resisted. If only because the ability to articulate critical discourse can only improve the achievement of expertise in the professional field. Indeed, we should not content ourselves with training good translation technicians—if only because a good technician must also be aware of the stakes of his or her practice. This is where the ethical dimensions come in: as a foundation upon which efficient and professional programmes can be built. And those are expressly considered in the EMT competence framework (EMT, 2009 and 2017). Indeed, at a certain stage, one has to deliver.

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11 At the time of writing, the future status of the UK vis-à-vis the EU is still undecided. If and when Brexit eventually happens, the now 14 British programmes will have the same status.
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Challenges in the Professional Training of Language and Intercultural Mediators: Translating Tourism Cross-Cultural Communication

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Abstract

The low quality characterising tourism translation into English in a country like Italy, boasting the largest cultural heritage in the world, is paradoxical and highlights the need for high-level professional translator training. The translation of tourism communication is a complex cross-cultural mediation practice as it is found at the crossroads not only of many disciplines such as history, arts, sociology, economics, but also of different semiotic resources, i.e. speech, writing, sounds, images. As a consequence, new multidisciplinary training options in the field of tourism communication should be created, answering the diversified needs of a tourist market constantly evolving. Furthermore, training should also cover new combinations of different semiotic and technological resources in order to make tourism communication accessible not only in terms of language and intercultural mediation, but also in a perspective of social inclusion.

In 2018, a workshop within the TranslatingEurope project addressed the topics of tourism translation and cultural heritage accessibility. The aim of the workshop was to enhance appreciation for Italian tourism and cultural heritage by involving the widest audience possible. In this context, a community comprised of international tourists – including social groups such as the visually, hearing and language impaired – were taken as the recipients of a type of translation which would mediate not only language contents, but also values and cultural identities.

1. Introduction

The tourist sector is increasingly expanding at a global level: it is one of the few economic areas in constant growth and with potential for further improvement. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, in 2017 the sector accounted for 10.4% of the global GDP - the total value of goods and services produced globally – and currently provides 313 million

1 [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2018_translatingeurope_workshops_en_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2018_translatingeurope_workshops_en_0.pdf)

jobs, corresponding to 9.9% of total employment. As these data demonstrate, travel and tourism are worldwide phenomena, and in spite of the controversies about the tourist industry’s potential (and realistic) exploitation of developing countries, the tourist sector is gaining currency also in areas of the world with high levels of poverty, as the blossoming of specialised tourist sectors and sub-sectors, such as sustainable tourism, or pro-poor tourism, indicate. The latter brings in fact the problem of poverty to the centre of the sustainability debate (Goodwin 2009).

Yet, the evident success of tourism, even in areas that are not traditionally lucrative but rather enhance social and community values, calls for considerable improvements in the area of communication. In fact the general low quality of tourism translation and language mediation activities, in general particularly (but not only) in English as an international language, may come as a surprise when we realise that language necessarily lies at the basis of any form of tourism promotion and tourist experiences. Many scholars, both in Tourism and Translation Studies, have long lamented this state of affairs (Dann 2006; Durán Muñoz 2012). And the question becomes even more complex if the language problem is considered from the ample perspective of a cultural, social and all-inclusive access to tourism communication. Hence, the barriers to be removed to make tourism products and services truly accessible are not only concrete and physical, but also intangible and cultural - hence more ingrained in the social fabric of our contemporary world.

2. Why texts from the tourist sector constitute suitable material for developing translator competence

Translating tourism communication is a widely practiced activity, not only in real-life situations, given the global diffusion of tourism phenomena, but also as a classroom exercise in most translator training institutions. In one of her earliest works on tourism translation, Kelly set down a list of criteria for text selection in translator training institutions and highlighted the special role of texts belonging to the tourist sector (2000; see also 1997). A number of the points that she made are relevant for the present discussion: 

1. Texts belonging to the tourist sector, tourist texts in short, offer a wide variety in terms of genres and topics, which enables students to operate in different contexts and yet maintain a certain continuity in terms of communicative intention.

2. Professional realism is another characteristic of these texts, and this makes them particularly suitable for training since, as Kelly makes clear, “they constitute authentic professionally translatable and translated material, and not artificial exercises” (ibid.: 161).

3. Students usually appreciate activities with tourism texts because they are likely to have a certain familiarity with them and with the linguistic and cultural conventions used in tourism discourse in general.

4. The positive expectations in the classroom can be used by teachers to introduce the issue of documentary and terminological research in the early stages of training (ibid.: 163). Tourism texts are not generally addressed to a specialized audience, and yet cover a variety of specialized or semi-specialized domains such as history, art history, architecture, sport and leisure, cuisine etc. Such diversification, both in terms of content and text type, provide the potential for teachers to develop a range of documentary and terminological research skills.

5. The complex semiotic structure of tourist texts is another important factor. As a matter of fact, tourist texts very often consist in a combination of written material and images (photographs, illustrative material, maps, etc.; cfr. Culler 1981, Jaworski and Thurlow 2011). Yet, this combination still tends to go unnoticed in most translator training programmes. Tourist texts can have a salutary effect in this respect, because they bring to the fore the interdependence of a wide range of semiotic elements.

6. According to Kelly, the most important point to be made about the pedagogical function of tourist texts has to do with the general low quality of the original. These texts are very often hastily produced by non-professional writers, who rarely take into consideration specific target readers’ needs. As a consequence, these originals (or source texts) are very often less than adequate both from a stylistic and functional point of view, and do not produce effective communication. In a word, they fail to provide access to tourism offers and experiences because they are not successful from a communicative point of view.

7. On top of everything else, tourist texts provide excellent material to demonstrate the degree of intervention - both in terms of language and intercultural mediation - translators can legitimately take upon themselves when adopting a functionalist approach. In fact, they require...
students to give up mechanical strategies of linguistic substitution and search through the entire set of linguistic and cultural resources they have at their disposal to produce effective communication (cfr. also Agorni 2018a).

The issue of the translator’s degree of intervention is a core issue that has been long disputed in Translation Studies, and has been variously defined as translator’s license, space of manoeuvre, manipulation, agency, etc. It has come to the fore once again thanks to the recent debate about the difference between translation and transcreation, originating innovative analyses of creative and resourceful translation methods (Cfr. Spinzi et al. 2018). For example, Katan has suggested a conceptualization of translation as a dynamic and intervening process, particularly sensitive to the distance between source text and target text worldviews. Following this thinking, target text readers should be able to access a text as if they had the same lingua-cultural competence as any other source text readers (Katan, 2018: 28, see also Katan 2016). I will return to this crucial topic in the last section of this article. Here, I would like to stick to the pedagogical function of tourist texts and explore some of the options in terms of training currently available in the field of tourism.

3. Training and Research in Tourism Studies

Kelly’s work mentioned in the previous section goes back to some twenty years ago, yet it is still relevant today. Indeed, in spite of her pointing to the best practices for translator training in the field of tourism, professionalization in this area is still inadequate in many parts of the world (cfr. Napu 2018). Hence, there is a strong need for highly qualified professionals in this sector. Given the economic importance of the field, the growing needs of the market and the professionalizing trends in all courses at university level all over the world, it would be expected to find tourism translation widely covered, particularly in tertiary education.

However, if the situation of the European Union is taken as a telling example, we are bound to be rather disappointed. In spite of the fact that most, if not all, translator training institutions offer activities and practice in this area, only very few universities offer degree courses at graduate or postgraduate level explicitly specifying a focus on tourism translation.
and/or language and intercultural mediation. In fact, training in the field of tourism is very rarely focused on the linguistic and communicative aspects of the profession, tending instead to be more committed to developing competence in the areas of management, economics, administration and marketing, as we shall see later in this section.

As I have argued elsewhere, it seems that the aspects related to language transfer processes represent a grey area in Tourism Studies in general, either from a theoretical, applied or pedagogical point of view (Agomi, 2018b: 257). In spite of the fact that applied research in tourism is very often concerned with international tourism — and has necessarily to account for the needs and wants of both local and foreign visitors — translation and language issues in general are seldom mentioned by scholars working in this area, even when they are involved in field work. And I have already claimed that this is not just a methodological oversight, but, rather, a theoretical gap (ibid., 257).

A couple of hypotheses can possibly explain this state of affairs. The field of Tourism and Hospitality is a full-fledged area of study at a global level; and applied research, or case studies, often consist in empirical analyses of tourism experiences which may take place in several countries in the world and concern visitors varying in terms of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age, gender, religion and, last in order but not of importance, language and culture. Yet, I am not alone in arguing that the theoretical bases of tourism research are still anchored to a specific Anglo-American tradition, whose universalist assumptions very often appear to be taken for granted (Atelejevic, Pritchard and Morgan 2007; Atelejevic, Morgan and Pritchard 2011).

Additionally, the language of scientific research and publications in the field of tourism is always English, with few exceptions. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that cross-cultural encounters with other languages and traditions are steered clear of. In fact what happens is that they are usually “translated” — in a literal as well as figurative sense — into English and referred to a cultural perception which is unmistakably Anglo-American.

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3 The universities of Granada and Las Palmas in Spain offer double degrees in Translation and Tourism, cfr.: [http://grados.ugr.es/traduccion/pages/doble_grado/doble_grado_traduccion_turismo](http://grados.ugr.es/traduccion/pages/doble_grado/doble_grado_traduccion_turismo) and [http://www.feet.ulpgc.es/content/Doble-Grado-Traduccion-Turismo](http://www.feet.ulpgc.es/content/Doble-Grado-Traduccion-Turismo) (Last accessed 13 July 2019); a pathway entitled “Cultural Tourism, Hospitality and Cultural Heritage” is offered by the Goldsmith University of London within their MA programme in Translation Studies.
Far from opening a debate on the geopolitical aspects of publishing within Tourism and Hospitality Studies, here I would only like to point out that most, if not all, the linguistic aspects that characterize cross-cultural interactions, translation and intercultural mediation practices do not find a place on the research agenda within Tourism Studies.

And yet the tourist encounter is by definition an exchange with the Other and with other individuals, and their different languages and cultural contexts. A seminal paradigm such as Urry’s tourist gaze, first introduced as a neutral, visual and incorporeal kind of perception, seems to be just a case in point (1990). Even after the introduction of Goffman’s (1959) “performance” perspective – a sociological approach to interpersonal communication based on theatre performance – language and intercultural mediation issues do not seem to have found a space on Urry’s agenda. His revised, multimodal gaze, is indeed aware of a variety of sensory perceptions, defined in detail by Urry and Larsen:

gazing is embodied, multimodal, and involves other sensescapes. It is a set of performative practices. Gazing is not merely seeing, but involves physical movement though landscapes, cities and sights, aesthetic sensibility, connecting signs and their referents, daydreaming and mind travelling and embodied practices capturing places and social relations [...] Tourists touch, stroke, walk or climb upon, and even collect the buildings and objects that they lay their eyes upon (2011b: 1115).

However, Urry’s multimodal tourists – those who touch, stroke, walk or climb upon, collect objects or places – do not speak, or, if they do so, ‘language’ as a distinctive tool of communication goes unnoticed.

Obviously the argument cannot be pushed too far, as the basis of Urry’s work is firmly grounded in a sociological approach to tourism, rather than in linguistics or intercultural studies. What is remarkable, though, is that even sociolinguistic perspectives on Tourism Studies can be blind to concrete language mediation and translation concerns. For example, Dann’s seminal work on the language of tourism in a sociolinguistic perspective appears to draw attention to the linguistic component of the tourist experience, as he claims that:

so pervasive and essential is the language of tourism, that, without it, tourism itself would surely cease to exist. In the absence of a sociolinguistic basis, the world’s largest industry would simply grind to a halt, and we would all remain at home – deaf, dumb, and blind to the beauties of creation and the voice of the Other (1996: 249).
Yet, although extracts from translated texts from a variety of languages are plentiful in this text, Dann does not ever refer to translation practices, nor to any other language mediation process. Significantly, ‘languaging’ is the only interlinguistic process mentioned in this work, and this strategy basically consists in the deliberate introduction of loan words, particularly in tourism promotion. However, this strategy is considered to be similar to the use of rhetorical figures such as alliteration or onomatopoeia in tourist texts, and therefore it appears that only the symbolic or figurative function of languaging is focused on in this work, at the expense of its fundamental interlinguistic nature (cfr. Agorni, 2018b: 257-8). It must be pointed out, nevertheless, that Dann’s work was published in 1996, at a time when the specificity of the language of tourism had not yet emerged and the intercultural aspects of specialized tourism communication had not been developed as they are today.

Still, the specificity of tourism communication and particularly the material aspects of language interactions in the field of tourism continue to be ignored by scholars working in Tourism Studies today. For example, a number of recent publications have started taking into consideration the agents of a “tourism mediation” process (Zátori 2016; Ooi 2006), and professionals working in this sector have been defined as “destination experience mediators” (Zátori, 2016: 117). This is a rather large category, including people, organisations or even texts which provide guidance and interpretation on a variety of tourism-related topics. Zátori defines destination experience mediators as:

- service providers, individuals or goods, which give advice to tourists on what to notice, how to consume various tourism products. Tour operators, tour and programme providers, tourism promotional authorities, tour guides, travel reviews, guidebooks and friendly locals (ibid.).

It goes without saying that all these providers will have to become involved with language and culture mediation or translation processes in one way or the other - particularly because Zátori concentrates on international tourism practices. Yet, no mention of the concrete aspects of language interaction is made throughout this work. Therefore, it is evident that language and cultural mediation or translation processes are not considered relevant enough ingredients of the tourist encounter, and this is arguably a limit for the research conducted in Tourism Studies.

Similar conclusions can be drawn if we leave theoretical and methodological considerations aside, and examine the role played by
academic institutions providing teaching in the field of tourism. Durán Muñoz (2011) has pointed out that the large variety of courses in Tourism Studies, International Tourism, Tourism and Hospitality, Destination Management etc. offered in Spain both at undergraduate and graduate level rarely include translation, language and cultural mediation practices or intercultural skills in general. As a matter of course, traditional Tourism Studies programmes are hosted by Departments of Economics or Management in Spain⁴, and in spite of the fact that cross-disciplinary programmes are becoming more and more popular, the specificity of translation and language and cultural mediation for the tourist sector does not appear to have been fully taken into account in these programmes curricula yet.

4. Specialized Training in Translation, Language and Intercultural Mediation Applied to the Field of Tourism: Need for a State of the Art?

Joint degree courses offering a combination of subjects abound in Foreign Languages Departments, where the situation is quite different. Foreign language competence is in fact very often applied to a number of more or less vocational disciplines. This is the case of the various degree courses offering programmes in foreign languages and cultures combined with socio-economic subjects, such as tourism management, destination planning, tourism policy, business administration, etc. Such programmes are extremely popular in Italy, for example, but although they do address the need for specialized training in the tourist sector with a clear awareness of the importance of strong foreign language skills, they do not delve into the specificity of language and intercultural mediation processes nor do they generally provide specialized courses in translation for the tourist sector.

Things are not very different if the few degree courses distinctively focusing on tourism translation and intercultural mediation are taken into account. As pointed out earlier, almost all translator training institutions provide some training and practice in the field of tourism translation, but only a few universities offer courses under a “tourism

⁴ The situation of Tourism degrees offered by Italian universities appears to be very similar to that of their Spanish counterparts, as degree courses in “Scienze del Turismo” (tourism sciences), Turismo Internazionale (international tourism), Management del Turismo (tourism management) are always offered by Departments of Management and Economics.
translation/mediation” label. No translator training institute at university level seems to be currently offering this type of degree course in Italy, for example.

Courses of this type are easier to find in Spain, however. Far from an intention to advertise them, I would like to cite just an example for the sake of argument. The University of Granada hosts a double degree programme in Translation and Interpretation for the Tourist Sector. This is a five-year course jointly organized by the Department of Translation and Interpreting Studies and the Department of Economics. Accordingly, there is a clear dividing line in terms of subjects taught in this programme. On the one hand, we find language and translation-oriented courses, such as foreign languages and cultures, translator and interpreter professional concerns, documentary research applied to translation, translation technologies etc. On the other, socio-economic topics, such as information technology for tourism management, statistics applied to the tourist sector, principles of economics, tourism administrative management, accountancy of tourism businesses, etc. In spite of the fact that specialized training in translation and languages for specific purposes are central subjects, the programme appears to be still very much split into the two different areas of study of foreign languages (and translation) and socio-economic studies. Besides, and more to the point of my argument, the two areas keep to their own academic models and traditions, as the “split” curriculum makes clear, rather than moving towards a more innovative interdisciplinary approach.

Obviously this article should be considered only as a starting point for an in-depth consideration of the state of the art of specialized training in translation and intercultural mediation practices applied to the tourist sector. Further investigation into the topic and possibly a broad overview of the education opportunities at tertiary level in the field of tourism translation, mediation and cross-cultural communication practices would be necessary to be able to formulate realistic assumptions. My aim here is simply to stimulate a debate on the evident need for innovative programmes of study, reflecting the multi-disciplinary nature of contemporary tourism and paying special attention to the language(s) and the communicative practices used in this field.

5. Future Prospects of the Training of Tourism Translators and Intercultural Mediators

The argument I have attempted to advance in the previous sections is that the training programmes devoted to the study of tourism appear to be generally oriented towards economic and management applications, even in those cases where translation and other language mediation practices have a key role to play. Now I would like to suggest that we could change this perspective and foreground translation, or, rather, the whole set of communicative mediation activities applied to the field of tourism. Hence, translation and intercultural mediation could be at the core of curricula designed to train high-level professionals capable of dealing with the multi-disciplinary nature of tourism communication. These new educational opportunities in the domain of tourism communication could be set up alongside the more traditional range of available training in tourism management.

Tourism translation, meant as a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communicative practice, appears to be fully qualified to play a primary role in terms of training as it is found at the crossroad not only of a number of subjects referring to the specific domains related to tourism (such as history, art history and architecture, geography, economics etc.) but also of different semiotic resources employed in tourism communication (speech, writing, sounds, pictures and even tactile experiences in museums for example). Thus, translation meant as a process of mediation can and in fact does deal with the multidisciplinary nature of tourism communication by using a combination of semiotic and technological resources.

Undoubtedly, digital developments have had a strong influence on translation and language mediation practices. As a consequence, training in the areas of audio description, subtitling and audio-visual translation in general are flourishing; indeed, audio-visual translation (AVT) is probably the most developed field of research and application in Translation Studies nowadays. But new technology and digital service developments are having an extraordinary impact on tourism practices too. Audio tours and other forms of audio-video guiding are becoming more and more popular, as they can be conceived of as a sort of re-mediation (Fina 2018) of the traditional guide book or travel guide.

Furthermore, a number of studies have been recently carried out to investigate the ways in which technological developments may be used to customize the tourist experience to visitors’ needs and expectations and
create new ways to engage them in personalized experiences. For example, the user-friendly interfaces available on smartphones and tablets are fashioning specific and personalized tourist offers (Anacleto et al. 2014). Also, digital media and new technologies are increasingly employed in order to enrich and personalize on-site tourist experiences, and this development has already attracted the attention of several scholars (Gretzel et al. 2011; Wang et al. 2012).

As a matter of fact, the contemporary drive towards creating new ways to engage visitors in personalized experiences is producing a positive effect also from a socially inclusive point of view: today, as never before, the tourist industry appears to be able to satisfy the needs and desires of a very large and diversified tourist population. In the near future, much more attention will be paid to tourists, and services will be more customized according to basic identity frames, such as the tourist’s culture (and language), age, gender, and (dis)ability (Richards 2011; Weiler and Black 2015).

Disability is a socially and culturally constructed notion: it includes people with a variety of disabilities and/or impairments, different levels of body and mind functioning, as well as ‘temporarily abled’ people, that is people who will experience some loss of function in old age. In other words, disability is, or will probably be, a fact of life for all of us. The social and cultural import of tourism accessibility is increasingly coming to the fore as a consequence of population ageing in contemporary society, and it is going to be one of the main challenges of the future as far as the fields of tourism, leisure and travel are concerned (Kastenholz et al. 2015, 1261; Agovino et al. 2017, 58). The European Network for Accessible Tourism has been active since 2006, and today accessibility has been established as one of the eight areas for joint actions in the EU supporting the core objectives pursued by the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (ibid., 58). As a consequence, as I have pointed out elsewhere, tourism participation is increasingly being recognized as a right for all citizens, as it has a strong impact for the promotion of a sense of citizenship and well-being (Agorni, 2019).

The term “accessibility” itself is becoming a buzzword, and not exclusively in relation to disability, but also in the sense of facilitating access, particularly to technology products or services, by removing all potential barriers that may hinder a certain process. However, in tourism communication, and especially in cross-cultural communication, the first barrier to be confronted with is the lingua-cultural barrier, and for this reason linguistic and intercultural mediation practices have to be
employed. Katan has recently spoken of a sort of linguistic “disablement” to be compared with in translation, “in terms of being linguistically and culturally challenged” (Katan, 2018: 28). Hence, accessibility in tourism cross-cultural communication means granting ALL tourists a functional access to the tourist experience. And it becomes evident that high-level training and a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of tourism multilingual and multimodal communication is an urgent and real necessity.

6. Rising to the Challenges of Accessibility and Engagement in Tourism Intercultural Communication

A group of scholars involved in foreign language and translation teaching in several Italian universities sent out a proposal for a TranslatingEurope Workshop on professional training in tourism communication and translation in December 2017. The Directorate-General for Translation (DGT) of the European Commission in Italy appeared to be rather skeptical about the project at first, as it did not seem in line with the topics normally addressed by these events, topics defined as issues related to the translation profession – i.e. terminology management, quality, technology, skills and employability in the translation and language sector. Yet, the proposal was eventually selected by the European Commission and received full funding for a two-day conference⁶.

The workshop aimed at highlighting the need for specialized training focusing on the multi-faceted dimension of tourism communication. Moreover, the concept of accessibility was given special prominence, as it was defined not only in terms of making tourism communication, services and products accessible by means of a scrupulous process of linguistic and intercultural mediation, but also in the framework of social inclusion.

In fact, today in order to rise to the challenge of offering effective professional training in tourism translation, a balance has to be found between the tenets of accessibility (as explained above) and the need to make tourism services, products and activities appealing to an extremely

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⁶ The event, organized at the Brescia Campus of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in April 2018, was well attended by an audience made up of university students, professionals working in the tourist sector and tourism promotion representatives as well as professional translators.
Last accessed 13 July 2019.
variegated audience. This means that the particular flavours and values attached to specific destinations have to be made accessible as well as captivating to an audience that is not familiar with them, and but is eager to grasp them. Thus, a translators’ or mediators’ capacity for intervention cannot be restricted to the level of language and/or cultural adaptation, but should focus more thoroughly on audience reception, taking into account criteria such as entertainment and, especially, engagement. Drawing on Csikszentmihályi’s theory of “flow” (Csikszentmihályi and LeFevre, 1989), Gilli and Rozzi have defined “engagement” with reference to the visitors’ experience of art in museums as the state where the challenge-skill balance creates an optimal and satisfying experience (2013). Thus, an engaging translation will be gratifying and stimulate visitors to the limits of their abilities.

Significantly, Tourism Studies scholars are increasingly aware of the need of making tourism offers accessible, appealing and engaging at the same time. Some of them have come up with attention-grabbing methods and creative strategies of transposition in intercultural communication that go well beyond schematic lingua-cultural transfer processes still applied in traditional translator training. For example, Ooi has claimed that tourism service providers should be involved into “crafting tourism experiences”, hence highlighting both their degree of responsibility and creativity (2006: 52). As a consequence, tourism (service) professionals are arguably granted more space of manoeuvre than their colleagues working as translators of tourism communication, as, according to Ooi, they are asked to find “a balance of the need for tourists to notice and interpret tourism products in desirable ways, while at the same time allowing them to feel engaged in making choices, bridging the foreign/local gap and overcoming difficulties” (2006: 58).

On that account, the creative approaches to tourism communication developed in the field of Tourism Studies seem to be unfettered by the constraining effects deriving from traditional contrastive linguistic models of translation still at work in Translation Studies, which relegate translators to the apparently neutral, low-risk role of ‘faithful’ language mediators (cfr. Katan, 2016a). Therefore, this asks for some kind of compromise: if translators and professionals in language and intercultural mediation could complement their linguistic and intercultural competence with some of the creativity of their colleagues active in Tourism Studies, their professional expertise would probably be more in line with the current demands of the tourism market.
This argument can be taken a step further if we claim that new, creative and intervening practices to be applied in tourism translation could affect Translation Studies at a theoretical and methodological level. Kelly was well ahead of her time when she put tourist texts at the core of translator training: the notion of accessibility meant in the wide social sense of inclusiveness, availability and user-friendliness, together with the concept of engagement, with its attention to attention-grabbing strategies and visitor motivation, are increasingly exerting their influence on translation theory and methodology (cfr. Neves, 2018 and Agorni and Spinzi, 2019).

The two criteria taken together are triggering the functional paradigms of translation to their farthest conclusion, as their strong plea for pragmatic effectiveness is definitely challenging fidelity, or traditional adherence to linguistic form (Katan, 2016b; Agorni, 2019: 27).

7. Conclusion

The role of language and cultural mediators and the crucial importance of their specialized training will continue to be relevant to the professional world only if the new global challenges that have resonance in the fields of education, innovation and technology, accessibility and social inclusion are accepted. One of the areas which could benefit the most from redefining traditional translators’ and mediators’ tasks and responsibility is intercultural tourism communication.

Nowadays, tourism translation and intercultural communication appear to be very complex fields of studies, somehow in between Translation and Tourism Studies. If, on the one hand, Tourism Studies should recognize the fundamental importance of language in any tourist exchange, Translation Studies could benefit from some innovative trends in Tourism Studies, and use them to free itself from rather old-fashioned preoccupations, such as the narrow concepts of linguistic transpositions of meaning.

To paraphrase Ooi, we could say that the new intercultural mediators could educate tourists about different cultural values, and thus “sculpt tourism experiences” (Ooi 2006: 66). In other words, tourism translators and intercultural mediators could help to frame tourist experiences at a deep, cross-cultural level.
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Habitus of the Future Translator – A T-shaped Expert

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Abstract

This article reports on interviews with six in-house LSP translators working in two non-translation companies. The interview analysis employs the tools of Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital. The interviewees' interactions and educational needs of future translators are further explained by applying the concept of T-shaped expertise. Among the findings of this study is how these translators use interaction to build and maintain their status as translation experts. They accomplish this in relation to the subject matter experts of their companies, and their own desire to be accepted as professionals. Further analysis explains how the forms of interaction affect the quality of information the translators receive from the experts and how this in turn may affect the quality of their translations. The conclusion suggests pedagogical methods for preparing future translators for similar interaction.

1. Introduction

Translation competence models (e.g. Göpferich 2009, Pacte 2009, EMT 2017), textbooks on translation (e.g. Byrne 2006, Robinson 2012) and research articles on translator training and translation routines (e.g. Chesterman 2005, Rogers 2006, Walczyński 2015, Gambier 2016) list consultation with experts as an information source on LSP translation. However the sources do not elaborate further how this interaction is performed, i.e. how to select and approach an expert, how to formulate questions or decide the amount of contextual information to be given in order to receive accurate information beneficial in solving of the problem that motivated the consultation. Translators are the initiators of this interaction, they choose the experts and the communication channels and engage the experts in
interaction with questions, contextual information and other communicative actions. The experts whom the translators approach seldom have formal training or expertise in linguistics or translation. They view the source texts from the viewpoint of their own training and expertise as, for example, descriptions of legal or technical processes and objects, not as functions, concepts or terms that need to be translated into another language.

The material reported and analyzed here is comprised of interviews with six translators. The translators are professionals who work in in-house translation teams in two different companies translating complex LSP texts dealing mainly with legal and technical topics. The term “expert” in this article refers to subject matter experts who have academic degrees and/or extensive professional experience in the domain of the LSP texts and who either work in the same company as the interviewed translators or who are external specialists consulting in company projects. Due to constraints of space their description is very limited.

Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, field and capital (Bourdieu 1984; 1986) are used in the analysis of information the interviews yielded. The concepts are used to explain the motives and interactions of the translators who act as linguistic experts inside companies where the primary nature of the industry is not that of translation and where the translators are in a supporting or hierarchically subordinate role vis-à-vis the experts in the primary field.

The article then links the concept of T-shaped expertise (Guest 1991, Gardner and Estry 2017, Conley et al. 2017) to successful communication within problem-solving scenarios between experts from different fields.

The article concludes with suggestions on how to improve translator training by including cross-disciplinary interaction in authentic or simulated translation tasks in the curriculum.

2. Habitus, Field and Capital in LSP Translation

Simeoni (1998: 2), echoing Toury’s notion that “there is little point in a process-oriented study of whatever type, unless the cultural-semiotic conditions under which it occurs are incorporated into it.” (Toury 1995: 13), was among the first to introduce Bourdieu’s theories and the concept of habitus into translation studies (cf. Bourdieu 1984;
Simeoni 1998; Inghilleri 2005; Sakamoto 2019). He defines habitus as “a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways. The dispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are 'regular' without being consciously coordinated or governed by any 'rule'[...]” (Simeoni 1998: 16).

Simeoni further describes habitus as both “structured”, i.e. something that is formed in contact with social structures in everyday life and education, and “structuring” or “a bundle of dispositions thus acquired contribute directly to the elaboration of norms and conventions” (ibid 1998: 22). Simeoni views translators’ habitus as “characterized by conformity to a greater extent than is the competence of other agents active in the cultural field” (ibid. 1998: 8). Sela-Sheffy challenges this notion of subservience Simeoni proposed by focusing on the struggles of translators to “establishing their profession as an autonomous source of symbolic capital” and to acquire cultural capital themselves (Sela-Sheffy 2005: 20). We will return to the concept of cultural capital later in this article.

According to Robinson the ability to translate LSP texts is tied to the habitus or else the translator projecting himself or herself in the habitus of an expert (Robinson 2012: 110). By this Robinson refers to a situation where translators try to assume the viewpoints of an expert and use this as a guide to solve translation problems they encounter.

Three other important Bourdieu concepts that need discussing here are, firstly field which refers to the social space where individuals or agents take part in a struggle or a game – a social action that has a set of rules pertinent to that field. Secondly the agents need capital which can refer to cultural capital, that is skills or knowledges learned through education or experience, and social capital, e.g. networks (Bourdieu 1986: 291). For a translator cultural capital may include language skills and “specialized training in an adjacent field” (Simeoni 1998: 14). Some fields require capital to enter and the more restricted the field, the more capital is needed (Simeoni 1998: 17). From the viewpoint of a professional translator the fields open to them are restricted by the cultural or social capital they have, either by not being able to receive translation assignments in LSP domains or language pairs they have no skills with or the inability to produce translations of a quality that satisfies the initiator or the customer or lack of networks and contact to translation agencies. Thirdly in relation to the struggle or the game there exists the feel for the game or an “individual’s sense of how to operate within the established norms of the field” (ibid. 2005: 2).
For the purpose of this article the most important form of capital is that of symbolic. Bourdieu defines symbolic capital as “a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honorability” (1984: 291).

Robinson elaborates on the significance of status:

for the translator or interpreter a higher consideration than money or continued employability is professional pride, professional integrity, professional self-esteem. We all want to feel that the job we are doing is important, that we do it well, and that the people we do it for appreciate our work (Robinson 2012: 26).

2.1 The Expert as an Information Source in LSP Translation

Toury (2011: 173) describes translation problems in expert to expert communication from the viewpoint of three separate discourses that seek to define the nature of translation problems as source, process and target oriented problems. He further states that, despite attempts to define the term, its “terminological status is far from clear” in translation studies (ibid). In this paper the translation problem is defined from the viewpoint of the translators interviewed as a word, term, phrase or other passage of text that can’t be translated satisfactorily (subjective to the translator or to the initiator of the translation) without access to advanced subject matter knowledge.

Chesterman (2005: 82) divides problem-solving strategies used by professional translators into three categories: search, creativity and textual strategies. He describes these strategies as tools translators use in order to solve problems with understanding the source text or producing the target text (these often include terminological difficulties). The search strategies include “use of the Internet, brainstorming a colleague, phoning that friend in the Ministry, checking through parallel texts, and so on”. He does not elaborate on these strategies further “although they might warrant considerable discussion in the classroom” (ibid.).

Robinson (2012: 111) describes access to subject matter knowledge through four scenarios that are based on level of exposure to subject matter or “job-related experience”:

1. having worked as an expert in the field earlier,
2. working on the peripheries of the field in some position not involving expertise (e.g. secretary of a law firm),
3. contacting someone working in the field,
4. using materials that describe the field or the LSP used (terminologies, dictionaries, parallel texts) (ibid. 111).

Here Robinson uses field in the sense of being employed in the field or profession, but this can also be interpreted as Bourdieu’s field, i.e. a social space that has its governing rules and includes individuals who possess suitable habitus and feel for the game for the field.

Research on the interactions between translators and experts in LSP translation is not abundant. Rogers (2006) reports on interviews conducted with two freelance translators of technical texts. She summarizes that freelancer translators felt that such interaction “needed to be handled carefully, balancing diminishing returns with judgements about the accuracy of the proposed solutions” (ibid. 2006: 336). The freelancers also listed skills that must be developed for the interaction: “how to formulate questions to obtain the required information, adopting different perspectives, asking what-if questions, clarifying, requesting examples, recognizing dead-ends and so on.” (Rogers 2006: 336). Rogers does not elaborate on the mode of contact or any other details of the interaction(s) nor the interactions between in-house translator and in-house experts that were also studied in the same research project.

2.2 T-shaped Expertise and Feel for the Game

T-shaped expertise integrates depth, defined in terms of disciplinary knowledge and the ability to understand how individuals with that knowledge function and interact to accomplish a desired outcome within or across a system(s), and breadth, defined as the professional abilities that allow someone with profound disciplinary knowledge to interact meaningfully with others who possess different disciplinary knowledge in order to affect an outcome that might not otherwise be possible. (Gardner and Estry 2017).

The concept of T-shaped expertise is related to Bourdieu’s concept of feel for the game, or the knowledge or skill-set a translator would need in order to work in close interaction with experts such as a translator.
working inside a non-translation company or freelancer with direct customers of different special fields (e.g. technical, business).

Depth of understanding in one field (e.g. translation) is required to be a competent professional. However, in order to co-operate and “seamlessly exchange knowledge between fields of study” (Conley et al. 2016: 166) - essential in complex translation problem solving tasks - the participants need communicative or “interactional expertise”. With this, Gorman (2010) refers “to learning the ‘language’ of another expertise without having to master all the disciplinary methods and practices”. In a pilot study (Conley et al. 2016: 169) technology students were introduced to “social aspect of technology, social science methods and related philosophical and ethical analyses”. The results suggested that undergraduate students can “refine their understanding of their own core expertise and demonstrate an awareness and aptitude for making connections to how other expertise can contribute to addressing complex problems” (ibid. 173). According to this author’s knowledge similar studies have not been completed with translation students, although there have been cross-curricular training programs (e.g. technical writer training FAST-program at University of Tampere, Finland).

3. Methodology

Six translators from two different companies were interviewed using a qualitative semi-structured interview protocol (Kvale 1996, Brinkmann and Kvale 2015) with three main themes that were divided into several sub-themes:

1) background (7 sub-themes) that included questions on educational background, work experience, professional identity and attitudes to group work,
2) personal working methods (5 sub-themes) that included questions on tools, work routines and information searching methods and
3) co-operation with experts (6 sub-themes).

Some of the sub-themes (e.g. tools, translation routines, outsourcing practices etc.) fell outside the scope of this paper and are not reported here.
The average length of an interview was 85 minutes with variation between 61 minutes (B2) and 143 minutes (A3). The interviews were conducted face to face in Finnish, recorded and transcribed by the author and reported here in English, all translations are by the author.

The interviews were analyzed qualitatively using a data-driven content analysis method where categories and themes were identified from the transcriptions. This was done solely by the author and it is recognized that this may cause problems with analysis reliability.

Information about the structure of the companies and translation units was also collected from the company webpages to support the interviews.

3.1 The Interviewees and the Companies They Work for

The interviewees are translators who work as in-house translators in two companies (A and B). All translators use translation memory tools, document archival and process management systems and refined work flows. The translators are native Finns, some have bilingual backgrounds and all have a graduate degree in translation or linguistics. All have several years of work experience at the companies and some previous careers as freelance translators.

Company A is a medium sized consultancy firm that mainly deals with international legal and business cases. The translation team is an independent unit that offers translation and linguistic services to other units of the company. Four of the in-house translators (A1, A2, A3, A4) were interviewed, A1 and A3 were female, A2 and A4 male.

Company B is a medium sized NGO that deals in creation of, and translation of, documents that establish specifications and procedures and their terminology in special fields. The translation projects vary from half a page to several dozens of pages. Two of the in-house translators (B1, B2) were interviewed. Both were male.

Both companies employ internal experts and also use external experts in some of their projects when needed. Both companies have other divisions that support the primary division (sales, human resources, communication, knowledge management etc.). In company A the experts have degrees in law, business or accounting. In company B both the experts are generally from scientific and technical backgrounds.
4. Analysis of Interviews

The information yielded by the interviews are reported below, but due to space constraints several sub-themes not directly relevant to this article have been left out. Bourdieu’s concepts are used as the framework of this analysis.

4.1 Translators’ Motivations to Contact Experts

The interviewees list the following types of situations for contacting an expert. They all described a process where they first use all the other available information sources they have, and only as the last resort contact the expert:

- Inability to select the best equivalent one among several possible terms, inability to find any term, and apparent terminological gap in the target language [interviewees A1-A4, B1-B2].
- Domain or project specific review of decisions (term, emphasis, omission etc.) made in a situation where there are several apparently equal or synonymous alternatives [A1-A4, B1-B2].
- Clarification of the meaning of the source text (complex or poor quality of language or vague meaning) [A1-A4, B1-B2].
- Need for more information on the project or customer [A1, A2, A3, B1].
- Help with the differences in the source and target language special domains (e.g. different accounting principles or stock market rules) [A1-A4, B1-B2].
- Need for co-operation to re-create the perspective of the customer in target language using domain terminology or phrases or spinning a certain viewpoint in the text (e.g. a defense in a court case or creating advertising texts) [A1-A3].
- Creation of new target language term in a special field [B1, B2].

Three out of the six also commented on the differences in the interaction between an in-house translator and a freelance translator based on their own experiences of both. They did not see the freelancer to expert relationship as any way interactive at all. This is
analogous to the findings Rogers reported in similar interactions (see chapter 2.1).

4.2 Initiation of the Interaction and the Channels Used

All of the interviewees used email as a primary communication tool – even in company B, where the physical distance between translators and experts is only a few meters. In some cases the translators initiated the interaction by phone, text chat or by visiting the office of the expert [especially A2 and B1] to ask confirmation for a choice of term. Generally, the interviewees sent a longer email with the context in the message or attached as a Word document, with the problematic parts clearly marked. Usually the email was sent at the end of the translation project with all the questions included. All interviewees stressed the importance of keeping the message clear and concise in order to save the expert’s and their own time.

“I prefer contacting experts in writing since it makes explaining the problem so that they understand my [linguistic] viewpoint faster and easier.” [A3, B2]

Five of the interviewees always include their own translation suggestions to the messages if they have them. They cite three reasons for this:

1) helping in contextualizing the problem;
2) expediting the process by signaling to the expert what they already know about the problem;
3) maintaining an image of a linguistic professional capable of understanding the source text and also the concept in the target language.

“I don’t like to send just the question without first trying thoroughly to find an answer and then presenting this research to the expert to validate my suggestions.” [A4]

“I never leave the source language term [even if I am not sure of my choice] in the translation, because I don’t trust the translation skills of the experts’, I fear they would come up with a translation worse than my suggestions. They are experts of the substance, not of language nor translation.” [B2]
This approach can be seen as an evidence of having ‘a feel for the game’: in company A, translators support the experts, who are often also the translation project leaders. These interviewees try to provide the translations with minimal workload for the experts. Yet, at the same time, they maintain their own habitus as an expert, a professional among other professionals, which carries social capital in the company and in the field of translation.

One interviewee [B1] seldom provided their own suggestions when they contacted an external expert for the first time. The main reason he gave was not to restrict experts’ thinking when they were answering B1’s question. B1 also noted that in some cases some external expert, new to the role may adopt an overtly strong objection to some of the suggestions B1 presents by email. This opposition B1 credits to mistrust of translators as professionals or to misunderstanding of the role of the expert (a validator of terminology, not the language) and also the experts’ adherence to foreign language terminology, which is wide-spread in some technical domains in Finnish: “Some engineers have difficulties in understanding why there must be a Finnish term in the translation, when ‘nobody’ uses it.” B1 prefers to move discussion of such items to translation review meetings company B organizes at the end of translation projects. In these meetings, B1 is usually successful in explaining why target language terminology is preferable and in convincing the external expert new to the role that B1 is a linguistic professional capable of translating domain specific texts. With internal experts and external experts familiar with B1 he usually provides the suggestions during the first contact.

According to B1, this approach seeks to avoid any negative consequences stemming from a struggle between a translator, who is responsible for the translation quality, and experts who do not understand their own role in the project or do not trust the expertise of the translator. The negative consequences were feedback sent to the project leader and the extra time that was needed to discuss the issues and feedback in the review meetings.

Risku et al. (2016: 244) have described similar situations from the viewpoint of centrality in translation networks where some of the in-house linguists studied are socially more active with the experts, while some interact with the experts only when they require information and have voluntarily remained in peripheral roles.

Active interaction may increase the social capital the translator has at the company in the form of personal networks and knowledge of current and possible future translation projects gained during the
interactions. A1 and A2 state this as a major reason for contacting experts face-to-face during and outside of translation projects.

4.3 Problems in Translator – Expert Interaction

“An in-house translator should be a person who can in their mind assume the role of the project lead expert, understand their situation and what they need [from the translator], the pressures they are working under.” [A2]

This seems to reflect Robinson’s idea quoted earlier (see chapter 2) of translators projecting themselves into the habitus of an expert. Several of the interviewees who have experience with experts from various backgrounds describe differences between experts in regard to abilities to co-operate in problem solving. For example, those with a legal background are seen by the interviewees [A3, B1] as more able to grasp the validity of, and motives behind, questions regarding linguistic or translation problems in a text and are more able to take part in an interaction that advances problem solving; whereas experts with “technical” backgrounds often advise the translator “just read the text and translate it” [A3, B1].

“When I was working as a freelancer, engineers might brush my questions aside and tell me to just translate the words that are there.” [A3]

Interviewees speculate that this is due to the way language is employed in the legal profession, as a tool that is used to perform actions [A1, A3], whereas experts from engineering backgrounds “deal more with numbers” [A3]. This research sample is too small to draw any conclusions, but this may merit more research into co-operative situations between translators and experts to gain knowledge for the training of translators to better understand how to co-operate with experts from different backgrounds.

“It may be because in the legal profession splitting hairs or defining concepts carefully is just as important as in translation. They value the nuances and how concepts are expressed, just as much as translators do”. [A3]
The difficulties in interaction can be interpreted as lack of ‘feel for the game’ on both sides, the translators’ or the experts’, depending on what is considered ‘the field’, whether it is a translator creating a target language document with the help of an expert (field is co-operative) or exhibiting domain expertise with the language used by the professionals (linguist or non-linguist) among themselves (field is restricted to either of the parties).

4.4 Quality of the Interaction Between Translators and Experts

The interviewees reported only very few cases where information they received from an internal expert was not usable either directly as text in the translation, or indirectly in helping to solve the problem. They brought up one of the issues also reported by Rogers (2006) in chapter 2.1, namely the importance of learning how to phrase questions in order to receive information quickly.

“Sometimes they understand right away, sometimes you need to explain, especially if the question is not closely tied to the context.” [A2]

“Often when they don’t understand the question, they start explaining the situation from their viewpoint, that of a viewpoint of a legal expert, which is significantly different to mine when I’m looking for an answer to a situation where the languages don’t match one-for-one.” [A3]

“To a legal expert the target document is sort of an artefact that is used to perform things, they look at the whole thing” [A1]

“Sometimes expert’s replies are not about the subject matter or terminology that I asked about, but about linguistic aspects, often about phrases that must be used because the document type of the translation requires them.” [B1]

According to interviewees, the experts approach the translation problems and translated texts from their own specialist subject field and habitus, not a translator or linguistic. Especially in situations where the translator is not the dominant actor, the translators must adapt their requests for information in such a way that the expert is able to understand the request and provide the information needed accurately. This also usually makes the interaction quicker, which is valued in both companies where time pressures are present.
“There have been a few cases where I didn’t end up using the term I got [from an expert], this was because the source language concept for which I was looking for a translation for became clearer only later in the text.” [B2]

In some cases, the request for information might be made prematurely, in which case the question or suggested translation might be formulated in a way that does not succeed in eliciting information that is helpful. If the information cannot be adapted later, this means that the translator will have wasted his or her own and the expert’s time (this is also reflected in Roger’s remarks in chapter 2.1).

5. Conclusion

Although this paper did not examine translator education in itself, its implications are certainly significant for translator training. In order to acquire the skills and ability to interact with subject domain experts with different habitus, students could benefit from authentic (or simulated) interaction with experts in their fields and the games played on them. The goal of such training should be to foster a translator, whose habitus is a combination of linguistic expert and a professional capable of interaction with experts in other domains, i.e. a T-shaped expert. Since such skills take time to develop, and it is not feasible to integrate cross-disciplinary interaction with subject matter experts of all specialised fields included in the training curriculum. At Finnish universities, for instance, these often include translation of technical, legal, business and medical LSP texts (Pakkala-Weckström and Eskelinen forthcoming). A step in the right direction would be to build contacts with those fields that are most likely to be relevant to students once they graduate and identify the types of projects and exercises where the learning outcomes are easily transferable to other fields. This could benefit all stakeholders, be they students of all fields, teachers, university departments, and so forth. Developing this approach clearly warrants further research and pilot project studies.

Throughout the interviews there were also indications that the experts in different domains approached the translators’ contacts in various ways. Although the population sample of this study does not allow for generalized conclusions, this finding does merit research into co-operative situations between translators and experts in order to gain
insight into translator training in order to better understand how to interact with experts from different backgrounds.

References


Audiovisual Translation from Criticism to Popularisation: Reflections on how to Make Academic Research on AVT ‘Translational’.

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Abstract

This paper confronts the issue of linking up academic research on audiovisual translation with its effects both on real life and on development and change in the field, identifying two issues to be addressed in order for AVT research to feed into practice and attain a social impact: the necessity to come to a full understanding of the needs and demands of the whole range of actors involved in the process, whose mutual communication should be promoted using all means; and the need to identify strategies capable of both fostering research in its present form and popularising it with the aim of disseminating its results.

The first, theoretical section of the paper discusses the importance of encouraging networks and research partnerships between academia and the professional sector. In comparison to similar research in the social sciences and to research in other areas of the translation spectrum, a fair amount of collaboration already exists in the AVT field, at least amongst some of the actors involved in the process. However, the impact of research would certainly be wider if the existing cooperation were to become even more significant.

The second, more practical section proposes an action plan to kick start the implementation process for the changes identified as desirable: improving AVT outreach and engaging with the non-experts more productively, making results more directly useful to them. Stages 1 and 2 of the action plan focus on the targets of developing a common language and identifying the practical effects of audiovisual translation research. Stage 3 concentrates on how the results of research could be made accessible to the public at large, also providing a starting point to both optimize third mission portfolios and identify criteria for development and implementation of third mission indicators and metrics in Universities hosting Departments with the suitable AVT competences.

1. Introduction

This paper sets out to reflect on the question ‘How can academic research on audiovisual translation feed into practice and encourage
both development and change? This question is crucial for the development of meaningful research that can be of true value to the entire community involved in the audiovisual translation process.

However, attempts to answer it have been scarce as they rest on two challenging (and intertwined) issues:
1. fully understanding the needs and the expectations of the many different actors involved in the process and encouraging communication amongst them;
2. devising strategies aimed not only at boosting the already existing research, but above all at popularising and disseminating its results.

This paper aims to address these delicate issues with a view to the advancement of research in the social sciences generally and also in the specific field of AVT. It comprises two sections: the first, more theoretical one is subdivided into two subsections presenting a series of reflections both on the importance of encouraging networks and research partnerships between academia and the professional sector, and on the fact that a fair amount of collaboration does in fact already exist. However, as the latter has not proved to be sufficient for yielding more profitable results, the way ahead probably lies in the more widespread dissemination of research findings. The second, more practical section will propose an action plan aimed at offering a handful of suggestions on how to kick start the implementation process for the improvements and changes identified as desirable in the previous section.

2. Making research in AVT ‘translational’: Reflections on how to increase the social impact of academic research

In some scientific areas, such as medicine for instance, a third alternative paradigm has recently emerged between the dichotomous ends of pure and applied research and has grown into a separate research field: translational research (see, for example, Woolf 2008; Pomeroy and Sanfilippo 2015), i.e. scientific research that aims to make findings from basic research instantly useful for practical applications. Thus, translational medicine attempts to turn laboratory experiments into new treatments and clinical trials into everyday practice.

This section will consider how this paradigm may be fruitfully applied to research on audiovisual translation in order to make it ‘translational’ and increase its social impact. Firstly, we focus on how
this research currently seems to affect the surrounding community and on how this may be achieved to a more significant degree in the near future if properly channelled. Then, an action plan is devised in the following section with a view to improving its outreach by engaging with the non-experts, i.e. the public at large. As the primary purpose of this is to provide them with a resource and make its results useful to them, the issues identified in points (1) and (2) of the Introduction will now be analysed in greater detail.

Issue 1: Understanding stakeholders’ needs and expectations:

One of the two issues hinted at above in addressing the question of how to channel academic research on audiovisual translation into practice is:

- understanding the needs and the expectations of the many different actors involved in the audiovisual translation process.

Though it may seem paradoxical, such needs and expectations are not, as yet, always fully clear to all academics (nor properly taken into account by them). Despite now focusing mostly on descriptive rather than prescriptive aspects of Translation Studies, some scholars still choose to linger along the branch of pure research as sketched by Holmes (Holmes 1988 [1972]; Toury 1995). They discuss (often specialised) (micro-)aspects of the translation activity, into which they delve with a punctilious attention to detail, shedding light on the production and interpretation stages of translation in newer, more informative ways than ever before.

However, they often fail to take into due account the process as a whole, let alone consider the legitimate expectations of most end users. In short, although the practical application of research seems to be acquiring greater importance in some countries, many researchers still appear to lose sight of the fact that the move from a theoretical process to tangible practice is not only long overdue but must necessarily generate benefits for the whole community involved and bring about widespread social change.

As Díaz Cintas states: “The tension between theoretical and applied approaches is a constant in the relationship between university and industry. It is a situation that arises not only in the case of translation, but is also encountered in other fields of learning.” (2004: n.p.).
In relation to the specific field of AVT, Díaz Cintas emphasises some academics’ ‘elitist’ interest in film research only, while other audiovisual programmes are virtually ignored. This focus on films is doubly elitist, Díaz Cintas continues, as it also seems to concentrate exclusively on ‘prestigious’ cultural products and, within such products, exclusively on the linguistic dimension (*Ibidem*). Díaz Cintas suggests that:

> the solution lies in a symbiosis that accommodates theory, practise [sic] and teaching. It is of little benefit to us or our society to shut ourselves away in an ivory tower and draw up theories with no empirical base, to produce a practical work that has no theoretical base, or to teach processes that have nothing to do with the reality of the workplace and have no solid theory behind them. To gain visibility and to assure the social welfare of translation, we need to join forces and avoid the creation of an unnecessary schism between the three dimensions, each as indispensable as the others. (*Ibidem*)

Writing from the other extreme of the translation process, Sánchez also hopes for “greater co-operation between academic institutions and industry” (2004: 17), though it is worth stressing here that experts from within the profession do seem to recognise that individualism and self-referencing are challenges that need to be addressed in the production stage: “although those working in this process form a team, their work tends to be carried out on an individual basis.” (Martínez 2004: 7).

The autoreferentiality of the academic world at large, i.e. its tendency to compulsively refer to itself when it comes to research, is a well-known phenomenon. However, this would appear to happen to a lesser extent in the field of audiovisual translation than elsewhere (probably also due to the nature of the AVT process, which includes aspects that are not strictly linguistic or theory-based); but it is still an undeniable fact, as is clear from the quotations above.

And yet, what is nowadays commonly referred to as cross-fertilisation or cross-pollination, i.e. interactions aimed at knowledge transfer between different communities in order to become mutually beneficial and productive, is obviously a crucial issue; and this has long been a tenet amongst the most enlightened researchers on audiovisual translation. As Denton and Ciampi remind us, “members of the (mostly) dubbing professions have been involved right from the outset in the debate on screen translation in Italy” (2012: 402): “dubbing script writers, dubbing directors and dubbing actors and
more recently subtitling companies” (401) have been a characterising feature of the ‘Forlì conferences’ over the years and professionals have also been invited to work side by side with academics in training programmes organised at university level. In an exchange of invitations which reveals the deeply-felt need for mutual knowledge and expertise-sharing, professionals have then asked academics to intervene in conferences organised for the market. Di Fortunato and Paolinelli (1996), for example, collect the proceedings of one such conference. Moreover, these two authors have also produced book-length accounts on the topic of AVT, considered from the different perspectives of participants belonging to different professions within the field (Paolinelli and Di Fortunato 2005). Nor can the useful role of AIDAC (Associazione Italiana Dialoghisti Adattatori Cinetelevisivi/Italian Association of Cinema and TV Dialoguists and Adapters) be underestimated, particularly in view of its production of an online newsletter, which regularly shares reviews of dubbed films foregrounding the characteristic features of the actual dubbing process. Italy being a dubbing rather than a subtitling country, the focus has understandably been mostly on dubbing. Finally, to open up a wider perspective, it is also worth mentioning the valuable function of the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation (ESIST), which operates at an international level thanks to the members it has attracted from all over the world.

As for the possible areas of practical academic intervention within the specific subsector of research on subtitling, Díaz Cintas mentions “Studies on the reception of subtitles to establish the appropriate reading speed, the easiest conventions, etc.” (Ibidem) and again, making reference to Italy, the issue of target audience perception is a research aspect in which Forlì academics have always excelled. Researchers at Forlì have in fact also attempted to recreate actual working conditions in the training courses they have organised over the years, especially in their Master’s degree course in Screen Translation, which also offers, for example, ‘hands on’ practice in

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1 The Dipartimento di Studi Interdisciplinari in Traduzione, Lingue e Culture/Department of Interdisciplinary Studies in Languages, Translation and Cultures (SITLeC), University of Bologna at Forlì has a strong tradition of studies on AVT. In addition to running a postgraduate course in Screen Translation, it has collected, over the years, an electronic body of audiovisual material and transcripts of film dialogues and subtitles and organised widely known international conferences on AVT (for example, Between Word and Image: Updating Research in Screen Translation in 2005).
audio-description and respeaking for the visually or acoustically impaired.

Summing up:
- the encouragement of networks and research partnerships between academia and the professional sector is undoubtedly one of the keys to promote communication and cross-pollination amongst the different actors in the audiovisual translation process;
- and yet, despite a fair amount of collaboration already happening, something is still missing if such partnerships are to work more fruitfully.

Issue 2: Devising strategies aimed not only at boosting already existing research, but above all at popularising and disseminating its results. The way ahead.

The missing ‘something’ may be the capacity to fully understand the average person’s needs in relation to audiovisual translation as well as the inability to assimilate academic and professional contributions due to a lack of ‘proficiency’ in the other’s jargon.

This paper argues that the most effective way to translate research findings into practical improvements and end-user benefits may be the full recognition that research on audiovisual translation can offer social trickle-down effects through a detailed analysis of the audience’s real needs and expectations. Furthermore, the gradual popularisation of audiovisual translation criticism is undoubtedly crucial to ensuring its dissemination amongst all the stakeholders and, consequently, cross-pollination.

The dignity of translation as an autonomous text, valid in itself and endowed with its own characteristics has been fully recognised (in line with the general direction of Translation Studies ever since the 1970s); however, many translation scholars have pointed out that it is also crucial to develop a form of criticism specific to it (e.g. Mattioli 1996: 193).[@9]

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2 “Fra i compiti attuali della traduttologia si impone con particolare urgenza quello di delineare e sviluppare una critica specifica della traduzione. Ricuperata ormai nella sua pienezza l’importanza della traduzione e sottrattala alla condizione di inferiorità, di subordinazione al testo originale, riconosciuta alla traduzione la dignità di testo autonomo con sue caratteristiche specifiche, è particolarmente importante proporsi il problema della critica delle traduzioni, considerandolo come uno dei generi della critica. Se si riconosce alla traduzione una specificità è ovvio che le compete una critica specifica. A me sembra che nello sviluppo straordinario della traduttologia cui stiamo
Despite its existence in the form of judgements on the quality of translated texts from the seventeenth century on (Berman 1995), translation criticism has not undergone the same development as what we commonly refer to as literary criticism, i.e. criticism of source texts. In actual fact it is barely existent (Osimo 2004) and therefore still in search of dignification (Berman 1995). This gap may be linked to the widespread lack of status of the translated text as such, which also raises crucial educational issues:

The marginality of translation even reaches educational institutions, where we witness a scandalous contradiction: on the one hand, an utter dependence on translated texts in curricula and research; on the other hand, a general tendency, in both teaching and publications, to elide the status of translated texts as translated, to treat them as texts originally written in the translating language. When students see that translation is not simple communication, but an appropriation of the foreign text to serve domestic purposes, they can come to question the appropriative movements in their own encounters with foreign cultures. (Venuti 1996: 328).

The obvious reference here is to literary translation, but it clearly applies to audiovisual translation as well, particularly to subtitling. One may even say it doubly applies to it, due to the well-known “disdain of literary intelligentsia, who seemed to dismiss film translating and the degree of difficulty involved in it as not worthy of their attention“ (Whitman-Linsen 1992: 17; also quoted in Díaz Cintas 2004: 51). This was the case up to just a few years ago, along with the tendency to view film subtitling as adaptation, and not translation. However, things are gradually changing, as both the growing number of scholarly works on film translation (these examples curiously all appeared in the same year: Bruti 2006, Chiaro 2006, Pavesi 2006, Tortoriello 2006), and Gambier’s arguments in

assistendo questo aspetto particolare sia uno dei più ricchi di futuro e dei più qualificanti.” [Among the current tasks of traductology, it is incumbent to outline and develop a specific form of translation criticism. The primacy of translation – freed from its condition of inferiority and subordination to the original text - being fully accepted by now, and its dignity as an autonomous text endowed with its own recognised characteristics, it is particularly important to raise the issue of the critique of translations, which should be looked upon as one of the genres of criticism. If specificity is recognised for translation, then it requires a specific form of criticism. It seems to me that, in the extraordinary development of traductology which we are witnessing, this particular aspect may hold the most noteworthy potentialities] (Mattioli 1996: 193, own translation)
favour of a paradigm shift from adaptation to ‘tradaptation’, seem to reveal (Gambier 2004: 179-180)\(^3\).

Audiovisual translation criticism is, indeed, far better developed than literary translation criticism, which still mostly relies on reviews, and Gambier’s sharp analysis of the Finnish subtitles of Kaurismäki’s *La vie de bohème* (*Ibidem*) is in itself good evidence of this. The real challenge in this area of translation studies may be to realise that recognition of the existence of an already developed field of audiovisual translation criticism is only the first step in the process of making research on translation ‘translational’, since:
- in most cases the language used in research is not directly accessible to the average end user or even to the professional; and
- academic research is normally made available via channels that do not allow for wide circulation.

The systems used by academia to evaluate research and make decisions about career advances should probably be listed amongst

\(^3\) “La notion d’accessibilité, centrée sur la situation et divers facteurs de réception, serait d’autant plus importante, on l’a vu, que la notion de texte ‘original’ (priorité ontologique de l’origine) est un leurre, un trompe l’oeil qui fait toujours croire à l’auteur-ité et à la linéarité texte-transfert-sous-titres.

[...] La chaine de transformations, aux macro- et micro-niveaux, sous la contrainte des idéologies, des canons esthétiques, des rapports de pouvoir et d’argent entre les agents engagés (producteurs, metteur en scène, distributeur, etc.) n’est pas sans rappeler la traduction perçue comme ‘reformulation’ ou ‘manipulation’ par André Lefevere (1992).

Dans cette perspective et cette dynamique, la pseudopolarité entre traduction (plus dépendante d’un ‘original’) et adaptation (relative autonomie par rapport à cet ‘original’) ne tient plus: il y a circulation textuelle et surtout synergie entre systèmes sémiotiques. D’où la notion proposée de tradaptation cinématographique (ou transadaptation), apte à englober tous les types de transformations.”

[The concept of accessibility, focused on the situation and various factors of reception would be even more important considering that, as we have seen, the notion of the ‘original’ text (ontological priority of origin) is a lure. It is a trompe l’oeil that always believes in the authority and linearity text-transfer-subtitles.

[...] The chain of transformations at macro and micro levels under the constraint of ideologies, aesthetic canons, power relationships and money between the involved agents (producers, director, distributor, etc.) is reminiscent of the translation perceived as ‘reformulation’ or ‘manipulation’ by André Lefevere (1992).

In this perspective and in this dynamic, the pseudopolarity between translation (more dependent on an ‘original’) and adaptation (relative autonomy from the ‘original’) no longer holds: there is textual circulation and above all synergy between semiotic systems. Hence the notion proposed, film tradaptation (or transadaptation), which can cover all types of transformations] (own translation)
the main obstacles to the integration of research into practice: the quality of each individual researcher’s contribution to the scientific community they belong to is, at present, primarily measured against the number of books, refereed and peer-reviewed journal articles produced and the number of citations received in other academic publications. This all favours the further development and progressively wider use of both the specific community’s jargon and the theoretical foundations used as references, which risks making academic research overspecialised. As a result, the information is often hardly accessible even to researchers from close areas of study without prior academic preparation. Moreover, only rarely are academic book-length studies and journals made visible to the public at large and they are mostly accessible via payment only; although this may be slowly changing in English-speaking countries, at least for that part of the general public competent in AVT specific jargon. That portion of the AVT public can indeed already benefit from the research (mostly written in English) made available via the open access system of publication, which allows for unrestricted access and re-use of research findings in most areas of knowledge.

A third and probably even more challenging question is that since audiovisual translation is a disciplinary area within the social sciences, it mostly relies on empirical approaches, which are often not looked upon with the same consideration as the experimental (‘scientific’) methodologies on which the hard sciences are based. A possible way out of this problem, which seriously limits the outreach of research in the social field at present, is to raise the scientific community’s awareness of the fact that research in the social field has practical trickle-down effects just like scientific research (see point (b) below); and therefore to encourage the researchers’ interaction with the community at large by practically recognising their impact on the real world.

To briefly sum up the assumptions behind the action plan which is about to be presented:
(a) the creation of partnerships amongst different stakeholder groups is a necessary BUT NOT a sufficient condition to make research translational;
(b) such partnerships should aim at:
- clearly identifying the practical trickle-down effects of the specific research area;
- making the different key players develop a common language;
- popularising the results of research.
This may significantly contribute to making all research, not just AVT research, meaningful to all stakeholders. In the next section an attempt is made at fine-tuning such aims to the specific target of the AVT sector, while devising an action plan for the implementation of the changes here proposed.

3. Making research in AVT ‘translational’: Devising an action plan

Stages 1 and 2: Developing a common language; Identifying the ‘practical’ effects of audiovisual translation research

In order to clearly identify the practical effects of research on audiovisual translation and at the same time develop a truly common language, it is first of all necessary to give a voice to those stakeholders who should actually benefit from research. This may be achieved through the organisation of focus groups, i.e. unstructured interviews conducted by trained moderators in which groups of end-users are asked about their perceptions, opinions, expectations, beliefs and attitudes towards audiovisual translation products. The ‘natural’, unstructured pattern of the interview would in itself be a guarantee of the respondents’ freedom of self-expression. Due to their very nature as exploratory instruments of people’s ideas in public settings, focus groups provide more meaningful data to identify aspects of the issues in question than traditional research tools. Unlike highly structured questionnaires, focus groups allow researchers to discover and investigate the diversity of the surveyed participants’ experiences and expectations rather than merely counting the number of participants sharing the same characteristics. Moreover, such groups are an invaluable tool when it comes to ‘producing’ ideas. As Lindlof and Taylor maintain, “the members are stimulated by the ideas and experiences expressed by each other. What occurs is a kind of ‘chaining’ or ‘cascading’ effect; talk links to, or tumbles out of, the topics and expressions preceding it” (2002: 182). This may be the necessary step to creating a meaningful direction for research initiatives: it would help initiate a reflective

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4 The research on audience reception and perception of which the author of this paper is informed – see, for example, Di Giovanni 2012a and b and Morettini 2012, respectively – seems to have been carried out in this form.
process at the academic level, aimed at identifying the actual social effects of research, i.e. the effects that are actually perceived as such by those who should benefit from it. Focus groups would help researchers to gain participants’ (i.e. insiders’) observations and knowledge and, reciprocally, the end users could tap the academics’ in-depth knowledge of the environment in order to help those working on audiovisual translation implementation to develop strategies to fine-tune it to real-world needs and thus effectively meet end users’ expectations, for example in terms of ease of access.

The additional (probably invaluable) benefit of focus groups is that participants in such events seem to naturally develop a common language to describe similar experiences. This may be regarded as the end users’ own ‘native’ language, which each of them has helped to create in order to make sense of the issue at hand. This ‘native’ language should then both coalesce and contend with specialised jargon in order to produce first an interlanguage and then, gradually, a proper common language that all stakeholders would feel to be their own.

Last but not least, since focus groups are often used for marketing reasons in the early stages of product development and looked upon as precious tools for discussing and/or testing the potentialities of new products before they are made available to the public, the use of such instruments of investigation in lieu of more traditional ones may help ease communication between academia and industry and increase the opportunities for attracting funding to research.

Stage 3: Popularising the results of research

AVT criticism could be divided with good approximation into academic and journalistic criticism. Journalistic covers the consumer-oriented reviews that regularly appear in newspapers, magazines and other mass-media recommending certain products rather than others and subtly orient public response and taste. Academic criticism involves the papers and book-length studies informed by theory and published in academic journals/volumes mentioned above. These are commonly labelled as criticism proper when compared and contrasted with reviews, as they entail in-depth analysis and judgement rather than superficial review and market-oriented advice. That is, of course, as far as ‘mainstream’ criticism is concerned. The upsurge of blogs, forums and websites in general, which are often the lay person’s only way to evaluate any AVT product, should also
be mentioned, but that would expand this paper far beyond its original scope.

One way to ensure circularity and cross-pollination in the flux of exchanges between the various stakeholders in the translation process would be the creation of a continuum between these extremes in the form of ‘serious’ (i.e. reliable) popularisations. An example might be reviews. Though they do not contain any explicit references to theory, and consequently do not ‘deserve’ the label of criticism as described above, reviews are actually soundly informed by theory. The problem with existing reviews is that those that can actually be labelled as such mostly tend to ignore the fact that they are dealing with translated products: films are reviewed as if they had been produced in the target language. Audiovisual translation research sometimes only focuses on the linguistic aspect of audiovisual products (Díaz Cintas 2004), while reviews frequently display the opposite weakness. This is often due to newspaper and magazine editors’ uninformed views. There are a few exceptions, which should be encouraged, but they only contain the seeds of developments yet to come.

Take for example the review by Catherine Shoard, Film Editor of Guardian News and Media, of Love is all you need directed by Susanne Bier. It completely misses the point that the film was produced in a language other than English. The source is actually referred to as a film blog rather than a review, though, which may partly excuse the shortcoming.

By contrast, take the review of the same film by Robbie Collin, which appeared in The Telegraph, where there is a proper film review column. The extract which is most interesting for our discussion reads: “That’s no criticism of the Danish director Susanne Bier’s new multilingual romantic comedy, her first film since the melodrama In a Better World won her the foreign-language Oscar in 2011”. If only the reviewer had expanded on the ‘multilingual’ aspect of the film, he could have been close to building up the preconditions for producing the type of criticism hinted at above. The reviewer later also adds “The film’s original Danish title, with more than a dash of gallows irony, is The Bald-Headed Hairdresser”, but he only goes that far. He could have usefully expanded on this, as well.

It must be said that The Telegraph column definitely seems to offer a higher quality product. And – to also open up a window onto journalism outside of Europe – the writing of such critics such as Pauline Kael (The New Yorker), James Agee (The Nation) and Andrew
Sarris (*The Village Voice*) definitely contributes to blurring the line between popular reviews and criticism proper. It should probably be the task of academics to raise newspaper and magazine editors’ awareness of the trickle-down effects of high quality reviews on their readers’ level of education and intercultural views. Indeed, academics should ‘educate’ editors to select reviewers with the right sensitivity and interest as well as hosting academic researchers on a regular basis (as they do with other areas of study such as health, IT and general science, for example). Although well-known mostly only to academics, research notes, are a step in this direction. They are discussion notes aimed at providing food for thought. They introduce novel ideas and/or advance arguments in favour of a specific theory or methodology in academic journals. If these notes were introduced into the more popular type of publications, they may not only prove to be an invaluable storehouse of ideas as they already are in academic journals, but they could also function as a crucial driving force for the cross-pollination of such ideas and the education of the public at large.

I would now like to consider what shape this prospective popularised audiovisual translation criticism may take. To do so, I will make a quick reference to Thompson and Bordwell’s work, which emphasises the advantages of close reading, of frame-by-frame attention to detail. Thompson informs us that “(t)he possibility of using short clips as illustrations in an article or book is very promising, especially once electronic textbooks get past the trial stages” (2012). She convincingly argues that digital technologies currently allow us to engage in a direct form of criticism which bypasses traditional written criticism:

> Video essays analysing films are still a new format but show great potential. Their usefulness will depend on how the issue of copyright plays out. At this point, I’m hopeful that showing clips as part of an analytical study will become established as fair use, as clearly it should be. Being able to use moving images complete with sound as well as still frames from films will be an extraordinarily useful tool. (*Ibidem*)

Advancing an argument through pieces of video content rather than via written essays may indeed prove to be a more effective form of audiovisual translation criticism, if nothing else because it uses the very structure and language of film to discuss this issue. This means adopting an approach that “involves an alignment of the process and
the content of learning” as a form of loop input (Woodward 2003: 301).

4. Pulling the threads together

This paper has attempted to address the issue of linking up academic research on audiovisual translation with its effects both on real life and on development and change in the field.

The starting point has been that, in order to attain a social impact and be of value to the entire community participating in the AVT process as a whole, from production to consumption, two issues should be addressed before any other: the necessity to come to a full understanding of the needs and demands of the whole range of actors, whose mutual communication should be promoted using all means; and the need to identify strategies capable of both fostering research in its present form and popularising it with the aim of disseminating its results.

Focusing on such issues, in comparison to similar research in the social sciences and to research in other areas of the translation spectrum, AVT research already shows a good degree of communication, cooperation and influence at least amongst some of the actors involved in the process, and on the community at large. However, its impact would certainly be wider if the existing cooperation, properly channelled, were to become even more significant in the near future. To this end, I suggest three stages of action to show how, in practice, research on AVT may improve its outreach and engage with the non-experts more productively, and make its results more directly useful to them. Stages 1 and 2 focus on the targets of developing a common language and identifying the practical effects of audiovisual translation research. Stage 3 concentrates on how the results of research could be made accessible to the public at large. One question naturally emerges: would end users actually appreciate and/or consult the type of ‘serious’ popularisations identified and discussed? While, of course, only reception analysis would provide an answer, it is evident that the ability to reach out and attract the public holds considerable weight in this process.
5. A starting point to implement third mission Portfolios

A 2012 European Green Paper released by the E3M committee is encouraging Universities throughout Europe “to develop research that is more focused on social needs” and that will “engage with the societal need for lifelong-learning more generally” (E3M 2012: 7). The aim is clearly to both raise academics’ awareness of their crucial role of guide and also to encourage their action towards a beneficial impact on society. The ability to build on the third academic mission (or public engagement) of Universities has been introduced as a specific requisite in the Quality Assessment Research inventory of many countries. It relates to specific interactions between the University and the community; to the University’s ability to both take the public’s concerns and aspirations into account, and to develop and improve services to empower the community.

As the 2012 Green Paper warns, “[t]he time when Universities could assume that they will be funded, no questions asked, is long past” (E3M 2012: 5). The document explains that the third mission is simply shorthand for trying to assess the ways in which Universities respond to societal needs, apart from its traditional role in providing academic scholarship and mainstream teaching. Yet, the Green Paper does concede that academics will struggle to identify ways to respond to the third mission: “engaged as they are with what they perceive as the noble pursuits of education and research”, they are often used “to see themselves as somehow apart from the societies that host them; a very different posture from the intentions of their founders” (Ibidem).

To help academics identify possible actions, the Paper suggests trying to answer such questions as “How is the university’s expertise used to extend the education of non-traditional learner groups? [...] How does the University exploit, in the service of society, the fact that it constitutes a large group (typically thousands) of fit, creative and intelligent people in one academic community, who could contribute in the local community, but also nationally and internationally, to problem solving and development on a massive scale?” (E3M 2012: 9). The Action Plan sketched in this paper may provide a starting point to both optimize third mission portfolios and identify criteria for development and implementation of third mission indicators and metrics (E3M 2012: 17) in Universities hosting Departments with the suitable AVT competences.
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Learning Audio Description: Training Resources for Future Academics and Professionals

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Abstract

Audio description (AD), one of many access services, narrates key visual and some sound elements of various types of visual content: a film, a TV advert, an opera, or a book cover. These descriptions can be inserted into natural pauses when the content has a dialogue or narration, or it can be a free delivery, as in the audio description of a sculpture. Audio description is a complex access service which can be used in recorded or live situations, giving rise to different approaches for its creation and delivery. Training the expert audio describer requires skills and competences from numerous and diverse areas, from writing skills to vocal performance. This article presents the training materials generated within the ADLAB PRO Erasmus + funded project, which focuses on the development of the professional profile of an audio describer. The first part of the article describes the overall aims of the project, as well as the methodology used towards outlining the skills and competences required. The second part focuses on the course design, followed by a presentation of the learning materials typology. Finally, examples of the training materials created are provided, together with suggestions for their exploitation.

Keywords: audio description, training, accessibility, ADLAB PRO project, audio describer profile, materials.

1. Introduction

Audio description (AD) is a burgeoning access service and area of research in Translation Studies. It is an access service that narrates key visual and non-discriminable sound elements of visual content: a film, a TV advert, an opera, or a book cover, for instance. These descriptions can be inserted into natural pauses when the content has a dialogue or narration, or it can be a free delivery, as in the audio
description of a sculpture. As our society becomes more inclusive, the need for professionally trained audio describers is increasing. Training the expert audio describer requires the development of skills and competences from many and diverse areas, from writing skills to vocal performance.

Regarding research, two different areas have been identified: AD as an object of study, and training in AD. There are two dedicated EU projects on AD training (ADLAB and ADLAB PRO), there is a conference which takes place every two years (ARSAD1), and several monographs and edited volumes have been devoted to AD to date (e.g., Chmiel and Mazur, 2014; Maszerowska et al., 2014; Snyder, 2014; Jankowska, 2015; Fryer, 2016; Matamala and Orero, 2016). These particular circumstances mean that research in AD is working towards creating a critical mass in terms of terminology, standardisation, practice and training. Other complementary Erasmus+ projects have also been granted where AD is one of the targeted access services, i.e. the project ACT2 Accessibility Culture and Training (2015-2017) and EASIT3 Easy Access for Social Inclusion (2018-2021).

The ADLAB4 (Audio Description: Lifelong Access for the Blind) project set out to define the practice of audio description in keeping with industry guidelines. These first collaborative guidelines took European aspects into consideration, which are multi-culture and multi-language. ADLAB also had diverse audiovisual products in mind (e.g. films, television programmes, documentaries, museums and their content). Two main publications were produced, focussing on the many approaches towards producing audio description scripts (Maszerowska et al. 2014; Remael et al. 2015). The results from ADLAB merited a follow-up, to further develop the training of the expert audio describer taking into consideration the workflow and the many technologies available, which led to ADLAB PRO (2016-2019),5 focusing, this time, on the professional profile of the audio

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1 For more information, see http://jornades.uab.cat/arsad/ [retrieved 14/03/2019].
2 For more information, see http://pagines.uab.cat/act/ [retrieved 14/03/2019].
3 For more information, see http://pagines.uab.cat/easit/ [retrieved 14/03/2019].
4 This successful European training project, submitted to the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) (2011-2014), was led by Chris Taylor from Trieste University. For more information, see http://www.adlabproject.eu/ [retrieved 14/03/19].
5 In 2016, Elisa Perego, also from Trieste University, received Erasmus+ funding for the project. For more information, see https://www.adlabpro.eu [retrieved 14/03/19].
This article presents some of the main outcomes of the ADLAB PRO project. It describes its aims, the course structure that has been proposed, and the typology of learning materials that have been developed: introductory videos, core videos, tasks, additional videos, reading lists and trainer’s guides. A detailed sample of training materials from Unit 1 in Module 5 (“Audio subtitling”) is also provided, together with suggestions about how to employ them. It should be highlighted that the open-access, didactic materials designed as part of ADLAB PRO are varied and flexible and can be used both in a vocational context and in an academic environment.

2. ADLAB PRO: Aims and objectives

ADLAB PRO’s main aim was to define the profile of the audio description expert, namely the skills and competences they should have, and to produce open-access training materials that could be easily integrated in different learning situations. In other words, the aim was not to create a full set of materials that could be used in a single, pre-established course but to provide a wide range of educational components that prospective trainers could use in various courses, at university level but also in vocational environments, depending on the training requirements. In order to achieve this aim, the project consisted of several stages.

First of all, it mapped the current situation in Europe in terms of audio description training and practice through a questionnaire (Mendoza and Matamala, 2019; ADLAB PRO, 2017). The questionnaire gathered basic information on training programmes, their content and evaluation. A total of 86 AD trainers provided information on 192 courses, including 93 academic and 99 non-academic courses. This questionnaire was followed by qualitative interviews with selected lecturers from five courses with different duration times: three academic courses and two non-academic courses. Understanding existing practices helped to outline the professional profile of the audio describer, in line with the required skills and competences.

A second questionnaire (ADLAB PRO, 2018a), addressed to audio describers, AD users and AD providers, complemented the information gathered and allowed the educational background of the describers to be mapped, which skills and competences professionals
should acquire, as well as user expectations in terms of AD quality.

Based on the input from the questionnaires and the qualitative interviews, a curriculum was created and remodelled into a course design (see Section 3), which aims to ensure professional, Europe-wide AD implementation in all cultural and media sectors. The training proposal considers different types of AD (i.e., TV, cinema, museums, live performance) and is flexible in its nature: it is built upon different modules that can be offered together or independently, depending on the prospective learners’ profiles (see section 3). This training proposal has been the basis for the generation of a comprehensive body of learning materials, which have been continuously assessed internally and externally to guarantee the highest possible quality.

While designing the course, the project also looked at the learning outcomes and workload associated with each module, at both academic and vocational levels, assigning ECTS and ECVETS. Learning outcomes are defined by what the learner is expected to know, understand and be capable at the end of the process, and were central factors in the project.

2. Course design

Existing literature on AD training and course design has two very different sources: the professional (Navarrete Moreno, 1997; Hyks, 2005; Snyder, 2014), and the academic (Orero, 2005; Matamala, 2006; Díaz-Cintas, 2007; Matamala and Orero, 2007; Jankowska, 2017). The commonality between the two approaches is twofold: the lack of a theoretical framework, and the central focus on skills and competences required from audio describers. However, when designing training programs, the complex nature of the audio description service requires a more comprehensive framework, beyond skills and competences. Issues such as the learning environment, the educational materials, learning format/modality,

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6 ECTS (European Credit and Accumulation Transfer System) is a student-centred credit system which is based on learning outcomes and workload. 1 ECTS is usually considered to equal 25-30 hours of students’ work, and a full year of study may equal 60 credits. On the other hand, ECVET (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training) is the equivalent applied to vocational training. Both systems allow for compatibility across European countries, and facilitate students’ employability.
support, assessment, and the specific didactic activities are to be considered.

Taking all these considerations into account, a flexible course was designed, divided into six independent modules (ADLAB PRO, 2018b). First of all, based on the questionnaires and interviews, the skills and competences a describer should acquire were translated into learning outcomes, in other words, what the learner should be capable of at the end of the learning process. At the same time, three big areas of AD practice were identified: screen AD, AD for live events, and AD for static arts. After discussions with interested stakeholders and partners, a module-based proposal was created, as follows:

- Module 1: General introduction.
- Module 2: Screen AD.
- Module 3: AD of live events.
- Module 4: (Semi) live AD and recorded AD for static arts and environments
- Module 5: Additional services.
- Module 6: Additional technical issues, developments and change.

For each module, a series of units were identified. Each unit was grouped in relation to learning outcomes. The first module was a general introduction to AD. It was designed in a way that would enable it to provide a basis of AD for those with no previous knowledge and who were willing to specialise in any of the AD types included in other modules. It could also work independently for those wishing to have a general overview of what audio description is. Module 1 included the following ten units:

1. Audiovisual texts: this unit discusses the challenges that audiovisual texts pose, going beyond the realm of the written word. The aim is that learners can define the fundamental, multimodal character of audiovisual texts and differentiate between the different modalities interacting in a multimodal text. They can also assess the challenges of such texts for the main target audience of the audio description.
2. Defining audio description: this unit provides definitions of
AD in different contexts.

3. Audio description research: it identifies the main research topics and questions in the field.

4. Additional services: it deals with services which are often associated with AD, such as audio introductions and audio subtitles.

5. The audio description process: this unit explains the main steps in the AD workflow, including final editing and quality control, and the main parties involved in the process, including users and the artistic team.

6. The target audience of audio description: this unit provides specific knowledge on the needs of the primary audience of audio description, i.e. persons with sight loss, but also refers to secondary audiences who can benefit from audio descriptions.

7. AD guidelines: this unit makes learners aware of the existence of different audio description guidelines and their heterogeneous approaches.

8. Central audio description issues: this unit approaches general, content-related knowledge of the basic rules for all types of audio description, namely what, when and how to describe.

9. Audio description voicing: it trains learners in basic delivery skills and for the voicing of different types of AD.

10. Audio description legislation: it allows students to learn about relevant international and European AD legislation and to explore national implementations.

All in all, the first module offers a wide panoramic on the different AD features, including legislation, the intended audience, guidelines and the process of creating and delivering an audio description. From this general approach a second module focuses on the process of generating recorded AD for screen AD and its main components, as detailed below:

1. Screen audio description: films and genres: this unit allows learners to understand the different types of content a professional may audio describe for the screen.

2. Process: it focuses on the process of recording an audio description.

3. Software: this unit describes how software can be used for
the production, reception and distribution of screen AD.

4. Characters: they are a central component of audiovisual content, and this unit describes how they can be audio described.

5. Time and space: these elements are another central building block in any film, and this unit approaches its audio description.

6. Culture: this unit discusses how to transfer cultural references into audio description.

7. Language: it discusses the specific linguistic features of audio descriptions.

8. Film language: it analyses whether, and how, film techniques should be transferred into audio descriptions.

9. Audio introductions: this unit provides specific training on this additional service, which normally complements audio description.

10. Recording: it illustrates how to record screen AD.

Module 3 is dedicated to live performances and covers the following topics:

1. Audio description of live events: this is the first unit and provides an introduction to the topic, which includes a taxonomy and description of the main challenges.

2. Technical skills: it trains students on the main technical equipment needed for a live AD performance, such as a mixing desk.

3. What to describe for live events: it discusses the function and importance of the different types of information that can be included in a live AD script.

4. Scripting: this unit explains how an AD script should be written, accommodating the unexpected.

5. Touch tours: it provides a thorough vision of what this additional service is and how it is integrated in a live event.

6. Workflow: this unit trains students on creating a timeline in which all the stakeholders involved are identified.

7. Evaluation: it gives learners the tools to identify evaluation criteria and implement them.

8. Dance and opera: this unit focuses on the specificities of this genre.

9. Audio introduction: it defines this additional service and
explains how to develop one for a live event.

10. Innovation: this unit encompasses all new developments related to the AD of live events.

Module four pays attention to the static arts, focusing on content, and where art objects are housed, such as museums.

1. Static arts: this unit includes a general introduction to the module, with a definition and a classification of static arts.
2. Museums: this is a unit in which students learn about the different types of museums and their accessibility features.
3. Audio description for static arts: it allows learners to recognise and critically assess linguistic and textual features of existing ADs in this area.
4. Strategies: this unit proposes strategies to formulate AD for visual art, allowing learners to create their own.
5. Live and recorded: this unit focuses on the differences between two process modes, both in terms of writing and delivery.
6. Audio description directions: this is a unit in which strategies for formulating and prioritising the AD of directions regarding museum layout, spaces, auditoria, lobbies, etc., are presented.
7. Tactile explorations: it is concerned with the creation of tactile descriptions of museum artefacts.
8. Descriptive tours: this unit gives learners the tools to know how to create a coherent tour of a museum or other environment such as a heritage site.
9. Stakeholders: it allows learners to become aware of the different agents involved in an audio description.
10. Research: this unit provides insights into existing research and gives hints to learners on how to conduct research in the field of museum AD.

A very short module five follows, looking at the three audiovisual translation modalities which influence audio description, since media may be in the original language or presented as a translation in the form of subtitles, voice-over or dubbing. In the first case, audio subtitling will need to be produced, and in the second and third cases the AD will need to interact with the re-voiced versions. The structure for Module 5 is as follows:
1. Audio subtitling: this unit deals with the auditory presentation of written subtitles, also called spoken subtitles, which allow for subtitled content to be accessible not only to persons with sight loss but also to persons with reading difficulties.

2. Voice-over: it presents the main features of this transfer mode and discusses how audio description interacts with voice-over.

3. Dubbing: this unit explains the specificities of dubbed content and how audio description interacts with it.

The last module, module six, is also short and focuses on technology. Technology has become a central tool in translator training and it is key in the training of future audio describers. The units in this module describe the technology available for both AD production and consumption, while taking into account new scenarios and new audiences. It is a module in which innovation finds its place, containing the following seven units.

1. Technology consumption: this is a unit concerned with technological developments that allow users to consume audio descriptions, such as applications.

2. Technology delivery: this unit takes a different approach and focuses on the technology that allows audio description delivery in different scenarios.

3. Translating audio description: it considers an AD production process based on the translation of already existing audio descriptions, be it through professionals or through a post-edited machine output.

4. Text-to-speech: it presents technological developments that allow audio descriptions to be automatically voiced by a synthetic voice.

5. Crowdsourcing and online collaboration: this is a unit that discusses online collaborative models of AD creation.

6. New services and new audiences: this unit makes learners aware of how AD can be used to other ends, such as learning a language.

7. Accessible productions: it is concerned with the concept of accessible filmmaking and how audio description should be considered from the beginning when developing audiovisual
Table 1 provides an overview of the complete structure of the training materials provided by the ADLAB PRO project, including all modules and units:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Module 1: General introduction (6 ECTS/ECVETS)</th>
<th>Module 2: Screen AD: films and genres (6 ECTS/ECVETS)</th>
<th>Module 3: AD of live events (6 ECTS/ECVETS)</th>
<th>Module 4: (Semi) live AD and recorded AD for static arts and environments (6 ECTS/ECVETS)</th>
<th>Module 5: Additional services, developments and change (3 ECTS/ECVETS)</th>
<th>Module 6: Technical issues, developments and change (3 ECTS/ECVETS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Audiovisual texts</td>
<td>Screen AD: films and genres</td>
<td>AD of live events</td>
<td>Static arts</td>
<td>Audio subtitling</td>
<td>Technology consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Defining AD</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Technical skills</td>
<td>Museums</td>
<td>Voice-over</td>
<td>Technology: delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>AD Research</td>
<td>Software</td>
<td>What to describe for live events</td>
<td>AD for static arts</td>
<td>Dubbing</td>
<td>Translating AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Additional services</td>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>Scripting</td>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Text-to-speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>AD process</td>
<td>Time and space</td>
<td>Touch tours</td>
<td>Live &amp; recorded</td>
<td></td>
<td>Crowdsourcing and online collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The target audience of AD</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Workflow</td>
<td>AD directions</td>
<td></td>
<td>New services and new audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>AD guidelines</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Tactile explorations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Accessible productions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Central AD issues</td>
<td>Film language</td>
<td>Dance and opera</td>
<td>Descriptive tours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>AD voicing</td>
<td>Audio introductions</td>
<td>Audio introductions</td>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>AD legislation</td>
<td>Recording</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Module and unit structure

For each unit, specific learning outcomes were formulated, suggesting learning methods as well as teaching materials. The credits assigned already provide a calculation of the global students’ workload, but a more specific timing of the different face-to-face and home activities was also proposed.

Some of the topics are recurrent in several modules. The reason for this is that the course is created in a flexible way that will allow trainers to adapt it to their needs. In other words, the course is a proposal addressed to trainers who can implement all modules as a whole course (for instance, a postgraduate course) or can implement modules independently (for instance, as vocational courses focusing on one AD typology). This training proposal was the basis for the development of a wide array of materials, which in turn can be implemented in more than one way and in learning environments both academic and vocational.
3. Learning material typology

A necessary first step before developing training materials was to define how each learning outcome could be better achieved by learners. In this regard, while developing the course design, proposals for training activities were made in association with different learning methods: learning through acquisition, inquiry, discussion, practice and collaboration (Laurillard, 2012). Thanks to brainstorming by all project participants, three main types of activities were identified: (a) lectures, (b) reading lists, and (c) tasks. The typology of tasks was also varied: discussion activities, writing and recording exercises, analysis, class presentations, written essays, web and literature searches, among others, which could be performed individually, in pairs or in groups, either at home or in class.

An interesting discussion arose around the concept of "assessment", in other words, how to propose evaluation activities that trainers could use to assess learners’ performance. An additional category for assessment activities was initially planned, which would include multiple-choice tasks and some evaluation activities. However, after much discussion regarding continuous assessment in the new European Higher Education Area (EHEA), we realised that the best approach would be to generate a list of tasks including multiple choice, that prospective trainers could use for assessed or as non-assessed tasks, depending on their needs. In other words, the ADLAB PRO project would not identify a task as an evaluation activity but would simply provide a list of suggested tasks that trainers could then use as evaluation if needed.

The final typology of training materials included introductory videos, trainer’s guides, core videos, additional videos, reading lists, and tasks, which correspond to the main activity types identified during the course design. In order to guarantee a smooth development and harmonisation of all training materials, templates, instructions and samples were created and evaluated by both internal

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7 The partners of the ADLAB PRO European project were Università degli Studi di Trieste, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Universiteit Antwerpen, Adam Mickiewicz University, RTV Slovenija, Utopian Voices, Soundfocus and the Royal National Institute of the Blind.
and external experts. Additionally, a blind user advised on the accessibility of the contents and a technical partner controlled the technical development. The different types of learning materials are described below:

a) Introductory videos
Introductory videos are 3-minute videos that explain in a lively manner, through an animated character, what each module is about and what learners and trainers can expect to find in each module. These introductory videos act as module teasers. There is also a general one that provides a global introduction to all the modules.

b) Trainer’s guide
A guide addressed to trainers was created for each module. The aim of the guide is to list all materials that are found in each module, and provide recommendations on how to use them. The trainer’s guide also provides the key to some of the tasks and thoroughly describes the features of each training material.

c) Core videos
Lectures were one recurrent activity suggested by trainers during the brainstorming phase. However, creating full lectures for each of the topics was beyond the scope of the project. This is why the approach taken was to create short videos on central elements for each unit. The aim of these so-called "core videos", with a length of between approximately 5 to 10 minutes, was to summarise all the main elements students should learn in each unit. These core videos are offered together with extra material: a PDF transcript of the core video narration, and a stand-alone PPT presentation, to be used in multiple ways. For instance, a trainer may want students to watch the video before or after they attend a face-to-face lecture or face-to-face discussion, in a flipped classroom situation. In another learning environment, a lecturer may want to include the core video as part of an online course without any further modifications. A third situation could arise in which the trainer uses the already created presentation as a starting point to develop their own presentation. The possibilities are multiple and, in order to cater for the needs of an even wider audience, English subtitles are provided for all core videos in all modules – a total of 50 –, and subtitles in the project languages, Catalan, Dutch, Italian, Polish, Slovene and Spanish, are made available for the core videos in module 1. Due to budget restrictions it was not possible to create subtitles in these languages for the other modules.
To provide a visual identity, it was agreed that all core videos would follow a basic unified style: they would be based on a PPT presentation and an off-screen narration by the lecturer. Accessibility issues were thoroughly considered: the PPT template followed accessibility guidelines and the videos were created in such a way that the audio description was either integrated or not necessary.

d) Additional videos

Beyond core videos, it was considered that a choice of additional videos could be developed. Additional videos are videos with a free format and a more lively approach, touching upon non-central, but still relevant topics in each unit. Once the core videos were finished, project participants analysed what was missing to guarantee that trainees achieve the learning outcomes and suggested possible additional videos. One of the key aims was to allow trainees to familiarise themselves with real professional practice and user needs. In this regard, the choice of additional videos is ample: there are interviews with professionals and end-users, audiovisual content samples with and without audio description, samples from live events, animated videos, and tutorials, among others. Again, they allow for multiple integrations in different educational environments: they can be used in or outside the classroom, to generate group discussion or to propose group or individual tasks, to name just a few. Special care was taken with the use of copyright-free material or in the acquisition of all the copyright permissions, so that all content in the ADLAB PRO project could be uploaded to an open access repository and shared for free with all interested trainers.

e) Reading lists

Another training material type was reading lists. It was decided that a reading list per unit would be created and would include 5 to 10 key references for the topic under discussion. The selection of such references was not easy, as various elements were put forward: first of all, the language of reading lists and, secondly, whether references in languages other than English should be included. Despite the interest in multilingual approaches to AD, a practical approach was favoured and it was decided that reading lists would include international works in English, as it was understood that local references could in fact be added by the trainer depending on each learning situation and need. The second discussion on reading lists involved the concern that they would become soon outdated: the solution was not an easy one, as the project cannot guarantee the continuous update of online reading lists. Therefore, the decision
was taken to prioritize seminal and classical works in the field, which all AD trainees should be aware of.

f) Tasks
Another educational material type was tasks. A document was created for each unit in which two to seven suggested tasks were proposed. For each task the following elements were described: the aim or aims of the task, the grouping (individual/pairs/groups), approximate timing, material and preparation needed, and development. Additional comments with further suggestions could be added in a final section for each task, and, if needed, a specific hand-out to be given to learners was provided. This same structure was reproduced for a wide variety of tasks. A specific format for tasks was included in all units, namely a multiple-choice exercise that includes five questions based on the core video for that unit. The idea behind the tasks document was to offer learners a series of possible exercises whereby trainers could make choices, depending on their needs.

The result is a complete set of training materials that are open access through Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona's online and free repository DDD, but also accessible in a user-friendly way through the ADLAB PRO website. In this way, any trainer is able to download and re-use the educational materials that suit their needs in order to train professional describers for free.

4. Training material exploitation: an example

Materials can be used in both vocational and academic learning environments. For instance, a university may want to develop the full course as described above and implement all materials. An MA on Translation may want to include a specialisation on live AD or AD for static arts in a traditional university course and implement only module 3 or module 4. An audiovisual translators association may want to provide a short, online introductory course to their members and re-use module 1 materials as online training content. A translator may want to simply watch all core videos to further develop their skills through a self-learning process. Or a company may decide to provide further training for their members by incorporating Module

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8 For more information, see [http://ddd.uab.cat](http://ddd.uab.cat) [retrieved 14/03/2019].
6 into an industry course. The five scenarios presented above are just a few of the many possibilities that ADLAB PRO offer to trainers via the open-access and free materials available online.

A presentation of one unit may help to better understand the characteristics of the training materials, and how they are suitable for different learning environments. We will focus on Unit 1 from Module 5, namely “Audio subtitling”.

Learning outcomes associated with this unit, and any other unit in the course, have been carefully designed following the findings of two studies (see Section 2 in this article for more details) carried out within the project (ADLAB PRO, 2017; ADLAB PRO, 2018a). Learning outcomes planned for Unit 1 (see Table 2 below) were divided into two levels: basic and advanced. This allows trainers to select activities according to the level of learner and according to the learning environment. Activities proposed in the unit presented below, and in other modules of the course, are heavily practice oriented, as the course aims at training professional describers. However, following the approach of theory feeding practice and given the fact that audio description research has been and is close to professional practice, some activities introduce theoretical concepts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Learning outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Learners can define what audio subtitling is and describe its main features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Learners can identify different types of audio subtitles and relate them to text on screen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Learners can identify the technology needed to produce audio subtitles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Learners can identify different types of recommendations related to AST.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Learners can create audio subtitles to be integrated in an audio description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Learners can defend and justify the audio subtitles they have created.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Learners can deliver audio subtitles to be integrated in an audio description with appropriate voicing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Learners can summarise research on audio description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Learners can evaluate the impact of research on AST on their practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Learning outcomes (Module 5, Unit 1)

In Module 5, Unit 1 (Table 3), learners gain knowledge about
audio subtitling – a media accessibility modality that is merged with AD to provide access to text on screen, be it foreign language dialogues rendered as subtitles or in logos, film credits, superimposed titles, popping-up messages, etc. Basic theoretical notions are introduced in the core activities, that is, through the core video lecture followed by a multiple-choice quiz and reading assignments. Additional videos provide examples of audio subtitling and discuss selected audio subtitling guidelines. The core video is followed by a multiple choice test (Task 1) and by five practical tasks (Tasks 2-6), which are presented and discussed in tables 4 to 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module 5, Unit 1</th>
<th>Audio subtitling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Core video</strong></td>
<td>Core video on Audio subtitling with subtitles in English, downloadable PowerPoint slides and transcript.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tasks</strong></td>
<td>Multiple choice + 5 practical tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Additional videos** | 1. An additional video with audio subtitling examples in English.  
2. An additional video with audio subtitling examples in Spanish.  
3. An additional video with audio subtitling examples in Catalan.  
4. An additional video on guidelines and recommendations in audio subtitling (ISO).  
5. An additional video on guidelines and recommendations in audio subtitling (ADLAB guidelines). |

Table 3. Module 5, Unit 1: overview

The aim of Task 2 (Table 4) is to familiarize learners with
different guidelines and recommendations on the provision of audio subtitling. This is achieved through analysis and discussion of existing guidelines and recommendations that include both documents prepared as a result of academic research and those used in professional practice. What is important in Task 2 is the fact that learners are actively involved in the learning process through induction rather than deduction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task 2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aims</strong></td>
<td>• To learn what guidelines and recommendations say in relation to audio subtitling and on-screen text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grouping</strong></td>
<td>• Individual, pairs or groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timing</strong></td>
<td>• 2 hours.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Material and preparation needed** | • Recommended watching before the class: additional video on audio subtitling guidelines and recommendations.  
• List of guidelines and recommendations (hand-out). |
| **Development** | 1. Give learners a list of guidelines and recommendations on audio description. Ask them to search for more local guidelines.  
2. Ask learners to identify whether the guidelines or recommendations give advice on how to render written text on screen, especially subtitles, via the audio description.  
3. Learners discuss the results and a summary of the findings is presented on the board. |

Table 4. Module 5, Unit 1: Task 2

In Task 3 (Table 5) learners become acquainted with the wide variety of text on screen. Once again, students are encouraged to learn through inductive methods, such as inquiry, production, collaboration and discussion, as they analyse and discuss real-life material. Learners are asked to watch a multilingual film that contains text on screen - *Inglourious Basterds* (Q. Tarantino, 2009) is suggested as a possible example. Later they prepare a list of the on-screen, presented text instances in the film and try to identify and classify their function. Finally, they explain the results of their work in a group discussion.
### Task 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>To learn about the wide variety of text on screen.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grouping</td>
<td>Individual, pairs or groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing</td>
<td>3 hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material and preparation needed</td>
<td>A multilingual film in which text on screen is present. A good example would be <em>Inglourious Basterds</em> (Q. Tarantino, 2009).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Development           | 1. Learners watch the selected film at home or in class.  
                        | 2. Learners make a list of text on screen (individually).  
                        | 3. Learners categorise the on screen, presented texts in the film and identify their function (in pairs or in groups). A sample categorisation is not provided. Learners try to create their own.  
                        | 4. Learners discuss results in class.                |

**Table 5. Module 5, Unit 1: Task 3**

Task 4 (Table 6) aims at familiarizing learners with different strategies for rendering audio subtitles. Learners are presented with real-life examples of audio subtitles used in a short film *What happens while* (N. Nia, 2016) and are asked to identify the strategies for rendering audio subtitles in terms of content, voicing, and synchronisation. Their findings are then examined in a group discussion.

### Task 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Compare and evaluate strategies for the rendering of audio subtitles.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grouping</td>
<td>Individual, pairs or groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing</td>
<td>1 hour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material and preparation needed:</td>
<td>Additional video on audio subtitles in the film <em>What happens while</em>… (N. Nia, 2016). They are available in English, Spanish and Catalan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Development           | 1. Learners watch the additional video mentioned above.             
                        | 2. Learners identify the diverging strategies used to render audio subtitles in terms of content, voicing, synchronisation and any other relevant features students may observe.  
                        | 3. Learners discuss pros and cons of each approach.                |

**Table 6. Module 5, Unit 1: Task 4**
In Task 5 (Table 7) learners create audio subtitles integrated with audio description. However, an equally important aim of this task is for students to learn to offer and accept feedback and defend their standpoint. To this end they are asked to work in pairs and comment on each other’s performance. This exercise prepares them to carry out tasks performed both by describers and proof-readers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aims</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learners can create audio subtitles integrated into an audio description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learners are aware of the importance of voicing and synchronisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learners can defend and justify their choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grouping</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individual, pairs or groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 2 hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Material and preparation needed</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A short film excerpt in which subtitles are present (3-5 minutes).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Learners create an audio description with audio subtitles for the film excerpt at home (individually).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In class, learners work in pairs. Learner 1 voices his/her audio subtitles live in front of Learner 2, who evaluates them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Then, Learner 2 voices his/her audio subtitles live in front of Learner 1, who assesses them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Learners discuss and defend their choices, accept criticism and improve their audio subtitles where necessary, based on the feedback received from peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Class discussion on the main challenges of audio subtitling and the importance of voicing and synchronisation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7. Module 5, Unit 1: Task 5**

In Task 6 (Table 8) learners write and voice audio subtitles and audio descriptions and later write an essay in which they discuss the encountered challenges and adopted solutions. Task 6 has two aims that are extremely necessary in the professional practice of any describer. First, learners practice the creation of both audio description and audio subtitles. Second, they are asked to justify their choices to show that they are the result of a consciously adopted strategy. This is a skill needed when dealing with clients and project managers, who might question the describer’s choices.
Task 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Learners can create audio description with audio subtitles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learners can defend and justify the audio subtitles they</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have created.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Grouping                                                          | Individual.                                                     |

| Approximate timing                                               | 20 hours.                                                       |

| Material and preparation needed                                  | Short clip with subtitles.                                     |

| Development                                                       | Ask learners to create audio descriptions with audio            |
|                                                                 | subtitles for a short film at home, and to write an essay       |
|                                                                 | discussing the main challenges and their choices.               |

Table 8. Module 5, Unit 1: Task 6

6. Conclusion

Early literature on audio description teaching - from an accessibility service perspective - dealt with very generic training in the industrial sector. Defining skills and learning outcomes were required as soon as audio description training began to be a part of the academic curriculum in specialised university courses. The professional audio describer was then considered to be a specialised audiovisual translator, along other profiles such as the subtitler. Many academic courses on audiovisual translation and media accessibility have flourished, and audio description training is now to be found in many universities.

The task of profiling a pan-European, professional audio description training has required much effort within the ADLAB PRO partnership. Audio description is bound to the media content which it describes, hence the fact that a subtitled video requires a different audio description to a dubbed movie or a voice-over documentary. These three audiovisual translation modalities, as well as the different European languages and cultures, and the existing audio description traditions, have been taken into consideration when describing the skills of the professional audio describer.

ADLAB PRO has achieved a comprehensive and unified, modular training methodology drawing upon the skills and competences of professional describers and has proposed a course
design. The course consists of six modules that complement each other and can be used independently, in combination with other modules or as a whole, depending on the training environment and needs. The modules include topics such as a general introduction to AD, the process of generating recorded AD and its main components, live performances, AD for the static arts, additional services and technology for consumption and production.

As with any publicly funded project, the outcomes are published as open-access teaching materials. They have been designed to cater for different cultural contexts and levels, and also for both vocational and academic training. Undoubtedly, the wide array of materials provided by the ADLAB PRO project will contribute to the training of highly skilled audio describers, whose work will be beneficial, not only for people with sight loss, but also for any other potential users, such as elderly people, users with specific needs, and society as a whole.

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References


The Future of Mediators for Live Events: LTA Project - Academic and Vocational Training

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Abstract

Languages and cultures are intimately related; especially in the age of Information Society, where Technology continuously gives rise to new levels of interaction. In this context, the traditional training of language professionals in Translation Studies is no longer in line with current social, and industry requirements. A common discourse among professional translators is the fact that translator training programs are “inefficient, misleading, too theoretical, and irremediably out of touch with market developments” (Pym, 2011: 6). Current market practices in the translation field are evolving and differentiating in terms of method (crowd-sourcing, relay, and live); working possibilities (in person and remote); distribution opportunities (from massive to individual) and roles (translator, interpreter, and linguistic and cultural mediator). Moreover, the disruption of automatic mediation processes clearly demands a fresh look at the training of future professionals, which is already highlighted by the EMT Expert Group (2009: 7). There is, then, a gap to be bridged in training, which requires training skills to be defined for professionals of language and cultural mediation (real-time intralingual reporters or subtitlers), whilst taking into account technical possibilities and industry requirements.

This article deals specifically with this topic. In particular, it will start from a definition of mediation as a key concept in Media Accessibility; it will then present the results of a survey regarding the skills required of real-time intralingual subtitlers and their role as mediators in several fields of everyday life; lastly, existing technologies in the field of re-speaking which are used to produce real-time intralingual subtitles on TV and standard live settings will be described, as well as the extent of their contribution to the domain of mediation.

1. Introduction

Since the emergence of technology in language-related activities, the traditional training of language professionals within Translation
Studies has been evolving in terms of method, working possibilities, distribution opportunities and roles. Both the study and practice of Translation and Interpretation can be adapted in response to market demands and technological possibilities. One example where this can be applied is in the field of the study and practice of audiovisual translation (AVT), which became established many years ago. An example of AVT among many others would be the ever-important area of Media Accessibility and subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing people (SDH). SDH has been evolving rapidly in recent decades due to new technological developments, such as the Velotype keyboard and ASR systems (Automatic Speech Recognition). These two techniques have made real-time intralingual subtitling possible, bringing this area of AVT closer to established forms of translation and interpreting. Real-time intralingual subtitling involves skills that are closely linked to simultaneous interpreting. Given that interpreters can be easily trained in this, real-time intralingual subtitling can be considered an interesting new niche in Translation Studies (Eugeni, 2008a; Arumí Ribas and Romero-Fresco, 2008; Remael et al., 2016; Eugeni and Bernabé forthcoming).

1.1. Mediation in Media Accessibility

The term ‘mediation’ in Translation and Interpreting Studies has been broadly explored in terms of practice. In this context, ‘the professional distinction is between “interpreting” as spoken mediation and “translation” as written’ mediation (Pym, 2018: 257). An important aspect of AVT in recent decades has been the pervasive nature of technology, which emerges not only as a tool, but also as an agent in the mediation process. According to Pym, ‘mediation, normally applies to situations where there is clearly a present third party: a translator, an interpreter, or perhaps an online machine translation service’ (2018: 257). In all three cases, the mediator becomes a meaning-making agent, whose role it is to create meaning for those who cannot understand what is happening. (Dendrinos, 2014: 143).

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1 Respeaking and Velotyping are the focus techniques of the EU co-funded LTA project, of which this paper is part of the required dissemination work (Ref: 2018-1-DE01-KA203-004218). Although only these two techniques will be dealt with here, most of what is said about Velotyping also applies to Stenotyping, Palantyping and other techniques making use of a chord keyboard. For more information visit http://ltaproject.eu (last accessed 28/08/2019).
In the field of Media Accessibility, ‘mediation’ plays a key role; namely to grant access to information for people when they cannot access audiovisual content because of their disability, such as people who are Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing. This kind of mediation is summarised in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2001: 14) as follows:

In both the receptive and productive modes, the written and/or oral activities of mediation make communication possible between persons who are unable, for whatever reason, to communicate with each other directly. Translation or interpretation, a paraphrase, summary or record, provides for a third party a (re)formulation of a source text to which this third party does not have direct access.

In this sense, Media Accessibility in the specific field of subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (SDH) could be considered as ‘intralingual mediation’, the act of interpreting in community-based settings (Pöchhacker, 2008). Intralingual mediation covers any activity that involves reformulation for an audience with specific needs and that share the same language. Part of this mediation process is the result of a linguistic reformulation from a linguistic structure to a different one (simpler, shorter and respecting the characteristics of written language), according to the end users’ need for a new recipient context (Eugeni, 2008b). In addition, other aspects such as the mediation skills of the real-time intralingual subtitler and the increasing use of technology will determine the mediation process.

1.2 Mediation and Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing audiences

Since the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), all EU countries have committed to set minimum standards to implement such rights. In this sense, the recently revised Audiovisual Media Service Directive (AVMSD) and the new European Accessibility Act, both by the EU, establish the need to generate new accessibility services to all media: subtitles, audio subtitles, audio description and sign language in live and recorded video, for both linear and non-linear delivery. Accordingly, each country must develop national laws to transpose EU directives and

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Acts. Due to the new international regulations and legislation in the Media Accessibility field, EU countries are being obliged to provide accessibility services to cater for the needs of user groups such as the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing.

The main objective of subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing is to communicate audiovisual information directly to a specific audience. Given that the needs of such an audience, the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, who are part of a disabled community, are frequently ignored, it is not difficult to assert that real-time intralingual subtitling is a form of socio-cultural mediation, along with all other forms of Media Accessibility, such as audio description and sign language interpreting. Within this context, Katan (2009: 89-90) synthesizes the process of cultural mediation in a ‘logical levels table’ in which each level is determined by the context of culture and circumstances that need to be considered. The levels include environment, behaviour, strategies, values/beliefs, identity, role, and mission in society. Each of these levels bears particular significance in the work of real-time intralingual subtitlers. Environment applies to the need for the professionals to know the type of text to be transferred, the setting and the audience specificities; behaviour applies to ‘what is to be translated?’, which consists of the inclusion/transmission of the non-verbal elements in the target text, to ensure its adequate reception; specifically, in field of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing accessibility. Values/beliefs apply to the intentions implicit in the Source Text and how to transfer them to the target text. Identity applies to the different agents involved in the communicative process, and therefore, to the needs and requirements of the speaker, the commissioner and the intended audience. The role applies to the meta-competences of the mediator’s ability to provide an accessible service. The mission in society deals with the ethics and professional issues from which the task of the real-time intralingual subtitler comprises.

As can be seen, professionals in this field are expected to master specific skills and receive appropriate training that goes beyond the linguistic and cultural knowledge usually provided in current translation studies. In fact, additional mediation skills related to the setting and the needs of the end-users have to be taken into consideration.
1.3 Mediation in real-time intralingual subtitling

The skills used to carry out intralingual mediation in the real-time intralingual subtitling field have hardly been addressed, except for a few studies such as the volume on live subtitling through Respeaking by Romero-Fresco (2011) and that on Respeaking as a technique edited by Eugeni and Mack (2006). Most of these academic works focus on skills used in a TV broadcasting setting and/or describe real-time subtitling practices in specific countries, such as Spain (Orero, 2006) and Belgium (Remael and van der Veer, 2006). As a consequence, not much research can be found that validates the skills and competences applied to settings outside of TV.

In the real-time intralingual subtitling field, professionals are required to relay information from the Source Text to the Target Text for a given communicative purpose and work setting. These mediation skills can be described as competence-based (Cedefop, 2011), since real-time intralingual subtitlers have to use various skills and competences to carry out the mediation process. Specifically, when real-time intralingual subtitlers are asked to provide a service, they are in fact acting as mediators. Therefore, they have to understand the information included in the source text and then transfer it to the target text appropriately and accurately in a way that satisfies the requirements of the work setting. The practice of mediation thus entails the use of the source text in particular social contexts in ways that are based on certain social needs.

Real-time intralingual subtitlers as mediators, not only use their sociolinguistic knowledge and language awareness, but must also possess a background in accessibility, with knowledge on how to implement different strategies which will address specific users’ needs, and in turn convey a specific meaning through a particular approach to the Target Text, such as verbatim versus sensatim (Eugeni 2008b). To be in a position to do this successfully, they need to activate their mediation awareness according to Katan’s ‘logical levels’ (Katan, 2009) with regard to the specific (Source and/or Target) Text and their familiarity with the topic.

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2. Mediation and Technology - impact on mediation services

Ahead of its predecessor, Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) was meant to be “the design, evaluation and implementation of interactive computing systems for human use” (SIGCHI 1992: 5). Nowadays, however, technology in many fields of mediation has superseded human use, by totally or significantly replacing it. In Machine Translation Studies, this is mirrored by Human-Aided Machine Translation, which is increasingly competing with the natural evolution of HCI, meaning Computer-Aided Machine Translation.

Similarly, in Natural Language Understanding, ASR is gradually automating Media Indexing, Reporting and the Subtitling of prerecorded audiovisual material published on the web. As far as real-time subtitling through Respeaking is concerned, technology is pervasive to such an extent that each step in the process would be impossible without it. In some cases, HCI is so predominantly driven by technology that we can talk of Human-Aided, Real-Time Subtitling and even of Automatic Subtitling. In order to gain a more in-depth understanding of how this technology impacts on real-time intralingual subtitling, the next section will address the three main steps in the process of Respeaking (Source Text, Mid Text, Target Text) and later, concentrate on the nature of technological aspects and their impact on the final product.

2.1. The process of real-time subtitling

With regard to real-time subtitling through Respeaking, Marchionne (2013) shows that the process consists of nine steps that can grouped into three main areas:

1. The Source Text
   a. The speaker speaks into a microphone
   b. The subtitler listens to the speaker, ideally through headphones in a booth or office at the same time as the rest of the audience

2. The Mid Text
   a. The subtitler speaks into a microphone
   b. The ASR software program transcribes what the respeaker says
c. The editing software turns what the ASR software has produced into editable text

3. The Target Text

a. The editor identifies, assesses, and corrects significant mistakes

b. The edited text is turned into subtitles

c. The subtitles are broadcasted

d. The audience reads the subtitles while watching the visual component of the setting, e.g. TV programme, conference or parliamentary session.

Even though this process describes the professional activity of the respeaker, it can be easily adapted to that of the velotypist. The only aspect which needs to be modified is the production of the Mid Text, which depends on the technique used. Specifically, in the case of Velotyping, the subtitler types a combination of keys simultaneously (2.a), which the Velotyping programme turns into written text (2.b), which the editing software turns into editable text.

2.2. Technological aspects

As seen, technology in real-time intralingual subtitling is so pervasive that HCI varies from Computer-Aided to Human-Aided to Fully Automated, real-time, intralingual subtitling; depending on factors such as the available resources (technological, human, logistic, and economic); the work setting (face-to-face, online, and by relay) and the context (cultural events, parliamentary sessions, media broadcasts, workplace, educational settings). Because of this, the needs and expectations of the end users may vary accordingly, from situation to situation, as the respondents explained in their answers to the questionnaire mentioned below.

As for the Source Text, technology has a moderate impact. However, there is a huge difference between listening directly to the voice of the speaker in a more or less noisy room; listening to it through headphones in the same room as the speaker or in a cabled soundproof booth; and listening to it via the web or a phone. What varies here is the quality of the reception: listening to the voice of the speaker through headphones in a soundproof booth is the best working condition because the subtitler can clearly listen to the speaker by adjusting the input volume; they can see speakers in their physical context and they are not stressed by background noise or prying eyes.
A similar situation is that of remote subtitling through online connection. However, in a face-to-face situation with no headphones available, the first and third conditions do not apply, and this may diminish the quality of the listening process, which is likely to affect the quality of the end result. In the case of a relay service, the second condition does not apply, thus adding stress to the overall task.

As for the Mid Text, its production is the one most influenced by technology which is, in this instance, related to the technique used to produce the subtitles (Velotyping or Respeaking). In the case of Velotyping, technology is limited to the keyboard. Hence, if the velotypist knows which combinations of keys to press, the final result will not need to be edited, whilst all of the following steps to produce the Mid Text (2.b, 2.c) as well as those to produce the Target Text (3.a, 3.b, 3c) will follow automatically without any further human intervention (except for contexts where subtitles are to be manually cued). The same cannot be said for Respeaking, where more variables can have an impact on the production of the Mid Text, such as the Respeaking mode and the microphone used. With respect to the Respeaking mode, subtitles can be produced either automatically from the voice of the speaker or indirectly via the respeaker. In the first case, step 2.a is skipped and the quality of the final input will depend on the quality of the Source Text. This means that the software can do a good job only if the source text is carefully constructed and without background noise, overlappings, hesitations, self-corrections, extra sounds, or unknown (to the machine) words (Lambourne et al., 2004).

If the Source Text does not have such features, the quality of the Mid Text can be very poor. In this context, homophones and near homophones can generate extra problems, which may lead to the transcription of other words when compared to the ones anticipated. In the second case, the professional respeaker knows how to handle all the aspects above. However, 100% accuracy cannot be guaranteed because the ASR machine may incorrectly recognise a word (e.g. they are > their) or prioritise the recognition of a different word (e.g. but > Butt), thus leading to an incorrect Mid Text (Marsh, 2004). As for the microphone used to dictate the Target Text, differences will depend on the kind of microphone used. If the respeaker uses a professional recording device (condenser, dynamic, ribbon, USB, stereo), the quality of the Mid Text will only depend on the dictation skills of the respeaker and on their capacity to avoid possible mistakes. In the case that a lower-quality microphone is used (mic-in, headphones with incorporated microphone, stenomask), as is common in conference
subtitling; quality may also depend on the background noise. If the respeaker uses a stenomask, the input volume may be adjusted according to reverberation and the individual’s voice particularities.

Regarding the production of the Target Text, the technology consists of Editing Software, Subtitling Software, and in some cases, Automatic Translation Software. Editing (subdivided into pre-editing, before starting working; peri-editing, while producing the Mid Text; and post-editing, after the machine releases the Mid Text) is still human-based, but its impact on the Target Text may vary considerably depending on who is in charge of the editing process (i.e., identifying mistakes, assessing their relevance and correcting them). Typically in TV subtitling, at least two people work on the editing separately (Orero, 2006; Remael and van der Veer, 2006).

However this condition largely depends on the country in which it is being carried out. In conference subtitling it is the subtitler who is normally entrusted with editing. In the case of TV subtitling, the first person (the real-time subtitler) will focus on both pre-editing (by adding all possible words that can be enunciated in the Source Text to the software dictionary) and peri-editing (i.e., avoiding dictating or typing words that are difficult to produce through the writing technique used). The second person (the real-time editor) will focus on post-editing; which will take more or less time depending on variables such as the accuracy of the Mid Text, the word-per-minute rate of both the Source Text and the Mid Text, the kind of mistakes produced and the type of editing software used. In particular, if the editor can select possible solutions the software automatically suggests, instead of cutting and re-typing (common in both Velotyping and Respeaking), or re-dictating (not applicable to Velotyping and less common in Respeaking), the quality of the Target Text will be higher. In the second case, the quality of the Target Text will essentially depend on the subtitler’s multitasking capacity, i.e. their ability to simultaneously produce the subtitles, browse the Mid Text in search of meaningful mistakes, and correct them. In this case, the effort made may be a further factor impacting on the cognitive load (cf. Gile, 1985) and consequently on the quality of the Target Text. As for the Subtitling Software, the quality of the final product depends on the kind of solution adopted. Subtitles can be sent to the end screen in several ways. In conference subtitling, the editing software may be connected to the screen either through cable (and beamer or video mixer), through USB ports communicating via radio among them, or through a web-based or TV-based solution. Once again, differences
depend on the specific timing of the on-screen appearance of the subtitles. In the case of a cabled screen or of a screen connected via radio, subtitles appear immediately, at the same time as they appear on the subtitling software. The same does not apply in the case of a screen relying on a web-based solution or a TV-based solution. Here the problem is latency, which may vary from 1.5-3 seconds (Eugeni, 2008a), in the case of TV subtitling, up to 30 seconds, as is the case with web subtitling, which also depends on the device used to send and mix the subtitles with the video.

Since there is a lack of well-established and certified training (Eugeni and Bernabé, forthcoming) for the acquisition of the mediation competences needed to carry out real-time intralingual subtitling, section 3 will present the LTA project, which proposes mediation skills for a curriculum designed to train a new breed of real-time intralingual subtitlers. By doing so, it aims to both bridge the gap in the training of these professionals and align both academic and vocational training in the real-time intralingual subtitling field.

2. Mediation skills for two real-time intralingual profiles: respeakers and velotypists

When end users regard the overall performance of a real-time intralingual subtitler as poor or insufficient, it can be assumed that there is a mismatch between their abilities and the standards required by the work setting. According to the 2015 report of the European Federation of Hard-of-Hearing (EFHOH)⁴:

It is essential that quality is maintained alongside increasing quantity; otherwise the purpose of subtitling is lost. One way to ensure quality is maintained is to invest in the training of live subtitling translators and speech-to-text interpreters. Such investment will only increase the accessibility of subtitling. (EFHOH, 2015: 19).

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The LTA project aims to bridge this gap by providing a harmonised modular curriculum following the skills-card structure proposed by the European Certification and Qualification Agency (ECQA), in line with the concepts of competence-based training, inclusion and equality (Cedefop, 2011). It will also provide training materials and implementation routes for higher education and vocational institutions.

LTA gathers educational and non-educational partners (trainers, employers, service providers, an end user association, and a certification association). The consortium aims to provide stable standards that express measurable levels of training quality; and to reach, through certification, a sustainable recognition of the training, profession and profiles of respeakers and velotypists. The LTA curriculum focuses on two techniques to produce real-time intralingual subtitles: Respeaking and Velotyping. The reason is that these techniques cover a higher number of languages and working scenarios, and show a higher employability potential as they respond to the market demands of a balanced outcome regarding costs, accuracy, and language availability. Respeaking uses ASR software to transfer voice to text. Though it is currently the most used technique, end-users still criticise the uneven quality of the delivered text (Romero-Fresco, 2015). Velotype is an EU-developed keyboard that produces whole syllables or words with every keystroke, and trained velotypists can type at the speed of speech for extended periods in over 30 languages. They deliver superior results in noisy environments and in terms of high-quality orthographic typing, but its training is long and costly compared to Respeaking. According to Lambourne (2006), the training period for velotypists is 12 months, while respeakers training is 2-3 months. In terms of speed, velotypist can reach up to 140-180 wpm and respeakers up to 140-160 wpm. In both cases, accuracy can be 95-98% but it will mainly depend on the source language and the speaker speech rate.

The LTA project consists of five work packages, so-called Intellectual Outputs (IOs), the results of which will be presented here. The goals are two: first, to define the skills and competences required of the real-time intralingual subtitlers; and, second, to explore real-time intralingual subtitling in terms of both vocational training (provided by universities or companies) and professional roles (respeakers or

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5 The Velotype keyboard costs 1500,- EUR while respeaking software costs about 699,- EUR (information retrieved on 12/12/2019).
velotypists). The results of IO1 are the basis for IO2 (curriculum design), IO3 (creation of learning materials), IO4 (assessment) and certification in IO5.

In IO1 the data collected was both quantitative and qualitative, and the chosen tool for the two online surveys was a questionnaire. The first survey sought to identify the skills needed in the labour market and those demanded by end-users. The second allowed LTA partners to explore current teaching practices. Both surveys began with a skills-card organised by competence areas using learning outcomes as specified by the European Certification and Qualification Agency (ECQA) guidelines. As identified in a comparative study by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop, 2016), learning outcome approaches are used in both vocational and higher-education qualification frameworks for almost all EU countries, and provide a means of transparency, transferability and recognition of training nationally, and throughout Europe.

This section presents the results of the skills survey. The questionnaire was restricted to eight languages and comprised three sections. The first section provided information about the purpose of the project (the goals of the survey) and included the terms of participation and consent. The second gathered demographic data from participants; and the third, data about the competences required of the professional. The two types of questions used were closed questions with a 4-Likert scale (0 - of no importance; 1 - of minor importance; 2 - important; 3 - very important) and multi-choice questions with a free-textbox at the end, which allowed LTA partners to gather meaningful qualitative data. The following sections disclose only the most significant results and focus on the conclusions.

3.1 Demographic data

A total of 121 respondents participated in the survey. The demographic data collected showed that their profile was conducive with the audience targeted by LTA: 57 professionals, 13 trainers, 13 prospective students, 17 providers, 29 end users, 20 other. Respondents under the group ‘Other’ were professionals or providers
of services that had not been mentioned explicitly, for instance, the provision of real-time subtitles at museums, galleries or literary festivals, the provision of technical assistance, and that of remote services. Participants came from Europe, Asia-Pacific, and the U.S. Most of the professionals are between 40 to 59 years old, are freelancers (72.5%), who work mainly in their mother tongue (81%). As for the educational background; 26% of the participants had a Master’s degree followed by 24% with a Bachelor’s degree. All of the participants had achieved the minimum of a high-school diploma. In terms of work experience, the sample profile shows that 28% of the participants have been working for 20 or more years in the field, whereas approximately 71% of trainers have been training for less than 10 years. 81% of the participants work only in their mother tongue, whereas 15% work in both their mother tongue and another language. In terms of preferred training technique, Velotype, scored 58%, which was much higher than the 2nd preference, Respeaking with only 16%. It should be mentioned that Velotype is mostly used in Dutch speaking countries and that the number of Dutch participants accounted for a higher proportion than those from other countries. This fact may have affected the training techniques preferences. In addition, the remaining 26% correspond to 'Other' using techniques such as Palantype, stenography or the use of QWERTY keyboards.

The demographic data gathered leads to the conclusion that interest in the topic reaches beyond European borders. The participants who work as professionals in the field are middle-aged (over 40 years old), have an educational degree (mainly higher education and undergraduate), work mainly as freelancers and in their mother tongue. The fact that the service has been provided for an average of 20 years while most trainers have been teaching for 0-9 years supports LTA starting point: training is lagging behind.

3.2 Competence areas

The following section sets out the LTA competence framework; expressed in terms of competences to be acquired or mastered as a real-time intralingual subtitler. In line with the European Qualifications Framework (2008), the LTA competence framework outlines which competences are to be achieved, acquired and mastered by the end of the training and the requirements of each given activity, all of which are expressed in a skills-card structure.
The LTA project competences are divided into six areas: Knowledge about accessibility, Linguistic competence, Entrepreneurship and service competence, IT competence, Respeaking competence and Velotyping competence. Each competence area displays a set of skills or knowledge that a real-time intralingual subtitler should acquire and master, which should in turn be expressed in learning outcomes.

All competence areas presented in the survey were presented in the same structure. The same sentence introduced the skills for each competence (“To deliver a good quality service, a real-time intralingual subtitler should be able to […]”) followed by a specific competence. Respondents rated the skills in a 4-Likert scale from 0 to 3 points (0 – of no importance; 1 – of minor importance; 2 – important; 3 – very important). At the end of the series of questions comprising each competence area, respondents were able to add their comments in a free-text box.

Competence areas ranked as follows:

Linguistic competence: 2.6;
IT competence: 2.4;
Entrepreneurship and service competence: 2.3;
Respeaking: 2.3;
Velotyping: 2.3;
Knowledge about accessibility: 2.1.

It should also be pointed out that Velotype and Respeaking areas may have scored lower because of those respondents who simply do not know or use Respeaking and Velotyping. Also, the higher rating for Linguistic and IT competence areas was probably due to their transversality rather than representing a comment on technique. Knowledge about accessibility, with the lowest points, can also be considered a transversal competence because most of the defined skills apply throughout the other key competence areas, and may determine the real-time intralingual service, i.e. knowing the needs and preferences of the end-users of the service, being able to adjust the output to the working context or advise customers about how to best set-up an accessible working environment. All of these skills may determine the use of the technology and the Respeaking and/or Velotyping service.

The analysis of the qualitative data showed that some respondents relate the overall importance of certain competences to the type of
employment or working context. In this light, they categorised the competence areas such as Knowledge about accessibility, Linguistic competence and competence related to technique (Velotyping or Respeaking) as necessary for all professionals, whereas Entrepreneurship and service and IT competences are seen as principally important for freelancers. Considering that 72.5% of respondents were freelancers; it can be asserted that the latter competences are considered to be secondary, after having acquired the initial competences, and once the professional has entered the market. It should be highlighted that respondents did not pinpoint the need for additional competence areas.

3.2.1 Knowledge about accessibility competence

This competence area comprise nine skills expressed in Learning Outcomes, relating to three categories:

a) Basic concepts about accessibility;
b) Target groups, needs and interaction;
c) How accessibility is embedded in the environment.

The skills concern the ability to apply knowledge; to use know-how to complete tasks; and to solve problems. The first category details the ability of the real-time intralingual subtitler to explain concepts such as accessibility, disability, multimodality, universal design, type of hearing loss, and particularities of the target audiences. The second category details the ability to help facilitate communication for people with hearing loss, and to adapt the output to the work context. It also includes the cultural particularities of the Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing and Deaf-Blind community along with other end-users of the service. The last category details the ability to identify personal ways of raising awareness, of explaining their role and tasks as professionals, and the ability to advise customers.

The results obtained showed that the skill “adjust the output to the work setting” was rated the highest, with a score of 2.7. This skill refers to a high-level proficiency requiring the professional to be able to evaluate and manage a given working setting for the delivery of the real-time intralingual service, and propose appropriate solutions, i.e. provide basic tips for presenters such as recommending to speak

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7 They are ‘statements of what an individual should know, understand and/or be able to do at the end of a learning process’ (Source: EQF 2008)
clearly, avoid speaking too fast and use simple language for the description of the visuals for Blind users. The skill with the lowest score (1.4) was Communicate in sign-language in basic situations. This might be due to the fact that sign language is not the mother tongue of all Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing people and also requires specific training.

With regard to data concerning quality, three main topics were identified: the need to clearly describe the role and tasks of the professional and how they differ from other profiles; the uneven provision of accessibility services across countries (Asia-Pacific versus Europe and the U.S.); and the need to establish quality standards for the profession.

3.2.2 Linguistic competence area

This competence area presented eight skills expressed in Learning Outcomes, relating to three categories:

a) Functionality: accuracy, readability, legibility;
b) How to cope with speech-related challenges (Exit strategies and ad hoc solutions);
c) Strategies to acquire and develop specific thematic knowledge.

In this competence area, prospective trainees should be able to understand the concepts and indicators of accuracy, readability, and legibility, and apply them to their work. The ability to perform verbatim (word by word) and sensatim (meaning by meaning) subtitling is expected, as well as the ability to identify and implement exit strategies (e.g. reformulation) and to decide its pertinence according to the setting and the needs of the audience. This competence area also included skills concerning the ability to acquire and develop specific thematic knowledge.

Two skills shared the highest score in the scale responses with 2.8; namely the ability to ‘Deliver the accuracy needed in each setting’ and to ‘Apply readability indicators to the transcribed text’. Both relate to functionality and demand high-level implementation skills, a highly proficient language level (e.g. correct grammar, spelling of basic and difficult words, of names, job-specific terminology, description of sound) and grounded knowledge about readability (e.g. indicating the name of the speaker or a switch of speakers, specifying when someone speaks unclearly or too fast). Finally, they demand autonomy, self-
confidence and methodological mastery in the live situation. The skill with the lowest score, 2.3, was the ability to ‘Deal with different cultural approaches to real-time intralingual subtitling’.

Free-text responses brought to light the different approaches taken towards accuracy (verbatim versus sensatim) and to the role of the professional in situations in which communication might be at stake due to poor technique, complex grammar or constraints emerging from the setting or the audiences’ language skills. Furthermore, the respondents’ answers concerning verbatim and sensatim show that this variable is mainly dependent on the constraints of the setting and preferences of the end-users. In addition, they pointed out that they might represent two different modalities that require separate training, and are provided by two different types of professionals.

3.2.3 Entrepreneurship and Service competence

This competence area contained ten skills expressed in Learning Outcomes relating to four categories: a) Management skills, b) Interpersonal skills, c) Stress management, and d) Business strategies.

These skills expressed the professionals’ ability to build and manage a business. For this reason, basic knowledge about customer management and portfolio skills were included. The interpersonal and personal skills aimed to develop abilities in interacting with customers and took into consideration other personal aspects such as resilience and stress management.

The skills with the highest score of 2.7 were ‘Respond to a customer’s inquiry or problem in a timely and effective manner’ and ‘Follow up on customer requests to ensure that accessibility service needs are met’. The skills with the lowest score, 2.0, were ‘Explain the role of personal resilience as an own critical skill’ and 'Prepare himself/herself to conduct professional interviews with customers’.

Free-text answers provided further insight into these topics. Respondents pinpointed the need to follow a code of conduct and dress appropriately for the job. They also propose self-confidence and social competence as necessary personal skills. Some respondents specified that skills in this competence area are mainly relevant for professionals who work as freelancers. This might be due to the fact that this competence area has not been sufficiently addressed in academic training programs (Siegel and Wright 2015). However, in the European Commission (2018) proposal for a council recommendation
on key competences for lifelong learning, Entrepreneurship has recently been included as one of the eight key competences, necessary to ensure resilience and the ability to adapt to change.

3.2.4 IT competence

This competence area included seven skills expressed in Learning Outcomes relating to the categories:

a) How to set up the working environment;
b) Input tools;
c) Output tools.

These skills describe the ability to set up the working station autonomously and to foresee and solve problems instantaneously. This competence area takes into consideration the need to acquire knowledge and skills in both input and output tools.

The skills with the highest scores, 2.7, were ‘Set up the hardware and software for each type of trained setting’ and ‘Use the hardware and software for each type of trained setting and solve problems’. A closer look at both skills reveals that they are intimately related. The verbs used show a difference in proficiency level, since the latter demands that the professional be able not only to understand but also apply the technical know-how to deliver the service. The skills with the lowest scores, 2.3, were ‘Explain the advantages of Text on Top and similar software by the provision of the service’.

Free-text answers provided comments regarding the importance of the mastery of IT skills as a critical point that adds value to the real-time intralingual subtitler. In addition, the comments stressed the challenge of keeping up with technological developments available in the market, the need to understand the advantages and disadvantages of automatically created subtitles and the fact that the software itself

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needs to be accessible for people with disabilities. It should be highlighted that training in IT skills is already a key priority, which has also been highlighted in the EQF (2008) and is one of the eight key competences in the European Framework for Key Competences 2018.

3.2.5 Respeaking competence

This competence area displays 15 skills expressed in Learning Outcomes relating to four categories:

a) Listening while speaking;
b) Dictating words and punctuation;
c) Articulatory skills;
d) Editing while Respeaking;
e) Factors of high performance.

All categories include high-level abilities that cover the full chain of the real-time intralingual subtitling service, from setup to evaluation. The theoretical knowledge acquired in the other competence areas, such as linguistic competence, is needed to produce subtitles by reformulating, editing and correcting the respeaked text during the listening. At the same time, the professional is required to continuously train the software (Arumi and Romero-Fresco, 2008; Remael and van der Veer, 2006).

The skill with the highest score, 2.9, is “Communicate with good pronunciation”. The one with the lowest, 2.3, is “Implement non-verbal elements for each work context by applying different techniques” such as changing colours or font-size, or by inserting labels. Respeaking demands special attention to the pronunciation of proper nouns and specific terms, otherwise the software will not recognise them during the Respeaking process, and the Source Text will not be accurately delivered to the end-users. This will cause a major problem in the quality of the service. On the other hand, non-verbal elements will mainly depend on the working context and available technologies.

As mentioned in the free-text responses, participants support the demand for good pronunciation and specify that the type and scope of the reformulation and editing depend on the constraints of the context (TV subtitles, live, other), the speed of speech, the ability to apply exit strategies and the overall goal of avoiding content loss.
Speed rates provided by the respondents range from 106 words per minute (wpm) to 400 wpm; this difference will depend on the speed rate of the speaker, the speed of the respoken subtitles and the amount of editing carried out (Romero-Fresco, 2009). Participants also subordinate this parameter to the quality of the output, the context, and the type of output (verbatim or sensatim). An accuracy of 99% is mentioned twice and some participants established a direct relationship between the accuracy of the subtitles and the delay. Delay remains a major challenge in real-time intralingual subtitles, because ‘as a product, it entails the production of non-synchronous subtitles (there is usually a 3-4 second delay)’ (Romero-Fresco, 2009: 118). In addition, there are technological issues that pose a major challenge, i.e. scrolling subtitles (more difficult to read) present a delay of 3-4 seconds and block subtitles present a delay of 4-6 seconds (Romero-Fresco, 2009).

### 3.2.6 Velotyping competence

This competence area displays 15 skills expressed in Learning Outcomes relating to four categories:

a) Listening while typing;
b) Typing words and punctuation;
c) Typing skills;
d) Editing while typing;
e) Factors of high performance.

Two skills obtained the highest score of 2.8: ‘Remember full sentences while lagging behind because of editing/quick speech/other difficulties’, and ‘Identify own typing mistakes during typing, decide how relevant these are (minor, major or critical) and correct them, if necessary’. The skill with the lowest score, 2.3, was ‘Discipline themselves to practice and improve their skills daily, to reach a higher speed and accuracy’.

Speed, accuracy, delay, and interpreting strategies are also topics arising from the free-text responses. Answers show that they are interconnected. Speed rates ranging from 420 to 500 characters per minute (cpm) should be achieved, and a 99-100% spelling accuracy should be the goal. However, respondents categorised both parameters, typing speed and spelling accuracy, as subordinate to the overall goals of minimising delay and applying higher level interpreting
strategies. As can be observed, Respeaking and Velotype are highly connected in terms of interpreting skills. The main difference remains in the fact that while Respeaking demands a high command of pronunciation, Velotype demands a high command of spelling accuracy.

The free-text answers present two new aspects: first, the need for clear standards to measure the precision of the output and to elect a suitable model for the parameters in use; second, the appropriateness of the technique for specific contexts given that the sound of the keyboard during Velotyping must be considered. Regarding standards to measure precision, it should be mentioned that different models have been developed in recent years to measure real-time subtitling quality, especially in the TV context. Some examples are the WER model (Dumouchel et al., 2011), which has been used as the base for developing the NER model (Romero-Fresco and Martínez 2015), asking for 98% accuracy; and the IRA model (Eugeni, 2017), where the smallest unit of analysis is not the word but the concept. The minimum accuracy required here is 95%.

While the NER model has been criticized, it is still the most widely known, especially in TV work contexts because it can be automatically applied through a specific software called NERstar (Matamala et al., 2017). Even if some survey respondents claim that it is not always easy to apply, it still meets the demand for quantitative data when live, verbatim subtitling is required (Eugeni, 2017). In general, the overall quality of real-time intralingual subtitling is improving, thanks especially to the technological improvements in speech recognition and steno-captioning technology. Still, there is no single model to measure quality, which would serve all settings and work contexts. Moreover, as mentioned in the white paper “Caption Quality: International approaches to standards and measurement” by Media Access Australia, presenting different models used in different countries to measure quality, “not all errors are of the same magnitude. Some are negligible, while a single incorrect word can make an entire news story incomprehensible or, worse, change its meaning completely” (Media Access Australia, 2014: 9). From this point of view, the IRA model seems to solve this issue by focusing on concepts instead of focusing on words. However, it is quite difficult to apply because the segmentation of the source text into units of analysis and its assessment are completely subjective to the evaluator, though some indications are provided (Romero-Fresco and Eugeni, forthcoming). Clearly, much work remains to be done in this area.
4. Conclusions

As we have seen, mediation skills in the real-time intralingual subtitling process are transversal, and consequently, go beyond message transfer. The LTA project aims to fill a gap in the training of real-time intralingual subtitling professionals who are capable of taking on this emerging professional activity. The proposed competence-based training areas serve to foster not only the acquisition of skills related to the linguistic and cultural aspects of the mediation process; but also other relevant competences, some of which are traditionally linked to vocational practices, such as entrepreneurship and service competence, which have long been overlooked in traditional training programs and are now being considered as key competences in the European Framework for Lifelong Learning (2018). In addition, these professionals need to acquire and develop competences related to accessibility, technology and Respeaking and/or Velotyping techniques.

Worth mentioning are also the continuous technological developments that are improving automatic and computer-assisted transcriptions. These developments could be considered a threat to those working in the industry, given that part of the human task is being replaced. However, editing remains human, and the real-time intralingual subtitler’s competences are still fundamental in many contexts of both verbatim subtitling (especially when the quality of the source text is poor) and sensatim subtitling, where Artificial Intelligence has not yet been developed for the production of accessible subtitles.

Professionals in the field have been able to bridge the gap between the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing and the audiovisual content in different settings such as cultural events, parliamentary assemblies, media broadcast, workplace, and education to name a few. The debate over the role they perform in each setting and the traditional role assigned to translators/interpreters and mediators is still open. There is no official recognition for the high demand for the work of real-time intralingual subtitlers and professionals in the Media Accessibility field, nor for the fact that training is still lacking.
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Training Respeakers: 
A Hybrid Profession for the (near) Future?

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Abstract

The digital revolution of the past twenty years has massively changed the language industry, now heavily technology-based. The use of technology has changed the pace and organisation of labour, but has also created new opportunities, by making it possible to provide new services. One such example is live subtitling via respeaking, a technique based on speech recognition technology. The skills and competences required to provide such services are still being investigated, with a view to informing training methods and curricula. The paper gives an overview of research activities in this field carried out at the Università degli Studi Internazionali - UNINT, Rome.

1. Introduction

The focus of this paper is on respeaking, a technique that straddles across the translation-interpreting divide. As the terms “translator” and “interpreter” are often used interchangeably in every-day language, it is perhaps useful to begin with a definition of both activities, provided by the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC). The AIIC website points out that interpreting is a real-time service provided to participants (speakers and listeners) in a communicative event, while translators usually work in relative isolation with no immediate contact with target language readers. It then adds:

An interpreter works with spoken words in a particular context, conveying a message from one language to another, while translation
refers to the activity of transferring a written text from one language to another. [...]” (AIIC 2012)

This definition, albeit clear, is a little restrictive, as it does not explicitly include hybrid modes such as sight translation (spoken translation of written texts) and subtitling (written translation of spoken texts). This paper takes a wider perspective and talks about professionals working in the language industry, defined as follows:

‘Language industry’ covers professionals working in translation, interpreting, subtitling and dubbing, localisation, language technology tools development, international conference organisation, language teaching, linguistic consultancy. (LIND 2019)

One activity that has developed in the language industry in recent years is respeaking for live subtitling, a technique that relies on speech recognition technology and efficient human-machine interaction. Respeakers listen to live input and simultaneously reformulate it to speech recognition software that turns it into written subtitles. This method is widely used to provide live intralingual subtitles for the deaf and the hearing-impaired on television and in live events; the interlingual variant, which resembles simultaneous interpreting but produces a written target language text instead of a spoken one, has the potential to contribute to universal accessibility to information, culture and entertainment by bridging both linguistic and sensory barriers.

As respeaking shares elements of both translation and interpreting and is heavily technology-based, it makes sense to briefly summarise the main changes brought about by technological progress in the language industry and their impact on the training of translators and interpreters (§2). Then, the focus shifts onto respeaking itself, with a brief overview of relevant literature on research and training (§3) to serve as the background for a discussion of the respeaking-related teaching and research experiences at the Università degli Studi Internazionali di Roma, (§4). Finally, conclusions are presented in §5.

1 The Language Industry Expert Group (LIND) provides consultancy services to the Directorate-General for Translation of the European Commission.
2. The technological turn in the language industry and in translator and interpreter training

In the first two decades of the 21st century the advent of the digital revolution has changed the language industry beyond all recognition. Of course, some language professionals rely on technology more than others, depending on their geographical location, specialisations, age, and so on; but at least in Western societies they all routinely use a variety of tools. In translation, the uptake of technology has been pervasive and very fast-paced. At the turn of the 20th century, translators were already expected to be able to use many different types of electronic tools (Austermühl 2001), but over the last couple of decades their range and efficiency have increased massively. Today, translators use online dictionaries, glossaries, term banks, corpora, CAT (Computer Assisted Translation) tools and, in many cases, machine translation (MT) software as well. This technological turn in translation has also created new tasks. In order to use MT systems efficiently, pre-editing and post-editing are necessary, and since the use of CAT tools has made it easier to split large jobs among several translators, tasks such as project management, TM (translation memory) management and revision have acquired growing importance. Thus, technology has had a huge impact on the pace and organisation of labour. The latest trend is the shift to cloud-based tools, which make it easier to optimise workflows and perform quality checks on large translation projects. Moreover, as turnaround times are significantly lower than in the past, some translators have been experimenting with speech recognition software to dictate their translations and increase productivity. In short, today translators need to be able to use a variety of tools to lever competitive advantage on the market (Rothwell and Svoboda 2019).

The technological turn has affected the interpreting profession more recently and to a lesser extent, but it is now definitely here to stay. Fantinuoli (2018b) classifies the impact of technology on interpreting into three areas: Computer Assisted Interpreting (CAI), Remote Interpreting (RI) and Machine Interpreting (MI), the latter still in its early stages of development.2 Interpreters use a wide range of online and off-line tools (term bases, glossaries, “do-it-yourself” corpora, and so on) before and after assignments for preparation.

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2 Readers are referred to Fantinuoli (2018a) for a fuller overview.
purposes and for continuous professional development. Moreover, there are dedicated terminology management tools such as Interplex to support interpreters with their glossaries. An even more sophisticated tool, Interpretbank, has been expressly designed for use in the booth (optimised for quick term look-up during simultaneous interpreting assignments), and features the integration of Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) technology to transcribe terms and figures and prompt interpreters with suggestions. In addition, remote interpreting (with the interpreter away from the primary participants’ location) and videoconference interpreting (with participants distributed across several sites) are becoming more and more common; and there are several interpreting apps that make it possible for clients to listen to the interpretation via their own devices (smartphones, tablets, laptops, and so on) instead of hiring specialised equipment.

All the above developments have had an impact of the training of translators and interpreters, where technology is acquiring growing importance. For example, the European Master’s in Translation (EMT) network includes technology competences in its core curriculum: search engines, corpus-based tools, CAT and MT tools, corpora, as well as the ability to handle different file formats and the localisation of multimedia texts such as websites and videogames. The growing importance of technology training in EMT institutions has been confirmed in a recent survey (Rothwell and Svoboda 2019). It found that almost 100% of programmes in the network now teach the use of translation memories and terminology tools and that a majority also teach MT and post-editing (71%) and cloud-based tools (69%). Finally, 35% also offer training in subtitling, which in some cases includes respeaking. In addition, EMT members seem to be moving away from a “traditional” view of translation as an activity involving exclusively written texts, for example by embracing multimedia translation.

Of course, the EMT network is a select group of institutions and cannot be considered representative of all the academic programmes.

3 See Interplex (http://www.fourwillows.com/interplex.html) and Interpretbank (http://interpretbank.com/).
5 The European Master’s in Translation (EMT) is a network of universities offering MA degree courses in translation, developed under the aegis of the Directorate-General for Translation of the European Commission. See https://ec.europa.eu/info/resources-partners/european-masters-translation-emt_en
in this field. However, the growing interest in technology on the part of translator and interpreter training institutions has also been confirmed by the 2019 edition of the LIND survey of the European Language Industry, whose respondents include professionals, language services companies and training institutes. One aspect that is especially relevant for the purposes of this paper is that speech recognition technology has gradually been adopted in both professional translation and interpreting, so much so that it is contributing to blur the boundaries between the two. Several CAT tools already include speech recognition features to enable translators to work using their voice; in addition, speech recognition technology can be used in simultaneous interpreting (see the above-mentioned InterpretBank tool) and in subtitling (live and recorded). The popularity of speech recognition has been noted by translator and interpreter training institutions:

Training institutes show a clear interest in dictation and subtitling technology. It is also interesting to note that dictation technology scores almost as high as machine translation with independent professionals. (LIND 2019)

It is now time to focus on speech recognition and on its application to respeaking.

3. Respeaking: an overview

Today, respeaking is the method of choice in many countries to provide accessibility services on television. It is also used in live events, such as conferences, lectures, and so on. As was mentioned earlier, it relies on speech recognition technology, originally developed in the 1990s for dictation purposes. A clarification is in order here: there are two types of speech recognition systems, namely speaker-dependent and speaker-independent ones. The former can transcribe any speaker’s words with reasonable accuracy. No prior preparation of the software is required, provided the input is of good quality (i.e. no overlapping voices, foreign accents or other sources of signal noise).

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7 In Italy the preferred method for live subtitling is still stenotyping. Respeaking is used on television and in live events, but to a much lesser degree.
In contrast, speaker-dependent recognition programmes require users to create a voice profile and to train the system by reading aloud some texts. As a result, the software gradually becomes familiar with the user’s voice, pronunciation and speech patterns. This latter type of speech recognition technology is the one used for live subtitling via respeaking:

[…] a respeaker listens to the original sound of a (live) programme or event and respeaks it, including punctuation marks and some specific features for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHOH) audience, to a speech recognition software, which turns the recognised utterances into subtitles displayed on the screen with the shortest possible delay. (Romero-Fresco 2011: 1)

The live subtitles produced via respeaking are used not only by deaf people, but also by non-native speakers and students (who may wish to listen and read at the same time for language learning purposes), and by the general public whenever it is impractical to listen to sound (e.g. at the gym or in an underground station). There is also an interlingual variant of respeaking (i.e. between two languages), which is a cross-over between simultaneous interpreting and interlingual subtitling, depending on whether you look at it from the point of view of the process or the product:

With regard to the process, ‘interlingual respeaking’ […] is really a form of simultaneous interpreting, while the product, in the intralingual as well as the interlingual variant, is a set of subtitles. (Romero-Fresco and Pöchhacker 2017: 158)

Interlingual respeaking is still in its infancy, but it is potentially a very inclusive translation mode, as it can be used to make multilingual content accessible to foreign and hearing-impaired subtitle users at the same time. It is worth mentioning that in April 2019 the European Commission adopted the European Accessibility Act, a directive aimed at facilitating disabled people’s access to information and entertainment: this measure is expected to boost services such as subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing, audio-description, spoken subtitles and sign language interpretation. Moreover, while in the past the audiovisual sector included only traditional media such as cinema and television, today a key role is also played by Internet-based streaming platforms, the gaming industry and the emerging Virtual Reality productions. All these new materials need to be made
accessible not only across sensory barriers (intralingual) but also across languages and cultures (interlingual). Finally, there is an untapped market in the live subtitling of on-line radio broadcasts, in the live subtitling of online classes (MOOC) and webcasts. Thus, it would seem that demand for this kind of service (in both the intralingual and interlingual variants) is likely to increase in the near future, and that it can provide plentiful employment opportunities to graduates with the necessary knowledge, skills and competences.

Clearly, in order to design respeaker training courses effectively, it is important to understand the process and skills involved. Over the last 10-15 years, research into respeaking has been developing steadily; initially only on the intralingual variant, and in the last 5 years on the intralingual one as well. The studies produced until now have been either descriptive-empirical (i.e. case studies analysing respeaking services in specific settings) or experimental (i.e. tasks carried out in a laboratory). A brief summary of key studies is provided in §3.1, while a quick overview of methods and approaches used in the training of respeakers is given in §3.2.

3.1 Respeaking research

As respeaking is such a young translation mode, research is still scanty. The available literature focuses on three main topics: the skills and competences required for intra- and inter-lingual respeaking; the accuracy of the subtitles produced via respeaking; and the viability of respeaking as a service, i.e. how to deliver it in various settings whilst ensuring the best possible quality.

As regards the process, a number of studies have highlighted the similarities between simultaneous interpreting and respeaking (Marsh 2004; Eugeni 2008). Recent studies have tried to determine whether a background in interpreting or subtitling can confer an advantage in the acquisition of respeaking skills and competences (Szarkowska et al. 2018, Dawson 2018). Early results seem to indicate that an interpreting background can help, but is not mandatory, and that subtitling skills are also needed to perform respeaking satisfactorily.

Assessing the accuracy of live subtitles is another key topic being investigated. Starting with intralingual respeaking, several models have been proposed, but the most widely used one is the NER model (Romero-Fresco 2011, Romero-Fresco and Martínez 2015). It distinguishes between (software-related) recognition errors and (human) edition errors, and attributes a score to each error depending
on its severity (minor, standard or serious), calculated in terms of the effect on viewers. The NER model has become established as the industry standard and an accuracy score of 98% has been suggested as the minimum quality threshold for (intralingual) live subtitles (Romero-Fresco 2011). As regards interlingual respeaking, Romero-Fresco and Pöchhacker (2017) have recently developed the NTR model, which once again distinguishes between recognition errors and human (translation) errors: the latter include content-related errors (omissions, additions and substitutions) and form-related errors (affecting grammatical correctness and style). The model needs to be validated in various settings to determine whether a 98% accuracy rate is a feasible benchmark in interlingual respeaking too.

Of course, other aspects also play a role in the service delivered to users. One of them is the average latency of subtitles, caused by the combination of the respeaker’s time lag in relation to the original speaker and the delay caused by data processing by the speech recognition software. This can become a problem in conferences when slides are used or on television in programmes with visual information (graphics, maps, and so on): if there is too much delay, the subtitle is displayed when the relevant visuals have already disappeared (Romero-Fresco 2011). In addition, the speaking speed of the original speaker is another key factor, because respeakers have to add punctuation marks orally. This means that, in order to produce verbatim subtitles, they have to say more words than the original speaker. In most cases, therefore, respeakers are forced to edit the subtitles in order to keep up with the original speaker, by finding succinct ways of expressing the same ideas. This is where both interpreting and subtitling experiences may come in handy (Romero-Fresco 2009). Another important aspect is how subtitles are displayed, whether as scrolling continuous text (letter by letter, syllable by syllable or word by word) or in blocks of text, and in one, two or three lines at a time. Moreover, on television subtitles may be provided as either open or closed captions, while in live events they may be projected onto a screen or relayed to the users’ personal devices (smartphones, tablets or laptops) via a network connection. Furthermore, the live subtitling service may be provided by two respeakers taking it in turns to work (just like two interpreters in the booth), or by a team which includes other professionals as well, such as a subtitle editor, a proof-reader and others. All the possible variations in the set-up of a live subtitling service shape the service itself and make direct comparisons between different settings difficult. That is why there is a need for more
empirical data from actual respeaking settings, even if they are relatively small-scale events. For example, Marchionne (2010-11) reported on an experiment in live subtitling via interlingual respeaking on television (in the French-Italian language combination), while Serafini (2014-15) reported on an interlingual respeaking service (English-Italian) at a small film festival in Italy. A more comprehensive research effort of this kind is the work being carried out by Moores (2018) on the feasibility of respeaking in museum tours, conferences, lectures and Q&A panels after cinema screenings and theatre shows. The aim, in all these cases, is produce best practice guidelines to organise such services efficiently.

As this brief overview shows, the actual skills and competences required to provide such “hybrid” language services are still being investigated; nevertheless, a few universities have begun to train respeakers on the basis of what has emerged until now.

3.2 Training respeakers

Just over ten years ago, the first intralingual respeaking modules began to be offered by the University of Antwerp (Belgium) in its MA in Interpreting; and by the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain), and by Roehampton University (UK) in their MAs in Audiovisual Translation (Romero-Fresco 2011). All of these courses are focused primarily on intralingual respeaking and are aimed at providing students with the skills they need to work in live subtitling for the deaf and hearing-impaired, mostly on television.

Respeaking modules generally include an introduction to the speech recognition software used in the course, which for widely spoken languages such as English, Spanish and German tends to be Nuance’s Dragon Naturally Speaking. Romero-Fresco (2011, 2012) proposed a taxonomy of respeaking skills to form the backbone of training courses. The taxonomy distinguishes between the skills needed in the preparation phase (before the process), during respeaking proper and after the task. Moreover, the classification highlights which skills are shared with subtitling, which ones with simultaneous interpreting and which ones are specific to respeaking:

Learning to respeak involves the acquisition of a number of unique skills, including (i) how to listen, (re)speak, watch (the screen) and type […] ; (ii) how to keep an optimum rhythm and produce valid respeaking units that display appropriately within the space allocated
for the subtitles on the screen; and (iii) how to edit the speech in real
time, when it is not possible to keep up with the speech delivery rate.
(Romero-Fresco 2012: 99).

Initially, students need to create their voice profile and become
familiar with the features of the speech recognition software. They
gradually learn how to speak to ensure maximum accuracy; to ensure
seamless transcription, students learn to speak relatively normally,
though maintaining a steady pace, avoiding disfluencies (hesitations,
mispronounced words, and so on) and articulating clearly. As they
become more confident in dictating to the software, they learn how to
improve recognition by adding new words to the software’s
Vocabulary Editor. To do so, students will research the topic, prepare
a glossary and then import it into the programme. They will also learn
to anticipate recognition errors by, for example, avoiding the use of
foreign words or neologisms.

The main similarities between respeaking and simultaneous
interpreting come to the fore during the process. Just like interpreting
students, respeaking trainees must develop concentrated listening, text
analysis and reformulation skills, as well as the ability to listen and
speak at the same time. Condensation skills are also important, in order
to keep up with the pace imposed by the original speaker. Stress
management and monitoring skills are especially important too.
However, multitasking is even more complex in respeaking than in
simultaneous interpreting, because there is an additional effort
involved: not only listening and speaking, but also reading and writing
(to correct any errors in the subtitles). Another skill that characterises
respeaking is the ability to mentally visualise the original speaker’s
sentences in a written form and decide how to edit them, how to
segment the text and where to insert punctuation marks orally, i.e. by
dictating punctuation to the speech recognition software. In addition,
it may be necessary to change the colour of the subtitles or to use
different labels to identify different speakers for the benefit of deaf
subtitle users. Finally, after the process, it is important to be able to
assess one’s performance and the quality of the subtitles, and identify
strengths and weaknesses to ensure constant progress. In this sense,
the NER model is also used as a diagnostic tool in training courses. If
there is a pattern of misrecognising words, the trainee will need to
improve his/her voice model and dictation skills; while if there are
more content-related errors, the trainee must work on his/her text
analysis and reformulation skills to produce a more accurate rendition.
As this brief description shows, respeaking is an extremely complex activity in which all the language competencies (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are involved, owing to the diamesic shift from a spoken input to a written end-product. Moreover, efficient human-machine interaction is required, because the respeaker actually produces an intermediate spoken text aimed at the speech recognition software (not the audience), which then converts it to a written text for the users. When respeaking is performed interlingually, the translation difficulty is added to the equation. To date, only one training course for interlingual respeaking has been organised: this was a four-week pilot training course delivered online within the ILSA (Interlingual Live Subtitling for Access) project (Dawson 2018). 50 students with a training background in subtitling or interpreting and with an English-Spanish language combination participated in the course. At the end of the course, over 40% of students managed to achieve an NTR score of (or over) 98%, thus proving that interlingual respeaking is indeed feasible. Moreover, the student interpreters performed better than the subtitlers on average, though some subtitlers did well too.

As this overview of respeaking research and training has shown, there is still a need for both empirical and experimental data regarding this practice, if it is to become more established. Section 4 reports on the contributions to the field coming from the UNINT in Rome.

4. Respeaking at UNINT: teaching and research

The Faculty of Interpreting and Translation of UNINT introduced an intralingual Respeaking Workshop in 2014. It is a 30-hour option offered to interpreting students in the second year of their MA in Interpreting and Translation. Owing to its short duration, the module is only meant as an introduction to speech recognition technology and intralingual respeaking for television and live events.

The module runs in Semester 2, when students have already been exposed to at least one semester of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting training; this ensures that they are able to listen and speak at the same time, summarise an idea or paraphrase a concept, and they have relatively fast reaction times. Some of them have also had an introduction to audiovisual translation and subtitling and are therefore relatively familiar with subtitling conventions, as well as with working on written text (including punctuation). Despite this, initially most trainees struggle with dictation, text segmentation and adding oral
punctuation: many of them find it difficult to articulate clearly, to keep a steady pace, to pause at the right time and to avoid using the prosodic resources they would normally use when interpreting. Over time, they learn how to work with the software to improve recognition, by adopting a flat, slightly robotic intonation, and by paraphrasing words that are not likely to be in the vocabulary of the programme.

Classes take place every week in a computer lab where the speech recognition software (Dragon Naturally Speaking) is available on all the machines. Students also have a weekly 3-hour timetabled autonomous practice session and can also use the lab on an open-access basis whenever the room is free. The course is hands-on and intensive, so class size has been kept deliberately small, with a maximum of 15 students per group. Over the course of the semester, students are given an overview of the needs of the deaf and of the hearing-impaired, to make sure they understand how to produce readable subtitles. They are also expected to carry out some independent research into the topics assigned for practice and to prepare the software for respeaking tasks by adding new words to the vocabulary: this teaches them how to prepare for respeaking assignments.

During the course, students are exposed to a variety of spoken texts presenting different degrees of difficulty: they start with narrations and slow conference speeches, to move on to sports broadcasts, weather forecasts, news programmes, sports, interviews and talk shows. Moreover, students progress from mono-thematic genres and constrained vocabulary with the involvement of one slow speaker, to talk-shows and debates involving many speakers and open-ended topics. Indeed, the final exam consists of two practical respeaking tasks involving a monologic and a dialogic text (such as an interview).

Evaluation and self-assessment methods are also discussed and exemplified at length in class, to ensure that students develop the tools to assess their own output and identify strengths and weaknesses. In this sense, they are encouraged to apply the NER model to their own work to measure subtitle accuracy.

It must be highlighted that, although the module cannot be said to produce professional respeakers, over the last few years a significant number of students (at least 3 or 4 in every group) have been offered placements or jobs in this field, while several others have reported using respeaking skills for other purposes, including to subtitle pre-recorded programmes, to carry out translation work and to transcribe meeting recordings.
In addition, the development of this training module has taken place in parallel with respeaking research at UNINT, in two ways: a number of small-scale case studies carried out as part of students’ MA dissertations and a larger experimental study for projects SMART (Shaping Multilingual Access with Respeaking Technology) and SMART 2 on interlingual respeaking.

The case studies reported below can roughly be classified as empirical and observational studies (aimed at collecting and analysing authentic respeaking data in various settings) or as experimental studies. In all cases, the methodology and tools for data collection were developed jointly by the students and their supervisor (the present author), to ensure not only the validity of the studies, but also data comparability and consistency. The first two studies (in chronological order) focused on an analysis of respeaking practices in two television settings: the first one was a descriptive study on respeaking at SWISS TXT, the company providing subtitles to SRF, the German-language channel of the Swiss state broadcaster (Monsorno 2010-2011); the second one focused on respeaking at RAI, the Italian public broadcaster (Astuto 2014-2015).

Monsorno’s study investigated the respeakers’ educational and professional backgrounds by means of a dedicated survey questionnaire, and found that they were all young graduates from ZHAW (the Translation and Interpreting department at Winterthur, near Zurich) with some professional translation and interpreting experience. The accuracy of the subtitles produced by the respeakers was analysed using the NER model. The corpus included the weather forecast programmes broadcast in a given week, and the specific focus of the analysis was on the text condensation strategies used to cope with speed and information density. The MA student’s case study was then implemental in defining the respeaking challenges posed by a specific TV genre, as was illustrated in Sandrelli (2013).

A few years later, Astuto (2014-2015) shifted the focus to Italy. As respeaking is not a well-established practice here, a survey of the respeaking market was carried out by means of a questionnaire sent out to the main stakeholders and companies working in the field, to shed light on the training and professional experiences of respeakers. The results of the survey showed that five years ago speech recognition technology was still used mostly for reporting purposes (for example in court hearings and company meetings), while it was not common in live subtitling. As RAI was the only broadcaster to make (limited) use
of respeaking, contacts were made to visit the subtitling unit there and observe the subtitlers at work.

Thanks to RAI’s willingness to collaborate, it was possible to obtain the video-recordings of all the TV news programmes broadcast on RAI Uno for a week. At the time, the set-up was as follows: some TV news programmes were subtitled by stenotypists (working in-house), while the other editions were subtitled via respeakers working remotely. A NER analysis was carried out on the data, which revealed that while the highest accuracy rate was achieved via stenotyping (99.5%), the respoken subtitles reached the 98% quality threshold (see §3.1) in 3 out of the 4 editions of the TV news in the corpus. Both methods, therefore, seemed to ensure high quality subtitles; however, they differed greatly in terms of latency, which in stenotyping ranged between 1 and 7 seconds, as opposed to the 6-35 seconds in respeaking. The huge variability in latency in the respoken subtitles was caused by signal delay and technical problems related to the remote working set-up. Consequently, these values cannot be considered representative of actual differences in latency between stenotyping and respeaking, but merely as indications that during that specific week there were technical criticalities. This partially explains why the use of this technique is still lagging behind in Italy, as it is considered less reliable than the tried and tested stenotyping method.

Moving on to interlingual respeaking, another empirical study (Luppino 2016-2017) compared interlingual respeaking and simultaneous interpreting in the same conference setting. A fully accessible conference took place at UNINT in June 2015, where both simultaneous interpreting and interlingual respeaking (English-Italian) were offered to the audience. The first objective of the study was to create a multimedia corpus of the entire conference, featuring video clips of the speakers, audio clips of the interpreters and the respeakers, transcripts of the original speeches and of the interpreted output, and of course the interlingual subtitles produced via respeaking. Then, a smaller sub-corpus of 4 speeches (2 read and 2 delivered impromptu) was selected to assess how much of the semantic content of the source language speeches was conveyed to the audience via the interpreted speeches and via the subtitles.

First of all, the NRT model was applied to evaluate accuracy in a conference setting. Unfortunately, Luppino’s findings show that the scores were far off the 98% mark on all 4 speeches. The best scores were obtained on the two read presentations; this may be explained by the fact that the respeakers received the presentations in advance and
were able to prepare the software by adding the relevant vocabulary. This benefit is especially evident with the low number of recognition and form-related errors, which indicates good human-machine interaction.

A dedicated analysis grid was also developed and applied to the data. Results show that the main difference between the simultaneously interpreted speeches and the target language subtitles was the quantity of omitted information, which was greater in interlingual respeaking. However, in terms of factual errors (distorted information) there was no significant difference between the two. In a sense, this could be taken as an indication that the two modes could co-exist side by side, leaving it up to the participants to decide which service(s) to use. The results of the study also point to the need to work on trainee respeakers’ condensation skills, to ensure they are able to omit redundant items and reduce the target language text strategically (see Sandrelli forthcoming).

The same accessible conference was used as a source of material for another case-study, this time on intralingual respeaking. Capomaccio (2016-2017) transcribed the final conference roundtable that was held in Italian. A short product presentation was selected to organise an experiment involving 12 respeaking trainees at the end of their 30-hour respeaking course. The aim of the study was to compare the performance of the professional respeaker at work on the day with the performance of the trainees, not only in terms of accuracy rates (by applying the NER model), but also in terms of processing strategies. As it was a simulation of a respeaking assignment, participants were sent background material on the product and the speaker in advance for preparation purposes. On the day of the experiment the trainees were given a list of words to be added to the Vocabulary of the speech recognition programme; then, they were asked to respeak the speech that had been divided into two video clips. After subtitling each part, they filled in a questionnaire with comprehension questions and questions on their strategies for dealing with specific challenges (e.g. the presence of English words, ungrammatical sentences, and so on).

Unsurprisingly, the professional respeaker achieved a higher accuracy rate (around 96%), though half of the students achieved rates over 90% after 30 hours of training. The main sources of error in their output were recognition and omissions. ‘Recognition errors’ can be tackled by working more with the speech recognition software, given that performance improves over time. ‘Omissions’, on the other hand,
can be improved in training through specific tasks that develop the ability to omit strategically, through selecting redundant items and paraphrasing text to make it more succinct.

All of the above studies have inherent limitations in their size and specific settings, which make it impossible to generalise their findings. However, they do highlight some trends that are possibly worthy of more investigation. In this sense, this overview of respeaking research at UNINT ends with a brief discussion of 2 pilot projects on interlingual respeaking, involving 26 students from UNINT, Surrey and Roehampton Universities.\(^8\) The experiments focussed on identifying the skillset that would best facilitate the acquisition of interlingual respeaking skills. The findings of the projects have been reported in various conferences (for example in Sandrelli et al. 2019) and will be the object of a future publication (Davitti and Sandrelli forthcoming), so they are only briefly mentioned here for the sake of completeness.

The projects used a variety of data collection methods and tools: questionnaires, respeaking data, screencast recordings, and self-reflection TAP (think-aloud-protocol) sessions. The participants included students with training backgrounds in subtitling, dialogue interpreting, consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting and intralingual respeaking, or a combination of two or more of these. To prepare them for the respeaking experiment, a “crash course” (6-8 hours) in interlingual respeaking was delivered face-to-face in the three sites. At the end of the crash course, two interlingual respeaking tests were collected from each student. The NTR model was applied to all the data, and data from questionnaires and TAP sessions were also analysed.

The results of the project can be summarised as follows: the best performers were those students with a composite set of skills comprising interpreting, subtitling and intralingual respeaking. Although interpreting trainees are already equipped with some of the required skills, many of them struggled with multitasking and monitoring written output. In contrast, the subtitling trainees are used to translating from spoken to written language, but found it hard to

\(^8\) SMART (Shaping Multilingual Access with Respeaking Technology) was funded by Surrey University between January and May 2018 and saw the participation of UNINT and the University of Vigo; this was followed by SMART 2 (funded by UNINT and with the same partner institutions) from September 2018 to September 2019.
cope with the real-time element of interlingual respeaking. Once again, the size of this pilot project makes it impossible to draw definitive conclusions, but it indicates some interesting patterns that certainly deserve to be investigated further.

5. Conclusions

This paper has given an overview of (intralingual and interlingual) respeaking for live subtitling, a hybrid translation mode that requires very sophisticated language and translation competencies, the ability to use speech recognition software efficiently and to monitor one’s output. As such, it involves complex multitasking. In this sense, it is certainly a very demanding task. Research has highlighted that variability in working set-ups has a direct influence on how respeaking is performed and the quality levels it is possible to achieve. What is still lacking is some standardisation and best practice guidelines in professional respeaking.

At the same time, as demand for both intralingual and interlingual respeakers is set to increase, there is a need to expand and improve existing training opportunities. Research seems to indicate that, while a background in interpreting may be an advantage, subtitlers can also become proficient respeakers. However, as respeaking requires a variety of skills, a modular approach to training may be the best option, enabling subtitlers to focus on improving their “live performance” skills, whilst allowing interpreters to concentrate on subtitle segmentation, oral punctuation and working with written text. In this sense, there is a demand for better training to be offered not only in academic programmes, but also via bespoke company training. Companies that are already active in the audiovisual sector are likely to need “top up” training courses for their existing staff. Before this can happen, however, there is a need for more research into the acquisition of respeaking skills. This is what the new, full-scale SMART project, based on the results of the pilot, is set to achieve in the years to come, starting in early 2020.9

It is hoped that this paper has shown that there is a huge potential in new translation-related professional tasks based on speech recognition technology. Professionals and academia must lead the

9 The new project will be funded by the UK’s Economic and Social Research Council and will be led by Surrey University.
dialogue on these issues in collaboration with the technology industry, to ensure that progress is technology-based, not technology-driven.

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Reception Studies and Audiovisual Translation: 
Eye Tracking Research at the Service of Training in Subtitling

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We are in an era of prestige television, 
with unprecedented choice and quality. 
(The Guardian, 21 August, 2019)

Abstract

In a recent article about viewers’ choice of shows and series, The Guardian referred to contemporary television as "comfort TV" and "prestige television", including all those streaming services that have recently pushed the very concept of television beyond traditional borders, while also giving it a new, vibrant life. 'Comfort' is most likely referred to the ease of consumption, both in terms of space (with portable technologies) and time (no longer univocally fixed by broadcasters). 'Prestige', as the quote says, is related to the incredible, and increasing, array of choices available; whereas quality can be referred to overall production standards, but perhaps not always to translation.

As consumption of contemporary television, including streaming services, increases and diversifies, the need to understand, monitor and cater for the viewers’ needs and expectations is ever more important, also through the lens of translation. This article discusses a recent experiment on the reception of a subtitled TV series by young Italian viewers, carried out using eye tracking and questionnaires. The experiment is here presented mainly to highlight the relevance, and the great potential, of reception studies applied to the training of audiovisual translators, and more specifically of subtitlers. After all, learning an eminently practical skill has to encompass as thorough a knowledge of its users as possible. Inspired by the curiosity of a subtitling company about viewers’ comprehension and appreciation of
In the following sections, key concepts in which the experiment is grounded will be explored, followed by the discussion of issues which have emerged from the experiment itself. As for the results, only a few will be presented, with a view to highlighting their relevance for the training of subtitlers.

1. Audiovisual translation and audience research

Within the realm of audiovisual translation, audience research has been booming over the past few years, pushing the field of study beyond a rather stale descriptivism. As recently as 2009, Yves Gambier observed that “very few studies have dealt with the issue of reception in AVT, and even fewer have looked at it empirically, even though we continually make references to readers, viewers, customers” (2009: 52). Ten years on, a fairly conspicuous number of articles, several handbook entries and a few dedicated books bear witness to a strong move towards a long-due, hopefully ever more systematic consideration of the audience needs and preferences.

Looking back, one clear reason for the slow inception of reception studies in AVT, in itself a relatively young field of research, is certainly related to modes of consumption, with viewers largely -and increasingly- consuming audiovisual texts in private settings, with great variation according to age, occupation, education, geographical factors, etc. Nevertheless, understanding and catering for audience reception of translated audiovisual texts is as important as it is for original productions, especially if we bear in mind that, on average, 55 to 65% of foreign grosses for blockbuster films come from translated versions (http://www.boxofficemojo.com).1

As studies of perception and/or reception (Di Giovanni, 2018) are on the increase in AVT, several pathways have come to be increasingly defined. Corpus-based studies, which have been developed for some

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1 See, for instance, the figures for recent blockbusters such as *Avengers: Endgame* or *Joker*, both released in 2019. Revenues from foreign distribution amount to 69.3% and 68.5% respectively. Considering that foreign distribution also includes some English-speaking countries, and that figures are not yet stable for these films, we could say that 62 to 65% of the revenues for these films actually come from translated versions (figures checked on 10 December 2019).
time (see Pavesi, 2013, 2014, 2019), have had the great merit of objectively depicting instances of standardization or lack of fluency in translation, manifestations of dubbese (synchronously and across the decades) recurrent register shifts between specific language pairs, and so on. Questionnaires, administered at specific screenings or delivered online (Di Giovanni, 2016, Romero Fresco, 2015, Caffrey, 2012, O’Hagan and Sasamoto, 2016), have also been used for quite some time and the sharing of results through subsequently published research has led to increasingly sophisticated experiments over the years. Research on fansubbing and fandubbing, started well over ten years ago (Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez, 2006), has had the merit of bringing to the fore special modes of AVT consumption, while also sparkling reflections on the increasingly active role of consumers (now better named producers). Focusing mainly on perception, several scholars have been infusing psycholinguistic research into AVT, mainly focusing on accessibility (Fryer and Freeman, 2014) but certainly providing stimuli for many other scholars and areas of research.

As can be inferred above, all of these contributions to the study of AVT audiences have implied the development of multi-, or inter-disciplinary approaches to AVT (Di Giovanni, Agost and Orero, 2012), which can be said to have led audiovisual translation and media accessibility studies to maturity. Interdisciplinarity is steeped into audience research, whatever angle one chooses to adopt in a study. Below, a brief survey of experimental research on subtitle reception using eye tracking technologies (as in the study here reported) is offered.

2. Eye tracking studies and subtitle reception

If we shift from analysing audience research from a thematic perspective to discussing it in relation to the technologies used for this type of research, a pivotal role has long been played by eye tracking.

The use of eye tracking technologies in audiovisual translation research can nowadays be considered well-established and mature, having found applications in subtitling (from D’Ydewalle and Gielen, 1992, to Orrego Carmona, 2016, Kruger et al., 2016, Doherty, 2018, and many more); audio description (Krejtz et al., 2012, Di Giovanni, 2014); dubbing (Di Giovanni and Romero Fresco, 2019), and many other areas of investigation. First applied in relation to subtitling and
reading speed in the early Nineties, by psychologists such as Géry D’Ydewalle, eye tracking steadily entered into AVT research a few years after the turn of the new century, thanks to media accessibility scholar Pilar Orero and her international team working on the Digital Television for All project (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/191846/factsheet/es).

Focusing on subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH) and audio description (AD), the project team used Tobii eye tracking technologies to evaluate reception across Europe. One of the outcomes of the Digital Television for All project was a book edited by Pablo Romero-Fresco, where reception tests carried out in several European countries are reported, focusing on three forms of subtitles: edited, standard and verbatim. One of the aspects tested in this cross-national study was reading speed for subtitles, which has turned out to be indirectly central to the experiment presented below. In the book, Romero-Fresco reflects on the very definition of reading speed, pointing out that when it comes to subtitling, both intra- and interlingual, the expression may not be the most appropriate:

The notion of reading speed could be used to refer to the reception of the subtitles by the viewers, but even then, it would not be thorough enough to account for the complexity of the audiovisual medium. Whereas in print the reading speed is set by the reader, who focuses mainly on words, in subtitling the speed is determined by the subtitler, while the viewer has to process both the subtitles and the images on the screen. […] print reading and subtitling viewing are completely different tasks. (2015: 337)

Romero-Fresco thus sets forth the notion of viewing speed, as a more accurate one to account for the process of viewing and understanding subtitles on film, and this notion proves particularly useful for our study reported below. Before focusing on eye tracking, a brief historical reflection on previous research on reading or viewing speed may here be of help, although it was not at the core of the initial hypothesis for the experiment here presented. Indeed, as we shall see, viewing speeds always have an impact on reception and they have to be a priority in the training of subtitlers.

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2.1 The early days of research on subtitle reading speed: from the 1970s to the turn of the century

As Romero-Fresco (2018) recalls, research on SDH (or captions) pioneered in the 1970s in the USA, mainly through a series of PhD dissertations which appeared some 10 years before subtitles were first aired on television in the same country. In 1973, as Romero reports, one large-scale experiment aiming to test reading speed rates was carried out:

In 1973, Shroyer set out to obtain average reading rates from 185 deaf and hearing students in order to determine appropriate speeds for subtitling guidelines. Shroyer concluded that subtitles presented at 160 words per minute (wpm, the average speed for spontaneous conversation in English as found by Kelly and Steer in 1949) would exclude 84% of students with hearing loss in his sample, which led him to recommend 120 wpm as an optimum speed for children. (2018: 201)

Research on reading speed rates, especially in relation to subtitles for the deaf, has been regularly carried out in the USA since then, making this country the leader in this field, with contributions from several disciplinary perspectives. In Europe, D’Ydewalle and a number of other scholars carried out systematic research on the same issue from the late Eighties, being indeed pioneers in the European landscape.

In 1996 and 1997, two, large-scale experiments were published by Carl Jensema, once again in the United States. Commissioned by the Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) funded by the U.S. Department of Education, these studies involved high numbers of participants (deaf, hard of hearing, hearing people) and different types of audiovisual texts. For his second study, a series of 24 short video segments were subtitled at different speeds (96, 110, 126, 140, 156, 170, 186 and 200 words per minute) and shown to 578 people. At the time of the second study, as Jensema himself recalls, there were already “over 500 hours of closed-captioned television programming shown each week” (1997: 2) in the U.S., and figures were on the increase. The experiment, which aimed at measuring “how comfortable people were with different caption speeds” (Ibid.), asked participants to rate on a 5-point scale if captions were too fast / fast / ok / slow / too slow. On average, the “Ok” speed was found to be associated with a value ranging from 140 to 156 words per minute, with interesting variations
across a spectrum of deaf, hard of hearing and hearing viewers. Here is one valuable remark by Jensema, useful for further studies: “Of particular interest was the adaptability exhibited by the respondents. As caption speed increased, the respondents recognized this, but most seemed able to adjust and did not appear to consider the captions unacceptable” (1997: 10). This seems to justify the steady increase of number of words per minute in subtitling which has been recorded internationally since those days. As we shall see in the following section, words per minute have come to be more commonly measured as characters per second, especially with reference to interlingual subtitling.

2.2 Subtitling, reading speeds and eye tracking: recent studies

As Romero-Fresco points out (2015: 336), viewing subtitles on film, understanding both the subtitles and the film, is not simply an act of reading: it is a complex cognitive act. As a matter of fact, more recent studies aiming to evaluate the reception of subtitles have focused on the notion of cognitive load (Gerber-Morón, Szarkowska and Woll, 2018) also breaking it down into three, different indicators: difficulty, effort and frustration. With a clear difference from the studies reported and/or carried out by Jensema and Romero-Fresco, who focused on SDH, Gerber-Morón, et al. centred their experiment on the syntactic segmentation of subtitles. They they found that cognitive load decreases systematically as subtitles are increasingly made ‘readable’ through apposite syntactic segmentation. Particularly interesting for the study presented below is the evaluation of cognitive load (effort) and comprehension by means of eye tracking experiments and questionnaires. In our experiment, interviews were not carried out, but several spontaneous declarations provided by the participants at the end of their test were recorded and proved extremely useful.

As a final reference to be highlighted in this section, another article by Szarkowska and Gerber-Morón (2018) is worth mentioning, as it focused on subtitle reading speed and relied on eye tracking. The authors aimed to evaluate comprehension, cognitive load, scene and subtitle recognition in films in two languages (Hungarian and English) and with speakers/readers of English, Polish and Spanish, once again focusing on interlingual subtitling. What is particularly interesting in this study, besides the different languages under investigation, is that the highest values of characters per second considered (12, 16 and 20 cps) are in line with the choices made by some of the most prominent
providers of streaming services such as Netflix for their interlingual subtitles. Although it is not easy to compare words per minute with characters per second, we could say that 12 cps would reflect the average value found by Jensema in his second study, i.e. 140-150 words per minute. As Szarkowska and Gerber-Morón point out, subtitle speeds have been on the rise for a long time, for both SDH and interlingual subtitling, although research on the latter is still more limited.

Their study relied on clips with interlingual subtitles at different speeds, created for the purpose of the experiment. Among the many interesting results obtained, the authors found that self-reported cognitive load, for the three parameters considered, yielded higher values for difficulty and effort but not significantly for frustration, and that participants generally declared the lowest cognitive load for the slower (12 cps) subtitles across the three languages. Moreover, the authors observe that the English participants reported the greatest difficulties, which may be connected to their overall limited exposure to subtitles, given that AVT products are mainly produced in English with no need for interlingual subtitling. This finding is to be kept in mind when considering the results of our own experiment with Italian subtitles, as Italian viewers are similarly—if not equally—hardly ever exposed to subtitles.

3. Testing viewing experiences across screens: *New Girl* with Italian subtitles

In discussing their results, Szarkowska and Gerber-Morón observe that viewers in traditionally dubbing countries may generally find it more difficult to read subtitles, especially at high reading speeds, although a generally-held belief holds it that contemporary, young generations find it easier and more natural to read subtitles. Both issues were considered when setting up our experiment, whose main aim was to evaluate reception of both dialogue and images of the same audiovisual texts with Italian subtitles, experienced on screens of different sizes. A small team at the University of Macerata, Italy,

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The team included Dr. Francesca Raffi and two Masters’ students: Paolo Di Tosto.
decided to test (20 to 30 years old) viewers’ comprehension and overall reception of professionally-created subtitles for the popular Netflix series *New Girl*. This series was selected for several reasons: it is very popular with that age group and the various seasons have been on Netflix for a number of years. Also, *New Girl* is a comedy, and this features humorous exchanges and gags, accompanied by canned laughter. The protagonists are all young and the actions reflect their lifestyle. Two sequences from episode 1 of the third series of *New Girl* were selected, making sure that both contained whole scenes. This is the reason for a difference in overall duration of the clips: 1.54 minutes for the first and 2.17 minutes for the second.

Participants were selected to ensure a balance between men and women; language and translation students were excluded and participation of non-students was encouraged, so as to ensure a variety of competences, backgrounds and interests.

A movable, screen-based eye tracker, the Tobii X2, 60 Hz was used. It was mounted directly on a 24-inch TV screen and a 15-inch laptop screen, whereas for experiments using a 5-inch smartphone (Huawei P8) it was placed on a Tobii Mobile Device Stand 2, standard procedure for this type of experiment, with a Logitech C920 HD Pro webcam.

There were 20 participants for each screen group, for an overall of 60 participants. Taking into account the principles for spatial accuracy and precision discussed by Dalrymple *et al.* (2018), and aiming for full comparability of the three groups, we decided to discard 2 tests per group, to have this final setup:

- 18 participants for the 24-inch TV screen,
- 18 participants for the 15-inch laptop,
- 18 participants for the 5-inch smartphone.

All were in the selected age range, with an equal share of female and male participants for each group. They were asked to sit on a chair in front of the selected screen, and watch the videos as naturally as possible. The experiment lasted approximately 15 minutes for each participant, which included calibration time, the viewing of two clips and Giada Ceruolo. The project was supported by SubTi Ltd, a U.K.-based audiovisual translation company interested in analysing the effectiveness of new and increasingly common viewing habits, such as watching audiovisual material on laptop and mobile phones.
and answering the two sets of questions which followed each clip viewing. Using Tobii Pro Lab software, the two clips were preceded by a black screen with a white text providing a brief context for the sequence to be watched.

3.1 The questionnaires: methods

As stated above, the main aim of this experiment was to assess viewers’ comprehension of both verbal and visual elements in an American TV series subtitled into Italian and viewed on three differently-sized screens. Comprehension was evaluated through eye tracking tests and specific comprehension questions, to which general questions aiming to better frame overall reception were added. The attention was, therefore, on both verbal and visual intake, the verbal component relayed through interlingual, Italian subtitles. Viewing speed, as defined by Pablo Romero-Fresco, was indirectly central to the experiment. The almost verbatim subtitles provided by Netflix accompanied both clips virtually without a pause, and one of our hypotheses was that viewers would occasionally be unable to process both lines, as was later confirmed by eye tracking and questionnaire data. We had no clear-cut hypothesis on the incidence of viewing speed and long subtitles on reception through the different screens.

With the aim to obtain true-to-life results, a decision was made not to create ad-hoc Italian subtitles but use those offered by Netflix for New Girl. Selecting clips with dialogue of average density, with subtitles set by Netflix at a reading speed of 17 characters per second, with a limit of 42 characters per line, we ended up with long, almost verbatim subtitles. As we decided not to make any changes to the subtitles, the clips also presented instances of poor segmentation, incoherent use of punctuation and a few translation errors/ambiguities. The questionnaire began with basic demographic questions, asking participants to state their age, gender, occupation and to evaluate their knowledge of English, rating it on a 5-point scale as 1) poor, 2) not so poor, 3) fair, 4) good, 5) excellent. Then, the questionnaire comprised 8 questions for each clip, according to the following pattern:

- 4 questions aiming to evaluate intake/comprehension of visual elements,
- 4 questions aiming to evaluate intake/comprehension of verbal elements.
The questions were either closed (4 multiple-choice questions with 4 options each), or open (one of these four included an initial word to start from, with space for an open response). To wrap up, two questions, on a 5-point scale, asked participants to self-evaluate their comprehension of the dialogues and the images from 5 (excellent comprehension) to 1 (very limited comprehension).

3.2 The questionnaires: results

Before focusing on some of the data provided by the eye tracking tests and the major issues highlighted by participants, either as replies to the questionnaire or spontaneously at the end of the experiment, we will briefly focus on descriptive statistics for the two final questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Please, evaluate your overall comprehension of the images (1 to 5)</th>
<th>Please, evaluate your overall comprehension of the dialogues (1 to 5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laptop</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>3.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: self-evaluations for comprehension of images and dialogues.

As can be seen in Table 1, the more ‘traditional’ screen for viewing audiovisual products has scored the highest values for self-reported comprehension of both images and text. This is a particularly meaningful finding, especially if related to the age range of the participants. Of great interest are also the figures obtained for the smartphone: increasingly familiar though it may be for today’s viewers as a primary resource to enjoy audiovisual texts, it seems to have left our participants unsatisfied with their intake of visual information. We should recall here that these questions came at the very end of the experiment, i.e. after viewing both clips and replying to all comprehension questions. Therefore, replies are the direct result of the awareness elicited by the experiment itself. It is important to highlight that the questionnaire explicitly used the word “dialoghi” [dialogues] in the self-evaluative question. We decided not to specifically mention the subtitles, so as to leave the field open for
evaluation of the interaction between the original English speech and the Italian subtitles, which was in fact the object of direct comments by many of the participants.

In terms of overall correct or wrong answers to the $8 + 8$ comprehension questions, Table 2 below provides a summary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage of correct replies to comprehension questions</th>
<th>Percentage of wrong replies to comprehension questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TV</strong></td>
<td>39.5 %</td>
<td>60.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Laptop</strong></td>
<td>38 %</td>
<td>62 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phone</strong></td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Overall percentage of correct and wrong replies for the three screens.

These figures seem to corroborate those obtained from the self-evaluations reported above. The TV screen scored the highest percentage of correct replies, while the smartphone led to the most negative scores, for both image and dialogue comprehension.

3.3 Eye tracking data

For the sake of brevity, and to leave space for a discussion of key issues and areas of improvement in the training of subtitlers, this section aims at highlighting only some of the most valuable data obtained from the eye tracking tests which, as anticipated, were gathered for balanced groups of 18 individuals (9 male and 9 female) for each of the three screens.

In order to systematically compare data obtained for all three screens, several metrics were extracted from the overall experiment, namely: fixation duration (total and average), fixation count (total and average), visit count (total and average) and time to first fixation.

With regard to ‘first fixation’, this indicates the amount of time spent by viewers before fixating selected areas of interests (AOIs); and Table 3 below summarizes the data obtained for all three screens, in terms of time elapsed between the first visit on that screen and the first fixation on 1) the characters’ faces ($faces$), and 2) the subtitles ($subs$). Values are expressed in seconds.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time to fist fixation on the AOI faces (average)</th>
<th>Time to first fixation on the AOI subs (average)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laptop</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Times to first fixations (in seconds).

The figures provided above, supported by the observation of each participant’s gazeplot,\(^5\) seem to highlight very plausible fixation patterns for the three screens. Starting from the TV screen, participants almost immediately fixated the characters’ faces, thanks also to the fact that the faces were located almost at the centre of the screen. Subsequently, the viewers moved onto the subtitles after 7.2 seconds on average, which proves that they took time to scan and fixate the images before looking for meaning in the verbal written track. The figures are lower for the laptop screen, but even in this case participants fixated the character’s faces almost immediately, to then move onto the subtitles after 3.4 seconds. Therefore, laptop viewing almost halves the time between the average first fixation on the faces and the subtitles as compared to viewing on the TV screen. As for the mobile phone, almost one second passed before participants fixated the characters’ faces (+230% compared to the TV screen), which makes us think that some time was spent visually wandering outside the phone screen, which is certainly worth investigating further. Then, 1.35 seconds later, participants moved onto the subtitle block, with a decrease in the time spent on average on the images which amounts to 80.5% compared to the TV screen and 58% compared to the laptop screen.

To follow up on fixation patterns, one further metric worth analysing in detail here is the fixation count, related in the experiment to three AOIs, referring to the characters’ faces (AOI faces), the overall subtitles (AOI subs), and the second line of the two-line subtitles (AOI line_two). It should be noted that the AOI faces is, on average, higher than the AOI for the subtitles, as 95% of the time both clips features

more than one character on screen; and when only two characters are shown it is generally in close up. This point will have to be considered in more detail, to more accurately evaluate fixation count and duration in relation to AOI size.

As required for all experiments on moving images, the three AOIs for this study were captured dynamically, i.e. the AOI position on the screen changed shot by shot, following precisely the specific visual elements we were tracking for the duration of each clip.

As for line_two, a decision was made to create a specific AOI for the second line of each subtitle in order to see if, and to what extent, viewing speed, as set by Netflix for New Girl, truly allows viewers the time to read the second line. Table 4 below shows figures for the AOIs faces, subtitles and line_two with reference to the overall number of fixations, for both clips together. The average AOI per participant is given in brackets:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total fixation count faces</th>
<th>Total fixation count subtitles</th>
<th>Total fixation count line_two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>2086 (115.8 p.p.)</td>
<td>1418 (78.7 p.p.)</td>
<td>413 (22.9 p.p.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laptop</td>
<td>1925 (106.9 p.p.)</td>
<td>1487 (82.6 p.p.)</td>
<td>376 (20.8 p.p.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>1905 (105.5 p.p.)</td>
<td>1958 (108.7 p.p.)</td>
<td>1389 (77.1 p.p.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Total fixation count (per group and per person).

As defined by a number of scholars, and also in the user’s manual for Tobii Pro Lab,

fixations are those times when our eyes essentially stop scanning about the scene, holding the central foveal vision in place so that the visual system can take in detailed information about what is being looked at.\(^6\)

Fixations are recorded by eye trackers according to recording rate (Hz). They are clusters of gaze points, calculated by the eye tracker’s own algorithm. Again, as stated in the Tobii Pro Lab manual, “Fixations are constructions, outputs of a mathematical algorithm that translates the sequence of raw gaze points into an associated sequence of fixations” (Ibid). Fixation length can vary, and can be visualized by

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means of gazeplots or scanpaths. The duration of fixations can be influenced by several factors, including amount of visual intake, processing difficulties, etc. In relation to the number of fixations on faces found in our experiment, there is a progressive decrease across the three screens. This is more significant from the TV to the laptop than from the latter to the smartphone. On the other hand, the number of fixations on the subtitle block increases from the TV to the smartphone screen. In fact, on average, each participant fixated more on the smartphone subtitles and less on the laptop and TV screens. However, if we consider the overall fixation time for each AOI across the three screens (total fixation duration), which scores much lower values for the smartphone, the counts above suggest that fixations on the smartphone AOIs were generally shorter.

To further comment on the fixation counts, it may be useful to mention the number of subtitles in each clip, and their text distribution on either one or two lines.

- Clip 1: 39 subtitles, 29 on two lines and 10 on one line.
- Clip 2: 45 subtitles, 26 on two lines and 19 on one line.

In total, there were 84 two-line subtitles, and 55 one-line subtitles. Figures for subtitle fixations are quite revealing: for the TV screen, the average per person (p.p.) shows that approximately 7% of the subtitles were never fixated, whereas this percentage drops to 1.3% for the laptop screen. Viewers of the clips on the smartphone, on the other hand, scored on average +29% of fixations on subtitle blocks. Once again, these figures should be measured against average fixation durations to give us a better idea of the actual time spent on each AOI. Here, though, let us compare fixation times with the questionnaire replies. Overall, the highest score for correct understanding, both for visual and verbal information, is with the TV screen and lowest for the smartphone, which shows that a higher number of fixations does not necessarily correspond to better comprehension.

Scores for fixations on the second line of the two-line subtitles are also meaningful. More than half of the second lines were never fixated by TV screen viewers, a percentage that increases to approximately 62% for the laptop viewers. Smartphone users, on the other hand, fixated more, but again their overall comprehension was lower than the other two groups. Clearly, the screen size allows for much more saccades (eye movements), although this does not imply greater comprehension. As reported elsewhere (Di Giovanni, Romero Fresco,
2019), more fixations and saccades can in fact bear witness to a search for meaning.

4. Difficulty, effort, frustration

Although our experiment did not involve any direct measure of parameters such as difficulty, effort and frustration, which were analysed for instance by Szarkowska and Gerber-Morón, we will nonetheless consider these issues in relation to some of the results obtained, also reflecting on some of the spontaneous comments provided by participants upon completion of the experiment.

The limited eye-tracking data discussed above reveal that many participants, regardless of the screen format, did not manage to even look at the second line of subtitles and scored high levels of error in the comprehension questionnaire. As a matter of fact, 9 out of 18 (50%) participants for the TV screen group provided more incorrect than correct replies, with figures going up to 12 out of 18 (66.6%) for the laptop group and 14 out of 18 (77.7%) for the smartphone group. These results seem to suggest that viewing speeds set by Netflix for Italian viewers of New Girl are not to be considered fully appropriate - and inappropriateness often generates frustration.

Interestingly, 3 to 5 participants for each group provided spontaneous comments at the end of the experiment. Most of these comments revolved around the great difficulty of reading subtitles, which were said to be “too long”, or “too difficult”, often leading participants to attempt to retrieve meaning from the original audio track, thus causing even greater confusion and frustration. To our surprise, 6 participants went back to their English competence after completing the questionnaire, and told us they had probably overrated it at the beginning of the experiment. The words “difficulty”, “tiring” and “attempts” were used by a number of participants in their spontaneous accounts, whereas frustration, although never spelled out, can be clearly inferred from such accounts.

As for the eye tracking data, besides those presented above, a qualitative analysis of gazeplots for each participant in the groups was performed. The gazeplot analysis shows that, in the presence of translation errors or ambiguous translation choices, individuals tend to produce more saccades (eye movements), especially in the form of regressions, backward movements over specific words or expressions. This seems to suggest that errors and ambiguities entail more cognitive
effort and also more time spent on the same, micro-verbal elements, with a consequent loss of pace in fruition. These data, paired up with the comprehension results, seem to reinforce the idea that awkward syntax and segmentation cause more saccades, regressions, and overall loss of comprehension (as proven by Gerber-Morón, Szarkowska and Woll, 2018). Falling outside the scope of this paper, further data analysis will be carried out elsewhere.

5. Training subtitlers today: inputs from reception studies

In the training of subtitlers, at least in my 15 years of experience in Italy and a few other countries, courses generally follow a top-down approach to the teaching of technical and linguistic parameters. Particular subtitling parameters are introduced, such as: number of lines, number of characters per line, reading speeds, use of punctuation and specific conventions (hyphens, italics, suspension marks, etc.), syntactic segmentation, shot and scene cuts. Examples are generally provided and students are encouraged to practice using videos of increasing difficulty, under the trainer’s supervision.

However, the results of this experiment suggest that a bottom-up approach should be introduced and may well prove effective as an introduction to the subtitling course. For instance, exposing students to selected subtitled clips with different viewing speeds and asking them to report on their intake of visual and verbal information, both spontaneously and through comprehension questions, may elicit much more awareness about the importance of appropriate parameters in subtitling. Moreover, such an initial approach could be complemented with the presentation of reception experiments conducted with non-specialist viewers and using authentic subtitled materials, such as the one briefly analysed above, may prove useful in making students aware of many important aspects normally just discussed in class, like appropriate condensation in subtitle translation, for the sake of viewing, rather than simply reading subtitles on videos. As a matter of fact, one of the issues that subtitlers’ trainers never tire of stressing is the importance of creating subtitles that accompany the viewing experience without becoming the main part of this experience. On the other hand, equally tantamount is the constant focus on translation quality, which many a reception experiment has reported to be

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7 See, for instance, Di Giovanni: 2016.
essential for specialists as well as for the general audience. Translation errors or ambiguities, the use of inappropriate register in translation and the misuse of punctuation cause confusion and can generate frustration and dissatisfaction amongst the audience.

Language and translation competence must always remain central in the teaching of subtitling. Once again, a bottom-up approach is here useful, by exposing students to instances of poor or inappropriate translation directly, and by commenting on the results of reception experiments where difficulties and frustration are reported. Language and translation competence bring with them the importance of appropriate cultural adaptation in subtitling, which is certainly one of the most difficult elements to teach and learn. As Henri Béhar puts it, subtitling “is a form of cultural ventriloquism” (2004: 85), but the focus must remain, as smoothly as possible, on the puppet and not on the puppeteer. Teaching and learning how to dose cultural adaptation in subtitling is perhaps one of the most daunting tasks, one that can be targeted both through exposure to different instances of more to less appropriate cultural adaptation across audiovisual texts and genres, and also by presenting empirical research on the issue. Indeed, even though viewing speeds are very often imposed by commissioners of subtitles, such as in the form of pre-timed templates, teaching students to set appropriate times for subtitles, as well as the complex art of condensation, remains absolutely central.

To conclude, this article, and the experiment discussed, aims to support the crucial importance and potential of reception research for the training of subtitlers. It is suggested here that discussing experiments and their results, using experiment materials directly with the students (such as questionnaires) will boost awareness of the importance of all subtitling parameters and, above all, of translation quality.

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What Mediators Want: A Qualitative Needs Analysis on the Training and Formation of Future Intercultural Mediators

Denise Filmer
University of Pisa

Abstract

This article presents the results of a sample survey on the training of intercultural mediators working in rescue, primary, and second phases of migrant reception in the Sicilian province of Ragusa. Adopting ethnomethodological and phenomenological approaches (Moustakas 1994 Creswell 2013: 81), the survey focuses on the intercultural mediators’ (henceforth ICMs) perception of the qualifications, experience, and skills they believe are necessary to carry out their work efficiently. A sample of 10 ICMs with different experiential and educational backgrounds responded to open ended questionnaires shedding light on the ways in which they experienced the shared phenomenon of mediating in contexts of emergency arrivals in Italy and their preparedness for such work. Informants included graduates in “Scienze per la mediazione interculturale” from the University of Catania’s School of Modern Languages in Ragusa and ICMs who had attended a vocational course at the Il Centro Mediterraneo di Studi e Formazione Giorgio La Pira in Pozzallo. To gain further insights, in-depth semi-structured interviews were then carried out with six of the ICMs who had responded to the questionnaires, and with the course directors at the above-mentioned institutions. The study aims to contribute to the ongoing debate on the status of the intercultural mediator in Italy, both legally and ontologically. Most crucially, however, the research attempts to understand what intercultural mediators feel they need in terms of training and education, particularly for those who work in the field of the reception and integration of migrants coming from the African continent.

1. Positionality and Paradigms – the research rationale

This pilot study addresses two research aims: firstly, to investigate the status quo on intercultural mediator (ICM) training in and around the
Sicilian province of Ragusa, site of frequent disembarkations; secondly to discover how ICMs working within the context of migrant arrivals perceive the (in)adequacy of their training in relation to their working experience. Combining ethnomethodological approaches (Rouncefield and Tolmie 2016) with phenomenological research methods (Moustakas 1994: 180-82), the underlying theoretical premise of social constructivism calls for the acknowledgment of the researcher’s positionality. Having already carried out research (see Filmer and Federici 2018, Filmer 2020, Filmer forthcoming) into intercultural mediation in Sicily where I lived and worked as a university researcher, it seemed essential to understand how the ICMs in the field felt about their training. Although the findings presented here are drawn from a small sample, the study has produced significant data. A similar survey on a larger scale would enable the identification of future ICM training needs and contribute to the formulation of recommendations to the relevant institutions and authorities. Furthermore, the study is a starting point for collaborative and comparative research with other European countries facing similar immigration phenomena, for example Spain and Greece.

Multiple forms of data were gathered for this project, drawn from documents, online websites, semi-structured interviews, observations, and open-ended questionnaires. 10 intercultural mediators from different training backgrounds, ethnicities, and life experiences were contacted via telephone, email or asked face to face if they would act as informants for the research. Following an explanation of the project, they were given the opportunity to ask questions, and told they could withdraw from the project at any time. Informed consent was then sought and obtained from each participant, who was guaranteed privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of data. Informants were asked to complete and return via email a questionnaire comprising a series of open-ended questions formulated in English, but were given the choice of answering in Italian, English, or French. This first stage served to gauge where the data-rich responses might lie and in which themes they were expressed. Having received and subsequently examined the questionnaires, I then set up and carried out in-depth, semi-structured interviews with six respondents whose replies invited further exploration. I obtained authorisation from their employers where applicable. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, then stored. Once all the primary data had been gathered and examined, recurrent themes and patterns were identified in the experiences narrated and were then distilled into the topics discussed in section 5.
In order to interpret the data, however, a contextual framework in terms of locus and status is necessary: the following sections aim to provide such a backdrop against which the findings can be analysed.

2. Contextualising the intercultural mediator in Sicily

The small Port of Pozzallo on the southern coast of Sicily has witnessed innumerable migrant arrivals from the African continent since the humanitarian migration crisis began in 2011. At its peak in 2016, the number of arrivals to Italy had reached 181,436, the majority of whom were disembarked at a Sicilian port. That year, the Port of Augusta saw the highest number of arrivals with 25,624, followed by Pozzallo with 18,970. During 2017 the number of migrants who arrived in Italy via sea decreased by 85 percent. This was largely due to the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Italian Minister of the Interior, Marco Minniti and the leader of the UN-recognized Libyan government, Fayez al-Serraj promoting closer cooperation between the coastguards of Libya and Italy in order to block migrant vessels before they arrived in Italian waters. Since coming to power in June 2018, the successive Minister for the Interior, Matteo Salvini refused permission to all vessels wanting to disembark migrants at Italian ports, regardless of their physical and psychological condition. This drastically cut arrivals to Italian shores even further, while ignoring the fact that thousands are being held in Libya in inhumane conditions (see Filmer, 2020). Pozzallo saw the largest number of arrivals to Italy in 2018 with 3,818; and remains the location for one of Sicily’s three Hotspots, which are primarily reception and identification centres. Between 1 January 2019 and 25 August 2019, despite the reduced numbers of migrants reaching Italian shores, 2,897 disembarked at the Port of Pozzallo.

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1 No term surrounding migration is ever neutral; some have very specific legal meanings (e.g. illegal migrant, refugee, asylum seeker, permanent resident, etc.), however for expediency, I use the term “migrant” to cover all categories of people landing on the coasts and at the ports of Italy having moved from their place of origin.
2 International Organisation for Migration [https://migration.iom.int/europe?type=arrivals](https://migration.iom.int/europe?type=arrivals)

According to the UNHCR, the key disembarkation points remain Sicilian ports, which have been identified as hotspots in Italy’s Road Map: Pozzallo (19%), Augusta (15%), Lampedusa (14%), Taranto (10%) and Trapani (5%). Other disembarkation points include Reggio Calabria (11%), Catania (6%).
It has been argued elsewhere (see Federici 2016 and Filmer, Federici 2018), that the effects of the so-called “migrant emergency” to a large extent could have been avoided or at least mitigated with strategic government planning and EU interventions. Federici points out that the migrant arrivals to Italy are particularly significant in terms of linguistic and cultural implications, for they “highlighted the need for translators and interpreters on an unprecedented scale” (Federici 2016: 10 my emphasis). A need that had hitherto been largely ignored, especially in crucial geographical areas such as Sicily.

With ill-defined contours and improvised training, those language and cultural mediators directly involved in the disembarkations in that historical period (and still today), for no fault of their own, had to cope with situations beyond their level of competence. From this premise, the study investigates how the practicing intercultural mediators operating on the coast of Sicily during the ongoing migratory flows perceive their needs in terms of types of training, knowledge, tools and skills. The following section focuses on the blurred definition and training requirements for this figure within the specific geographical location.

3. A question of recognition – what is the role of the ICM?

On the 9th January 2018 the Sicilian regional government approved decree law D.A/21 establishing legal recognition for, and a professional profile of, the intercultural mediator within its jurisdiction. On signing the decree, the Regional Councillor for education and vocational training, Roberto Lagalla, stated:

The professional\(^4\) figure of [the intercultural mediator] is indispensable to the multicultural society in which we live,

\(^4\) I have translated “figura professionale” here as “professional figure”. This is, however, open to interpretation. “Professionale” in Italian can mean professional in the sense of a person whose occupation requires special training or a university education, and therefore confers high status. It can equally mean vocational, as in “istituto professionale”, which is similar to a technical school or college where technical and manual skills are taught. As the minimum entry requirement for regionally authorised courses in intercultural mediation is a high school diploma rather than a degree, thus, as far as Italian law is concerned, intercultural mediation appears to be considered more an occupation than a profession. However, I have chosen to leave “professional”, given the social significance the speaker appears to attribute to the role.
guaranteeing social cohesion and equal opportunities through the gradual and assisted processes of integration and reception. […] Today, more than ever, intercultural mediation is indispensable to the removal of cultural and linguistic barriers, and for the protection of rights and duties, for example facilitating access to public and private services aimed at immigrant populations.⁵

Lagalla’s affirmation that the intercultural mediator is “indispensable” in complex multilingual societies is undoubtedly a step forward. However, it begs the question as to why the region of Italy that has been most directly affected by the Mediterranean migratory crisis has only just legislated on a figure of such import. The Sicilian case, albeit counterintuitive, is by no means isolated. Attempts by previous national governments to formulate a unified framework in which the role of the ICM is better defined across the Italian peninsula have yet to be put into practice. Nearly a decade ago, Amato and Garwood (2011: 5) observed “despite the large use of cultural mediators in public services in Italy there is no national or central accreditation system, no single code of professional conduct, and no common recruitment requirements or procedures”. This is still the case today. The most recent governmental recommendations on the subject were published in 2014 (Melandri et al) by the Ministry of the Interior in conjunction with the European Union.⁶ The dossier is a detailed study of the issues and dilemmas surrounding the figure of the ICM in the Italian context and delineates the competences, skills, and qualifications required in this overarching description:

The figure of the ICM is delimited by a clearly defined area of competence that on the one hand, is close to that of the social worker

⁵ “E’ una figura professionale indispensabile per la società multiculturale nella quale viviamo per garantire coesione sociale e pari opportunità, attraverso processi di integrazione e accoglienza, graduali e assistiti […]. La mediazione interculturale è certamente, oggi più che mai, indispensabile per la rimozione delle barriere culturali, linguistiche e per la salvaguardia dei diritti e dei doveri, come per l’accesso ai servizi pubblici e privati della popolazione di immigrati”. http://www.robertolagalla.it/

Within these parameters, the scope of action intercultural mediators undertake is vast. While the long-term and general aim is that of facilitating social integration, the tasks carried out by ICMs on a regular basis include clinical and community interpreter, asylum and legal interpreter, cultural broker, health assistant, offering psychosocial support, preventing conflict and supporting resolution, and last and not least in the Sicilian context, emergency and crisis mediation during and immediately following disembarkations. (For discussions on the professional figure and competences of the ICM see Katan 2015; Merlini 2015; Rudvin and Spinzi 2014; Russo and Mack 2005; UNHCR 2017 and WHO 2019).

Asylum hearings are obviously one of the most critical situations in which an ICM may be called to interpret. Without the requisite linguistic, cultural and technical skills, however, the outcomes can be disastrous for the asylum seeker. The UNHCR’s (2017) “Handbook for Interpreters in Asylum Procedures” points out that in many cases “interpreters are appointed on the strength of their language skills but often do not have specific training for the asylum situation” (ibid: 3).

Space constraints prohibit a detailed overview of the role of the interpreter compared to the ICM (see, for example, Pöchhacker 2008; Martin and Phelan 2010). Suffice it to say there is considerable dissent as to the division or conflation of tasks, and as to what indeed the respective roles might entail (see also Angelelli, 2004, 2015; Hale 2007; Inghilleri 2005, 2017; Katan 2015; Merlini 2015; Taviano 2019). Instead the UNHCR (2017) refers to the “interpreter as mediator for both language and culture” (ibid.: 56), thereby rendering the ICM redundant altogether.

Rudvin and Spinzi (2014: 58) have analysed this “terminological turmoil” and suggest that from a cross-cultural perspective the “community interpreter” could be considered the Anglophone equivalent of the ICM. Merlini (2015: 32), for her part, observes that the “cultural mediator” has become the “intercultural mediator” in institutional discourse thus foregrounding “social cohesion as an overarching goal”. Furthermore, this Special Issue of Cultus entitled “training for the language and cultural mediator” avoids the question

7 “La figura del MI è delimitata da un confine chiaro che la pone limitrofa da un lato all’operatore sociale con spiccate competenze di interculturalità e dall’altro all’interprete professionale”.

of interculture altogether. Terminology aside, we return to the real issues at stake: competences and tasks. As Martin and Phelan (2010) point out:

there is considerable confusion across Europe about the exact role of cultural mediators. The term ‘cultural mediation’ is sometimes used as a blanket term to cover both translation and interpreting and the terms interpreter and cultural mediator can appear synonymous. In France, Italy and parts of Belgium and Germany the terms interpreter, cultural mediator and, also intercultural mediator are used interchangeably and the role boundaries are unclear, especially to outsiders.

Within the context of the Republic of Ireland’s healthcare system, and in line with some of the opinions expressed by the informants interviewed for this study (see section 5), “the roles of medical interpreter and cultural mediator are complementary and distinct” (Phelan and Martin 2010). According to the authors, purely linguistic communication is the task of the interpreter, whereas the cultural mediator “is required when lack of cultural awareness and understanding of the system is the main impediment for the migrant population to access and benefit from health services”. Akin to the situation in Italy, a recognised, unified code of ethics for what the authors refer to as cultural mediation within the Irish context does not exist. Phelan and Martin suggest that such recognition “would permit cultural mediation to develop and maintain standards at national and international level” (ibid. 2010). The mediator-interpreter dichotomy is further complicated by tensions surrounding the political and social stances implicit in the intercultural mediator’s work. In the Sicilian context, Taviano’s (2019) study describes what she refers to as “activist mediators” who “create active spaces of resistance” (Taviano 2019: 30). One of the ways the ICMs she interviewed do this, is “by encouraging intercultural and transcultural understanding while collaborating with social workers to make them reflect on the importance of accepting diversity beyond one’s own prejudices”.

While this appears to be less “activism” than best practices in intercultural mediation, she goes on to describe further “resistance tactics” (ibid.: 31)

[the ICMs interviewed] define their role as mediators on the basis of their own personal views and experiences of what this role involves, rather than according to predominant practices or predefined rules.
In this sense their initiatives, drawing on the informal acquisition of competences and skills, show how long-life learning can be even more significant than official formal training.

It might be reasonably argued that such an approach to mediating resonates with improvisation, flouts ethical codes, and may result in accusations of advocacy. Life experience is undeniably a crucial factor in the work of the ICM, especially where asylum cases are concerned; but in order to maintain neutrality, “personal views and experiences” cannot be privileged above professionalism.

Returning to the Ministry of the Interior’s problematic definition of the ICM, the skills of a “professional interpreter” mentioned therein require training in interpreting techniques, theoretical underpinning, and a solid ethical grounding. These elements are lacking in many university and regionally authorised courses in intercultural mediation. The same ministerial document then lists the less onerous “non-professional interpreting and translation” [interventi (…) di interpretariato e traduzione non-professionali] (ibid.:14) as competences pertaining to the ICM, creating further confusion as to the required skills set. Equally dubious is the proposed “indispensable” requisite for the ICM: “preferably, of foreign extraction” [L’essere preferibilmente di origine straniera] (Melandri 2014: 36-38), which could be viewed as a form of inverted racism. These recommendations have never been enshrined in a national legal framework, and the responsibility for defining and training the ICM remains firmly with regional governments in Italy. Nevertheless, the Sicilian government’s recently published profile of the ICM pays more than a passing resemblance the one set out in the abovementioned report. The four areas of competence identified are:

1. Analysing the needs and resources of the foreign national, and the context in which action should be taken;
2. Understanding the language and cultural codes of the various cultures and facilitate communicative exchanges;
3. Mediating in various communicative situations, facilitating exchanges between members of the immigrant community and operators, services, institutions, stake-holders, actors, partners, and businesses within the territorial area of reference;
4. Planning training initiatives and strategies of intercultural integration in various real life situations

Despite the complexity of tasks and the intellectual skills such a delineation of intercultural mediation entails, the ICM is located on level 5 of the European Qualification Framework and is thus considered a technician; a high school diploma is the entry level for a regionally recognised and authorised training course. In the Italian National Institute for Statistics’ [ISTAT] (2011) classification of professions, ICMs are classified as “Technicians of social integration and rehabilitation” [Tecnici del reinserimento e dell'integrazione sociale]; a definition that belies the analytical, reflexive and evaluative abilities that are crucial to the core activity for an intercultural mediator; that is, negotiating encounters between individuals of diverse cultures and languages in a gamut of social situations. While the linguistic services provided by ICMs might not best be described as “professional interpreting and translation”, the mindful activity of mediating between social actors from different socio-economic and lingua-cultural backgrounds in high-pressure situations of emergency or crisis is clearly beyond the scope of a technician. In clinical contexts where psychological health is concerned, inadequate training, lack of experience or lack of neutrality on the part of the intercultural mediator could result in serious communication failure between the parties (see Filmer 2020).

By the same token, the recently established minimum requirement of a high school diploma has created an impasse in ICM training in Sicily. For example, the regionally recognised cooperative “Centro Mediterraneo Giorgio La Pira” is a training centre and learning space for operators in the area of migration, and has trained many of the intercultural mediators working in Ragusa. However, due to the 2018 legislation their vocational course in “mediazione interculturale” is no longer active. Director of the centre, Giacomo Anastasi explains that

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8 Analizzare i bisogni del Cittadino straniero ed il contest di cui bisogna intervenire; comprendere il linguaggio e i codici delle diverse culture e facilitare lo scambio comunicativo; realizzare interventi di mediazione tra il cittadino straniero e i diversi contesti di riferimento, facilitando lo scambio tra immigrato e operatori, servizi, istituzioni, imprese del territorio di riferimento; progettare interventi di orientamento e percorsi di integrazione interculturale nei differenti contesti di vita.

9 https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/search/site?f[0]=im_field_entity_type%3A97#

10 http://professioni.istat.it/sistemainformativopropriessioni/cp2011/
the course was initially set up in 2016 to give refugee minors a chance to develop their skills and obtain a certificate that was authorised by the region at that time. Numerous training courses offered by private training bodies were springing up all over Sicily in the wake of the migratory crisis. Anastasi explains that, by law, reception centres for unaccompanied minors run by local co-operatives are obliged to employ an intercultural mediator as one of the requisites for constituting such reception services according to the emergency decree\textsuperscript{11} issued by the Regional Department for the Family, Social Policy, and Work\textsuperscript{12} but at that time no authorised regional training body existed.

Responding, therefore, to the urgent need for qualified mediators, the “Centro Mediterraneo Giorgio La Pira” offered a 500-hour blended learning course. Languages were not taught; they were a prerequisite. The course was structured over a period of six months with several weekend encounters and seminars with specialists in the field, such as NGOs and university lecturers, who offered one-off seminars gratis. The course also included 150 hours of e-learning and an 80-hour case study. Internships of at least 100 hours were organised with the network of partners operating in the field of migrant reception in the Ragusa area. In this way, explains Anastasi, those with a minority language, or even bridge languages such as English or Arabic could begin to earn a living. The new legislation not only affects minors but also many refugees, asylum seekers or migrants over 18; few will have a high school diploma, and those that do will have great difficulty providing evidence of such. The bureaucratic process known as “equipollenza”, that is, recognition of a foreign qualification as equal to the corresponding Italian one, is a painfully long and laborious one requiring a level of documentation that would be practically impossible for a refugee to obtain from the place of origin. Ironically, then, by placing an educational threshold, the path to a recognised qualification as an intercultural mediator is blocked for those who may have relevant language skills, personal experience and disposition but either lack the formal education or the possibility to prove it. The next

\textsuperscript{11} DP513/GAB 18 January 2016.
section focuses on what type of qualification is required to be legally recognised for this role.

4. A question of qualifications

In order to understand which qualifications are required to get a job as an (inter)cultural mediator, the following example is provided. A recent call for applications\(^\text{13}\) for the position of “cultural mediator” (a fixed term 500-hour annual contract) issued by a local health authority in Rome lists under its essential requirements, \textit{either}

- a degree in \textit{mediazione linguistica}/applied languages with translation, psychology, sociology or educational science, pedagogy, or social work and a regionally recognised certification in intercultural mediation;
- a regionally recognised certification in intercultural mediation and/or a degree that confers the title of intercultural mediator
- or a certificate conferring the title of intercultural and linguistic mediator issued following the completion of a regional, provincial or ministerial training course (my emphasis).

The wording of the requirements is far from clear: it appears that a regional vocational course is equated with an undergraduate degree, \textit{plus} an additional course in intercultural mediation. It is also contentious to claim that any degree can “confer” the professional title of intercultural mediator. A degree in \textit{mediazione linguistica} generally has little to do with intercultural mediation although it might offer the grounding in foreign languages and translation. Nevertheless, the uneven requirements undermine the value of a university education with regards to ICM formation. As one of the informants remarked:

\begin{quote}
Those like myself who studied for three or even 5 years to obtain a degree in Applied Languages with Translation have the same professional
\end{quote}

\(^{13}\) \url{https://www.workisjob.com/5693/concorso/selezione-per-mediatori-culturali-asl-roma-4/}
opportunities, if not fewer, than those who do a training course approved by the regional government of maybe 200, 300, or 600 hours.

ICM3 commented thus at the very beginning of our interview, indicating its importance for her. It also brings sharply into focus the question of how “regionally authorised courses” might compare with a university education. Anastasi comments “The way regional training works is crazy, it’s Kafkian”. A tender is put out to private educational institutions, co-operatives, and local training bodies. But in Anastasi’s opinion “there are no criteria – it’s who gets there first, and strangely, there’s always someone who gets there before you!”. He adds “and regional training courses have only ever served the interests of the course organisers”.

Due to the recent regional legislation on minimum requirements and fewer migrant arrivals, many of the courses are no longer running. At the time of writing, a search on internet revealed two “regionally authorised” courses in Sicily: one of 300 and the other of 675 hours. The regional requirements do not stipulate course duration. The courses are free for the unemployed and those seeking first employment, provided that the service provider, i.e. the training body, receives funding from the regional government. Otherwise, non-authorised courses may charge a fee of anywhere between 500-1,000 euros. “Abakos Formazione”, for example, is a legally recognised co-operative offering various vocational courses including intercultural mediation. The course aims to “train the figure of the intercultural mediator who facilitates immigrants and members of ethnic minorities to access public services”. Contrary to the norms of transparency, the website offers no information on the course content nor structure, nor does it identify the teachers. There are no regionally authorised courses in intercultural mediation in the province of Ragusa where the port of Pozzallo and its Hotspot are situated.

Instead, the University of Catania’s School of Modern Languages located in Ragusa offers an undergraduate course in *mediazione*

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14 All informants are referred to with the female gender for convenience and to maintain anonymity.

15 “è pazzesco come funziona la formazione regionale, è Kafkiana […] non ci sono criteri – è chi arriva prima […] ma stranamente c’è sempre qualcuno che arriva prima di te! […] ma i corsi regionali hanno sempre servito solo gli interessi degli enti organizzatori”.

16 “…formare la figura di mediatore interculturale che facilita gli migranti e i membri delle minoranze etniche a accedere ai servizi pubblici”.

17 [http://www.abakosform.it/mediatore_interculturale.html](http://www.abakosform.it/mediatore_interculturale.html)
Applied Languages with Translation, and has done since 2002. Course Director, Professor Massimo Sturiale acknowledges that although the current degree course satisfies the ministerial criteria in terms of core subjects for the degree class of “Mediazione Linguistica”, there are some significant gaps in what are considered optional subjects. “Cultural Anthropology, Economy, EU law…this is a problem that we can no longer offer these subjects” comments Sturiale but “this is not the department’s fault, it the Ministry of Education’s”. Stringent budgets and a reduction in the number of contract lecturers that a degree course can sustain inevitably also reduce the choice of secondary subjects on offer. In Sturiale’s opinion the first generation of degree courses in mediazione linguistica, that is, before the Gelmini Reform18 were much stronger - precisely because they were not bound by the number of contract professors that could be employed and therefore offered a richer variety of subjects. For the moment, he opines “even if we wanted to change something by adding other subjects, we simply don’t have the staff to cover them”. On a more positive note, a way out of this gridlock is co-operation between institutions by swapping expertise. “What I would like to change, and what I will implement is a series of seminars – using our own networks to invite colleagues to give guest lectures”. Secondly, the degree programme will aim to offer better organised and more relevant internships by exploiting connections and involving local government, institutions and associations in the territory.

Having described the status quo of intercultural mediation training in the context of the Sicilian province of Ragusa, what follows is a discussion on the most significant results of the surveys and interviews carried out.

5. Discussion

Ten intercultural mediators from varying backgrounds (see below) were asked to take part in a survey comprising open ended questions, which was distributed via email. Based on the richness of the responses 6 of the informants were interviewed face-to-face between July 4th 2019-30 August 2019. The table below gives a brief overview of essential data on the ten informants who participated.

18 Decree law 240/30 December 2010

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Ethnic origin</th>
<th>Experience (in years)</th>
<th>Permanent, fixed term contract or self-employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICM1</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICM2</td>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICM3</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Permanent contract with the “Fondazione San Giovanni Battista”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICM4</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Self-employed returned to full-time education, completing “Magistrale” course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICM5</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Volunteer worker in full-time education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICM6</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Permanent contract with the “Fondazione San Giovanni Battista”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICM7</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Permanent position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICM8</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Permanent contract with the “Fondazione San Giovanni Battista”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICM9</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Self-employed returned to full-time education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICM10</td>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An initial observation relates to employment. Apart from one university employee, a further three, who work for the “Fondazione San Giovanni Battista”, have a permanent contract. The Foundation, like many others in Italy, is a religious organisation/co-operative that collaborates with the Ministry for the Interior on the question of migrant reception. It runs several small reception centres in Ragusa. As mentioned previously, reception centres have the legal obligation to employ at least one intercultural mediator on the staff. ICM7 is employed at a university and deals with the integration of foreign students. She is also a Red Cross Volunteer and has assisted during the height of the numerous disembarkations. According to ICM 10, “intercultural mediators are real losers” when it comes to working opportunities. Highly qualified with several years’ experience, her precarious, self-employed status is like most of the ICMs working in the context of migrant reception in Sicily.

5.1 Who am I? What am I?

The first issue is an ontological one and refers to the informants’ desire to define terms as to who they are and what they do. Katan (2018: 18) affirms “Post-positivists suggest that although phenomena may (possibly) be observed, it is the observer’s subjectivity that will bias what is perceived towards a particular construction of ‘reality’ and towards a particular way of defining ‘the thing’”. Bearing this in mind, the respondents were asked to choose from a list of terms. ICM6 describes her work as “a passion, a calling”, while ICM7 classifies the role in more pragmatic terms as “a professional who works towards the removal of cultural and linguistic barriers”. Eight of the informants prefer the denomination “intercultural mediator”, while two opted for “cultural mediator”. ICM9 elaborates on her choice of “intercultural” mediator: “in my work I try to demonstrate that cultures are not so far apart […] because no culture is self-contained and each one has aspects that are compatible with the other”. ICM8 was the only one to choose both intercultural mediator and interpreter/community interpreter as possible denominations. As the researcher and the interviewer, I must acknowledge this may be the outcome of an exchange between the interviewee and myself in which ICM8 made a

19 Nel mio lavoro di mediazione cerco di mostrare che le culture non sonno così lontane […] perché non esiste nessuna cultura che non racchiude delle cose e degli aspetti compatibili con ognuno di noi.
net distinction between the roles of ICM and interpreter. ICM8 performs both tasks but in different settings, considering “interpreting” as what she does when working with the police, for example, whereas “mediating” takes place in situations where cultural diversity needs to be explicated before communication can effectively take place. This, according to ICM8 does not require word for word interpretation. During the interview she states:

There is a big difference between the translator [sic. interpreter] compared to the mediator. The translator is someone who translates what one person says to another person without regard to logic, without additional reasoning. The mediator goes beyond that [...] he applies logic, goes beyond listening. It’s someone who tries to understand, someone who tries to find meaning [...] with regard to cultural difference.

When this comment is compared with interviews carried out previously with other ICMs trained at the “Centro Giorgio Pira” (see also Filmer and, Federici 2018: 246-248), a recurrent perception of the interpreter emerges; the interpreter follows the strict conduit model (Solow 1981: ix) while the ICM “builds bridges” across cultures. If trainee ICMs are told that the interpreter translates “without regard to logic” or “reasoning”, then this risks reductionism and denigration of the work performed by the interpreter. Interpreting word for word has a fundamental role in the process of seeking asylum, for example during the asylum hearing. ICM8 states that apart from her work as an ICM, she also interprets for the police. Having arrived in Italy in July 2016 it is likely that ICM8’s knowledge of Italian goes beyond the minimum B1 level stipulated in the regional requirements. Nevertheless, a B1 or even a B2 level of target language competence would be insufficient for professional interpreting tasks, and, it may be argued, barely sufficient for non-professional interpreting activity especially in contexts such as police enquiries.

5.2. The adequacy of training - ready or not?

The core of this study is the ICMs’ perception of their preparedness. What surfaced was an overwhelming awareness of their failings and shortcomings in the face of certain challenges their work often needs to embrace. All the informants replied that they had felt ill-equipped to deal with certain situations, and provided examples. ICM1’s story is representative:
There was an episode with a young man who had arrived in Italy as an unaccompanied minor. He was imprisoned as soon as he landed because he was accused of human trafficking. When he was let out on probation, he was sent to the reception centre where I was working. He found it difficult to integrate with the others; he didn’t trust anyone and couldn’t keep to the rules.

This example poses questions regarding the boundaries of what an intercultural mediator should, or is able to, do. Clearly, the mediator in this case feels some sense of guilt for not having been able to assist the person in question. A grounding in psychology might have helped the ICM. ICM5 on the other hand recounts her failure to read the non-verbal messages of those she was mediating for:

The first time I mediated in a reception centre I didn’t know much about the culture of the beneficiaries nor their variety of English: for example, in many African cultures it is a sign of respect not to look the interlocutor in the eye, above all if this person has a higher social position in the communicative context. During the interviews, the young men tended to lower their gaze and initially I thought this was a sign of their disinterest, which I found deeply discouraging. I subsequently understood, with experience, that it was the exact opposite. It meant they were listening to me attentively and respectfully.

ICM5’s experience highlights the gap between theory and practice. She is a graduate of Applied Languages and Translation, yet the theoretical knowledge she obtained did not match the skills needed in practical situations. ICM4 echoes this notion by commenting “all the subjects I

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20 C’è stato un episodio con un ragazzo che è arrivato in Italia come minore straniero non accompagnato. È stato in carcere appena sbarcato perché è stato accusato di essere un trafficante, quando questo ragazzo è stato liberato con messa in prova in centro d’accoglienza dove lavoravo, aveva difficoltà a integrarsi con la comunità, il ragazzo non si fidava di nessuno, aveva difficoltà a seguire le regole.

21 Le prime volte che mi sono trovata a fare da mediatrice per dei colloqui all’interno del centro d’accoglienza, non conoscevo molti elementi della cultura dei beneficiari o della loro varietà linguistica: per esempio, nella cultura africana è segno di rispetto non guardare l’interlocutore negli occhi, soprattutto se questo ha una posizione socialmente rilevante all’interno di un determinato contesto comunicativo; durante i colloqui, dunque, i ragazzi tendevano ad abbassare lo sguardo, ed inizialmente, pensavo fosse per una loro mancanza di interesse e questo mi scoraggiava profondamente. Ho capito con la pratica, che in realtà era esattamente l’opposto, significava che mi stavano ascoltando con attenzione e rispetto.
studied [at university], the exams, the dissertation, the books…we’re light years away from what we actually have to do […] only experience in the field can give you the practical skills needed for the job”.

Lack of experience can have far-reaching consequences: a young neo graduate with no hands-on experience entering an environment such as a Hotspot can have serious psychological disturbances. ICM4 explains,

It was a traumatic experience for many reasons. On a psychological level, I was afraid of the responsibility that the job entailed; something much, much bigger than me, I felt …but there you don’t have the time to think, just to act. Full stop…it was emotionally shocking, other people like myself started but then left… in the first days I couldn’t eat, I couldn’t sleep…then I started to get used to it, if you can ever get used to these situations.

ICM1, who did a vocational course, admits that cultural and religious differences at first were difficult her to fathom: “In the past, my training wasn’t enough to overcome the mental closure and rigidity from a religious point of view of some of the young men. For example, why is there so much self-harm on the part of North Africans?” ICM9, on the other hand, notes the limitations of instructors and lecturers as to the cultural knowledge they impart, for example drawing on stereotypes rather than looking for the underlying reasons. She gives this example of cultural stereotyping proffered by a lecturer: “sub-Saharan women are not interested in birth control because it does not exist in their culture”. ICM9 sustains that the lecturer’s assertion is erroneous because in some cultures, certain topics are not discussed with foreigners, and above all not in groups. Furthermore, she points out that when a (foreign) researcher does field work in reception centres, they are always treated with diffidence by the guests and will therefore never get a real picture.

5.3 Academic approaches or hands-on experience? What makes a good intercultural mediator?

22 Tutte le materie che ho fatto, gli esami, la tesi, I libri…siamo anni luci da quello che dobbiamo fare in realtà.

23 Era una trauma per tanti motivi All livello psicologico avevo paura della responsabilità, era qualcosa molto più grande di me. Sentivo…ma li non hai tempo di pensare, solo agire e basta. Era molto forte, pesante, la gente inizia e poi lascia, I primi giorni non riuscivo a mangiare a dormire…poi mi sono un po abituata se si puo’ mai abituarsi a queste cose.
According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED online), vocational education or training is “focused on preparing students for a particular (esp. manual or technical) occupation and teaching them the necessary skills”. Academic training on the other hand “is concerned with the pursuit of research, education, and scholarship; scholarly, educational, intellectual”. We might juxtapose a couple of phrases here to make the dichotomy apparent: technical skills as opposed to intellectual skills—which are more pertinent to the intercultural mediator? Opinions were varied and vociferous on this point. From ICM4, who had university background and who freely admitted (see above) that for the type of challenges she had to face in the field, “a vocational course would be better [than a university degree]. More practical and technical skills such as languages for specific purposes, for example terminology on immigration law that can be applied immediately within the migration context would be really useful”. Although the courses Anastasi has run at the La Pira centre are vocational, he sees the natural collocation for intercultural mediation training at University: it’s not about theory against practice but about getting a balance between the two elements […]. An intercultural mediator is an interdisciplinary figure par excellence - subjects like anthropology, politics, sociology, law – it is essential that the basis comes from a university education.

ICM8, who did a course at the La Pira centre points out that “Having a university degree does not make one a skilled mediator. A good vocational course in addition to experience is good” but concludes “a university degree would be an added advantage”. ICM9 feels that a university education gives the intercultural mediator self-confidence because it provides the analytical and critical tools and foundations necessary to interact on the same level as with other professionals involved in the mediating triad, for example, doctors. For this reason, she views the regionally recognised courses as inadequate: “I think these courses are often set up as a way for the organisers to make money” and in any case “a course that lasts just a few hours could

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24 Non una questione di teorie contro la pratica ma trovare un equilibrio fra I due elementi. Il mediatore interculturale è una figura interdisciplinare per eccellenza - antropologia, politica, sociologia, i diritti – è essenziale che queste basi vengano fornite all'università].
never provide sufficient training for the depth and breadth of work we perform” [Purtroppo credo che questi corsi vengono usati semplicemente come una scusa per incassare soldi, e gli iscritti spesso lo fanno solo perché lo devono fare ma non perché lo vogliono fare. Un corso di qualche ora non potrebbe mai formare una persona per l’ampiezza del lavoro che svogliamo].

5.4 Knowledge gaps and empathy – what skills make a mediator?

Many were the suggested gaps in knowledge. From religious studies, geography, global economy, ethnology, pedagogy and transcultural psychology, to problem solving and conflict management. The breadth of subjects that all the informants felt were essential to their tasks indicates that the expert ICM needs to be trained in an interdisciplinary perspective that cuts across traditional academic boundaries. Yet, according to ICM4 “the most important skills are empathy, understanding, and being supportive. They are soft skills that perhaps cannot be learned but are equally as important as the hard skills”. ICM7 agrees empathy is the key and adds “either you have it or you don’t. It’s not something that can be taught”. Todorova (2019: 166), believes that:

Interpreters working in emergency situations, and those who want to specialize to work with refugees in humanitarian emergencies, should be provided with appropriate training which will draw not only on the most recent development in interpreting studies, but also on conflict resolution, peace building, and crisis management studies. This training should prepare interpreters to develop their empathic reactions, being able to identify the most vulnerable groups and individuals providing them with a voice.

Overlooking the conflation of interpreter with intercultural mediator for the moment, Todorova sustains that interpreters working with refugees in humanitarian emergency scenarios would benefit from training in “conflict resolution, peace-building, and crisis management studies”, in order to cultivate “empathetic reactions”. As the informants themselves confirm, skills such as conflict resolution (ICM 3) would undoubtedly be useful in emergency migratory contexts but that such skills would lead to “empathic reactions” is debateable. Initially used in the context of psychotherapy, the theoretical construct of empathy has been adopted in various health settings, not least in intercultural mediation or community interpreting (for a detailed, lucid
discussion on empathy in intercultural mediation see Merlini 2015: 27-50). A slippery paradigm to say the least, as Davies (1990: 707) points out, “Empathy […] is often confused with related concepts such as sympathy, pity, identification and self-transposal”. She argues, however, with German phenomenologist Edith Stein, that

What makes empathy unique […] is that it happens to us, it is indirectly given to us, "nonprimordially." When empathy occurs, we find ourselves experiencing it, rather than directly causing it to happen. This is the characteristic that makes the act of empathy *unteachable*. (my emphasis).

She concludes that “Empathy is a process that eludes teaching”. Nevertheless, it can be fostered through professional socialization experiences, modelling compassion and raising students’ awareness to “negative, fragmenting behaviours such as prejudice, self-preoccupation, […] poor listening and poor assertiveness skills, and low self-esteem” that may block empathy.

While “experience” may not exactly be considered a skill, it featured in 8 of the 10 responses on essential subjects for future mediators. Finally, ICM9 observed that intellectual curiosity is a fundamental part of the profile: “you always need to have the curiosity to do some research every time we encounter something about the Other that we do not understand”.

5.5 So, what do mediators want?

From those who answered the questionnaire, 9 of the 10 felt that a university degree is the most suitable form of qualification because it could offer more insight into the theoretical knowledge and critical tools required for the job. However, it was stressed that alongside the language content, the course should also contain subjects that provide relevant secondary subjects such as cultural anthropology, psychology, transcultural psychology, sociology, immigration law, EU law, and finally more exposure to non-standard English varieties such as Pidgeon English – or at least an overview of variations on pronunciation from the non-Anglican English speakers. ICM8 thinks that “the application of Psychology, Philosophy and Sociology would really improve mediation practice as they deal with the science of human behaviours”. Practical training in “problem solving” and

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25 Bisogna avere sempre la curiosità che ci spinge ad andare a documentarci ogni talvolta che incontriamo qualcosa nell’altro che non capiamo.
“conflict resolution or management” were other subject areas mentioned as highly relevant to the work of the ICM. Above all, respondents emphasised the need to integrate a university course with experience in the field via extended internships with local stakeholders and partners, such as the police, the Prefecture, and the reception centres in the territory thereby encouraging closer ties with the working reality. In addition, such experience would provide students with a practical grounding to prepare them for what their future work might entail.

6. Concluding remarks

This sample survey on the training of intercultural mediators working in the context of migrant arrivals in Sicily can only scratch the surface of what, on a wider national, and supranational scale, is a vast and largely neglected area of investigation which requires urgent attention. A recent review by the World Health Organisation (Verrept 2019: 13) reveals that in Europe:

Limited evidence was found on the training of intercultural mediators. The review found a lack of standardized training programmes to prepare mediators for their numerous and complex tasks […] To what extent and how intercultural mediators are evaluated and accredited also remains unclear. In addition, the dearth of professional guidelines, standards and quality assurance strategies and the limited involvement of academic institutions in the professionalization of the intercultural mediator are serious concerns.

These immense lacunae in regulating the profession lead to the profoundly worrying suspicion that ethical issues in mediation practices become merely academic. The absolute priority in the context of Italy must be to legislate on the role, functions, and competences of the intercultural mediator. While it is true that each geographical territory has its own specific needs, not least of all Sicily, there still must be a baseline; a unified framework of the training and qualifications necessary to accede the title of intercultural mediator, and an official professional register for each region to which the police, health services and courtrooms would have to refer when requiring mediation and linguistic services. Secondly, better co-ordination needs to be established between local authorities and the educational
institutions who provide training, be they state or private universities or authorised private colleges; this would help to ease the is-ought dilemma. Is intercultural mediation a vocational occupation or a profession? If it is the former, then university training, contrary to what most of the mediators interviewed believe, is superfluous. In this case, better structured vocational training is required that responds to the criteria set out in the regional framework.

If, on the other hand, intercultural mediation is viewed as a profession whereby a university background is essential, what would “appropriate training” be for future cohorts? Currently, in Italy, undergraduate courses with false-friend names such as *Scienze per la mediazione interculturale* or *Mediazione linguistica* focus principally on language and translation, and lack the subject areas that would provide the breadth of knowledge that the role demands. Anastasi rightly suggests that the interdisciplinary nature of the ICM would require an undergraduate foundation course structured to span diverse subject areas including anthropology, political science, psychology, and crisis studies. A specialisation (Laurea Magistrale or Master) in specific fields of mediation such as clinical/medical, psychological, educative or legal/asylum would then ideally follow. The reality is rather different. Italian universities tend to build degree courses around the teaching expertise of existing staff within a particular department instead of stretching their vision across disciplinary boundaries (and departments) in order to respond to the needs of today’s complex employment market in which the ICM is firmly situated.

Further research and a much broader survey of intercultural mediators’ needs in different national and European contexts might include reflective practices, such as “debriefing and discussion groups for your interpreters” (Tiselius 2019)26 enabling informed recommendations for educators and institutions. We should be harnessing the knowledge and experience accrued by those who are the “first generation” of a “new breed of linguist” (Amato and Garwood 2011) in order to better approach the complex societal and multicultural challenges of the twenty first century. Investment in research is essential. Research that aims to provide training paths and skills to better equip those already involved, and those who have yet to start on a path of intercultural mediation: not as a part time, ad hoc job but as a mission and chosen profession.

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26 Tiselius, private communication 22 September 2019.
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The paper investigates empathic conduct in the context of healthcare interpreter education. Drawing on the concepts of dispositional and interactional empathy, activity frames, role-playing vs. role-taking, and situated learning, the study attempts to answer four research questions: How far does (un)empathic disposition correlate with (un)empathic behaviour in simulated interaction? Does the didactic frame have an inhibiting effect on students’ expression of empathy? Can empathy be suitably developed in the classroom environment? Is empathic responsivity a desirable educational goal for healthcare interpreters? A research protocol was set up, and implemented on a sample of 15 postgraduate student interpreters. It entailed the administration of a dispositional empathy test, the video-recording of role-play data, and the collection of post-simulation feedback. The role-play script was based on an authentic healthcare encounter addressing the highly sensitive issue of elective abortion. The following are the key findings from the combined analysis of the three data sets. No systematic correlation between the study subjects’ dispositional and interactional empathy levels could be established. The influence of the didactic frame, albeit undeniable, did not turn out to be a major obstacle to the subjects’ manifestation of empathy. In the classroom environment, empathic skills can be acquired through the combined use of a variety of tools, with reflective and interactive learning activities being fundamental to unravel the complex interplay between rapport-building and other motives for action. Empathic responsivity and, even more significantly, awareness of its effects on interaction may be valuable learning achievements in healthcare interpreter education, as they enable students to contribute to the provision of humane medical care while keeping within the boundaries of professional ethics.

1. Introduction

This paper builds on previous research into empathy in interpreter-mediated healthcare interaction (Merlini, 2015; Merlini and Gatti, 2015;
Merlini, 2017a). The primary interest of these earlier studies was a methodological and descriptive one, entailing a multi-focal qualitative analysis of real-life data; yet, the issue of how empathic behaviour impacts on professional ethics was also addressed. In the absence of centralized educational and accreditation programmes, the contention was that, in the Italian healthcare context, one of the major “zones of uncertainty” accounting for the indefiniteness of “cultural mediation” practice is precisely empathic conduct. Findings seemed to indicate that empathy can be successfully used by both healthcare providers and cultural mediators to fulfill the institutional task at hand, while relating humanely to patients “in search not only of a solution to their problem but also of understanding and compassion” (Ruusuvuori, 2007: 598).

In light of the above, a research protocol was devised to investigate the role of empathy in healthcare interpreter education. Dispositional and interactional empathy have been analysed on the basis of three tools: an empathy test; transcripts of interactional data from a classroom role-play; and students’ feedback reports. The study involved 15 subjects belonging to two subsequent cohorts of students attending a 30-hour post-graduate university course on healthcare interpreting. Drawing on such theoretical notions as activity frames, role-playing vs. role-taking, situated learning, and interpreter training vs. interpreter education the following research questions have been asked. First, what is the correlation between students’ dispositional empathy and their interactional behavior in classroom practice? Second, are possible discrepancies to be accounted for by the didactic frame? Third, is the simulated environment a suitable context for the development of empathic responsivity? Fourth and lastly, is empathy awareness a desirable learning outcome in healthcare interpreter education?

2. Teaching empathy: Theoretical underpinnings

While referring readers to Merlini (2015) for a discussion of the notion of empathy and its impact on doctor-patient communication as documented in medical literature, a brief summary of major findings concerning interpreters’ affiliative behaviour is provided here.

1 For the difference between community interpreting and cultural mediation, see Merlini (2009). Reference is made in this paper to “interpreters” (rather than “mediators”) as a specific category of academically educated post-graduate students.
Following this, attention is shifted to educational issues, in line with this paper’s topic.

Reviewing a wide selection of both generic and sector-specific codes of ethics, Ozolins (2015) notes how their focus on neutrality and invisibility has preserved, over time, the machine-type model as the prescribed form of interpreting conduct. The basic equation between professionalism and emotional detachment, in particular, was placed at the very core of interpreting ethics not only in the field of conference interpreting, but also in the dialogue interpreting one as this was thought to be the best way to professionalize its largely *ad hoc* practice. Gradually, however, the stigmatization of interpreters’ agency, along with the practical applicability of codes have been called into question by researchers – Angelelli (2004) being one of the first – as a number of empirical studies on authentic interpreting performances started to reveal the production, by non-professional and professional interpreters alike, of affiliation moves, especially in the healthcare contexts, in open disregard of neutrality prescriptions.

A twofold trend has since been recorded. In her review of nine seminal studies on interpreter-mediated healthcare encounters, Fernandez (2010) found that interpreters’ exclusive focus on factual biomedical information coupled with their neglect of the emotional side of the interaction hamper the development of doctor-patient rapport. More specifically, failure to transmit the healthcare providers’ display of empathy through verbal and non-verbal cues negatively affect the doctor’s ability to provide support and build trust (Rosenberg *et al*., 2007; Pham *et al*., 2008). Conversely, evidence of the opposite trend towards a more empathic interpreting conduct is found in the studies of Merlini and Favaron (2005), Baraldi and Gavioli (2007), and Merlini and Gatti (2015). In their data, interpreters are seen to challenge affective neutrality through affiliative responses which treat the patient’s manifestation of feelings and worries as conversationally relevant, and, in some cases, further reinforce the healthcare practitioner’s empathic model of communication.

On the premise that empathy can be used as an effective clinical tool to promote diagnostic accuracy, therapeutic adherence, and both patient and physician satisfaction, a number of medical educators have started conceptualising it as a set of teachable and learnable communicative skills, which need practising to achieve adequate mastery (Coulehan *et al*., 2001). This same goal underlies the birth of narrative-based medicine (NBM) (Charon, 2001; Kalitzkus and Matthiessen, 2009), as against evidence-based medicine (EBM) with its
emphasis on scientific objectivity and doctor-centred communication practice. By educating doctors to attentively listen to and humanely respond to patients’ storytelling of illness, NBM enables them to identify the fears and hopes associated with their patients’ conditions, as they enter the latter’s often chaotic inner world in search for coherent meaning. The narrative approach to medical care is thus one of the latest and most promising avenues for developing doctors’ empathic engagement.

Similar attempts at equipping healthcare interpreting students with empathic communication skills are, if anything, very much in their infancy. As Dysart-Gale (2005: 401) observes, it is not surprising that many professional interpreters manifest distress and ethical dilemmas with regard to the expression of affect, given that “[they] are not trained to establish therapeutical rapport with the patient”. On the same note, Fernandez (2010: 223) argued for a new turn in training practices:

Interpreting students should be offered information regarding involvement and rapport, and should be taught strategies to handle verbal rapport and nonverbal rapport, and culturally different ways to relay involvement. […] More informed decisions by student interpreters could be made if students were made aware of the risks posed by seeking for the medical (objective medical information) at the cost of the emotional (subjective personal accounts).

One of the earliest and widest university-level training initiatives in the medical interpreting field is accounted for in Ertl and Pöllabauer (2010). Aimed at developing a targeted curriculum and innovative teaching materials, the EU-funded MedInt project was a response to the inadequate training provision for healthcare interpreters in European countries. Despite its many merits, especially in advancing professionalization and raising stakeholders’ awareness, empathic communication needs were not specifically addressed in the curriculum conception and design; moreover, the curriculum itself could be neither implemented nor tested, due to time and financial constraints.

Only very recently have teams of researchers in the United States and Belgium proposed medical interpreting courses featuring empathic skills acquisition as a major learning outcome. Targeting a cohort of 80 bilingual medical students, the Penn State College of Medicine offered regular whole-day interpreting workshops from 2015 to 2017, with the declared aim of enhancing student physicians’ communication skills
and empathic sensitivity to vulnerable limited English proficiency patients, potentially resulting in more professionals adopting a “humanistic healthcare” approach. Reporting on the programme results, Vergas Pelaez et al. (2018) note that all participants developed proficiency in interpreting – to the extent that those who took the exam were able to successfully become certified medical interpreters – and, even more significantly, that their self-reported measures of empathy increased on completion of the course. The study by Krystallidou et al. (2018a) investigates the impact of student interpreters’ interactional behavior on doctor-patient empathic communication. Data consist of simulated consultations which were held in 2016 at the University of Antwerp as an additional joint-training activity involving medical students and Master’s students in interpreting. 9 video-recorded interactions were coded using the Empathic Communication Coding System (Bylund and Makoul, 2005) to identify empathic opportunities initiated by the patient, and the doctor’s responses ranging from 0 (denial of the patient’s perspective) up to level 6 (sharing of feelings and experiences). Despite the limitations of the coding model, which does not consider the non-verbal components of empathy, the study is the first quantitative, systematically conducted exploration of interpreter-induced shifts in the levels of patient- and doctor-expressed empathy. The authors conclude suggesting that educational curricula should address the effects that interpreter renditions have on the complex co-construction of empathy.

Coming to the learning and/or testing tools, both medical (Bradley, 2006) and interpreter education (Dubslaff and Martinsen, 2005; Stokoe, 2014; Crezee, 2015; Cirillo and Niemants, 2017) have relied on some form of role-play practice – from more traditional scripted role-plays, to real-life scenario-based improvisations, to conversation analytic role-playing, up to semi-authentic pre-professional simulations. The different varieties have been designed, over time, to increase the authenticity of pedagogical materials while overcoming the limitations of classic role-plays, particularly in terms of interpersonal dynamics. De Pedro Ricoy (2010: 109), for instance, underlines how “genuine distress or aggression on the part of the participants in a […] real health-care scenario is considerably more difficult to cope with than ‘acted distress/aggression’ in role-play situations, in which students feel safe”. In medical education literature, despite their reputation as the gold standard practice, Atkins and Roberts (2018: 14) argue against the use of standardized, statistically
analysed role-plays for the assessment of empathy levels in exam settings, on the grounds that

the frame of showing empathy to a role-playing patient is nested in a frame of displaying competence to an examiner, which in turn is nested in the institutional frame of the overall assessment process. So what matters is not how emotionally and sincerely connected the candidate feels to the role-player but how far they are seen as ‘empathic’ by the examiner.

The notion of “frame” (Goffman, 1974) bears the utmost relevance for the purposes of the present study. Revising Dubslaff and Martinsen’s (2005: 215) diagram of embedded activity frames to accommodate the shift from testing to research/learning setting, the framework of the present study can be represented as shown in Fig.1:

![Figure 1: Activity frames](image)

In this configuration, the students do not feel compelled to comply with a standard check-list of acceptable behaviours, as they would in an institutional assessment frame. The possible distortions originating from the outer frame – in our case, the research study one – have also been largely neutralized by the design of the present research protocol, as discussed in Section 3 below. As for the didactic frame – the only remaining one susceptible of significantly affecting the subjects’ manifestation of empathy – two may be the inhibiting factors; namely, the inherent distance between student and lecturer statuses prevailing over their simulated roles; and students’ orientation towards an “ethics of conviction”. Comparing healthcare interpreting role-played interactions with authentic ones, Niemants (2013) identifies a dichotomous orientation to a classroom “ethics of conviction” vs. a
real-life “ethics of responsibility”. In other words, whereas in class students tend to adhere to an ideal model of interpreting conduct, interpreters in real-life contexts are seen to take responsibility for the outcome of the interaction, departing from theoretical guidelines when this is deemed necessary to achieve overarching communication goals. Hence, the question raised by Niemants is the following: How can teachers help students overcome the confines of the didactic frame, and bridge the gap between “playing” roles in the classroom and “taking” roles in the real world? One answer may be found in the social constructivist concept of “situated learning” (Kiraly, 2000; González-Davies and Enríquez-Raido 2016), which aims precisely at moving students along the continuum from membership of the community of learners to membership of the community of practice. To this end, the situated learning approach fosters learners’ autonomous construction of knowledge, as against mere regurgitation of received notions and passive compliance with normative guidelines. By observing, reflecting, and providing feedback on their own and others’ performances (including real-life expert ones), students actively contribute to shaping and transforming the group’s competencies.

This process is facilitated by exposure to authentic and/or highly simulated work environments and tasks, both inside and outside the classroom. Focusing specifically on healthcare interpreter education, both Crezee (2015: 56-59) and Krystallidou et al. (2018b) report on the benefits of collaborative and interdisciplinary experiences of shared pre-professional practice, whereby student interpreters work through semi-authentic scenarios together with student healthcare practitioners. Their findings point to the successful development of a more insightful, resourceful and reflective approach to contextually dependent communication and relational needs.

Finally, situated learning theories show evident connections with the conceptual transition from “interpreter training” to “interpreter education.” Spearheaded by Angelelli (2008), the shift has consolidated into a learner-centred, dialogic-based pedagogical paradigm. Evidence of its currency in Interpreting Studies is the sixth volume of the Critical Link series, which devotes an entire section to the topic (Schäffner et al., 2013: 285-337), as well as the volumes by Furmanek and Tipton (2016) and Cirillo and Niemants (2017). In her contribution to the latter, Merlini (2017b: 156) points to the narrow confines of practical-only training with its focus on instrumental skills, setting it against the wider educational goal of expanding students’ capacity of “improvisation” – defined as a reasoned and creative opposition to the
linearity of habit – through a guided process of “reflection on one’s art”.

3. The research study

The study was implemented within two subsequent healthcare interpreting course editions held in the academic years of 2015-16 and 2017-18. The course is taught in the second year of the MA degree in Modern Languages for International Communication and Cooperation at the University of Macerata, Italy. The programmes and contents of both editions were identical, and aimed at developing the students’ ability to autonomously decide what interactional and interpreting behaviours are best suited to achieving the primary participants’ healthcare goals, in a number of contextually diverse medical settings. Both in the theoretical and practical components of the course, the focus is on conversational and relational dynamics, the role of empathy in building trust between healthcare provider and patient, and issues of professional ethics.

3.1. Research design and protocol

The protocol envisaged three phases. At the beginning of the very first class of each edition (phase 1), prior to any introduction to the topics of medical interpreting and empathy, all attending students were administered Davis’ (1980, 1983) Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) test. The 28-item questionnaire is a widely used self-report measure of dispositional empathy consisting of four 7-item scales, each tapping a different component of the multidimensional construct of empathy. The fantasy scale (FS) taps the respondents’ tendency to imaginatively transpose themselves into the actions and lives of fictitious characters; the perspective taking scale (PT) assesses the tendency to “step outside the self”, and adopt another’s psychological perspective; empathic concern (EC) measures other-oriented feelings of sympathy and concern for unfortunate others, whereas personal distress (PD) measures self-oriented feelings of anxiety and discomfort in witnessing others’ negative experiences. In terms of correlations between the four scales, Davis (1980) posited the following: fantasy scores display moderate to null correlation with the other scales; the perspective-taking scale is positively related to empathic concern, but
somewhat negatively related to personal distress scores – that is, greater perspective-taking ability is associated with greater feelings of empathic concern for others, and with lower personal unease in the face of others’ distress. These correlations have been extensively validated in subsequent literature. Konrath et al. (2011), among others, observe that the emotional sensitivity and self-control associated with high scores in EC – which is arguably the scale that represents the most prototypical conception of empathy – translate into more prosocial attitudes and behaviors (such as the willingness to do voluntary work, for example). PT high scores are equally related to prosocial outcomes, being associated with high self-esteem and desire to help others. As for the remaining two scales, FS has been found to bear no relation with prosocial behavior, while PD high scores appear to be associated with higher social dysfunction (e.g., shyness, loneliness, social anxiety, verbal aggression). On account of their prototypical salience and documented prosocial association, only the scores of the two central scales (PT and EC) are analysed here for the purpose of describing each subject’s empathic disposition. Finally, with reference to the mean scores of Davis’ (1980) first study – as derived from a statistically significant sample of over 1000 respondents (579 males and 582 females) – they are as follows: FS, 18.75 for women vs. 15.73 for men; PT, 17.96 vs. 16.78; EC, 21.67 vs. 19.04; and PD, 12.28 vs. 9.46. Thus, women exhibited higher scores than men on all four scales, with the smallest difference obtaining for the perspective taking scale measuring the cognitive dimension of empathy. The generally lower empathic disposition of the male population has also been corroborated by later research.

In the second half of the 10-week course (phase 2), students were invited to volunteer for an unspecified research project involving the video-recording of their interpreting performance in a role-play (RP). Participants (here referred to as subjects) authorized the use of their anonymized data. By then, empathy in medical interpreting had been presented only from a theoretical point of view; no purpose-written role-play had yet been used in class to reflect upon the implications of empathic behaviour in terms of professional ethics. Neither the study subjects nor the other students were informed about the aim of the study, prior to the simulations. Each simulation took place before the class, yet in the absence of fellow study subjects. While indications about the role-play were limited to a sketchy description of context and participants, clearly no instruction on how to behave was provided. The volunteer subjects were explicitly told that their performances
would not be subjected to formal evaluation. This procedure was meant to reduce, as far as possible, the impact of the research and didactic frames on subjects’ spontaneity.

The role-play script (see Appendix 1) is based on an authentic interaction, discussed in Merlini (2015), addressing the highly sensitive issue of elective abortion. An Estonian undocumented immigrant woman went to a family planning clinic for a voluntary termination of pregnancy. The service provider, an Italian female sociologist, started the encounter enquiring about the woman’s personal circumstances, particularly the relationship with her boyfriend. This routine practice of story-telling elicitation, however, annoyed the woman, who did not understand why she was being questioned, and closed up. Though the woman had some knowledge of Italian, a Russian-speaking female mediator was called in “just in case”. A crucial part of the encounter was when the service provider engaged in a parallel conversation with another person, and service user and mediator started a dyadic monolingual sequence in Russian. In the role-play version, an English mother-tongue male language assistant played the part of a social worker (SW), and the Italian mother-tongue female lecturer (author of the present study) the part of the pregnant patient (P). Differently from the real-life encounter, where the service provider displayed a markedly empathic attitude throughout, SW was instructed to adopt an affectively neutral behaviour, except for the instances that were structurally built into the script. Clearly, a degree of flexibility had to be envisaged, as departures from the script were sometimes unavoidable to respond realistically to the subjects’ interactional moves. As documented in Appendix 1, opportunities for empathy construction were designed to arise from the following occurrences: P’s initial attempts to communicate directly with the service provider; SW’s joking remark about P’s quitting on her partner; his shifting to a more empathic pattern in explaining the goals of the counselling session; and finally, his momentary absence from the conversation.

Following upon each simulation (phase 3), both the subject who had role-played it and his/her classmates were asked to individually write down a feedback report (FR) on any aspects of the interactional dynamics that they felt might be useful for class discussion. For the purposes of the present investigation, only the reports of the study

2 While having fellow students play the parts of service provider and patient would have undoubtedly reduced the evaluative threat as perceived by subjects (despite assurances to the contrary), lecturers were thought to be able to better guarantee uniformity of interactional conduct and consequent comparability of data.
subjects have been analysed. Guided class discussion addressing (un)empathic interactional moves and outcomes was conducted in subsequent weeks on the basis of the students’ feedback reports and the subjects’ videoed role-play performances. Although, for reasons of length, the detailed contents of the discussions are not accounted for here, this reflective learning activity has yielded additional evidence in support of the conclusions of this paper.

3.2. Data sets

The study involved 15 students (3 males and 12 females), aged between 23 and 29 (see Appendix 2). All the subjects were starting their second year of the Macerata MA degree course. In the first year of their degree, all the subjects had taken a 60-hour conference interpreting course focusing on the consecutive mode with note-taking, and all had passed the corresponding exam before starting the second-year healthcare interpreting course. The difference in size between the samples of the two cohorts (4 subjects in 2016 vs. 11 in 2017) is due to the smaller number of students who took the then pilot medical interpreting course in the 2015-16 academic year.

The three sets of data referring respectively to dispositional empathy (DE), interactional empathy (IE), and feedback report have been analysed as follows.

The preliminary step has entailed the processing of the subjects’ IRI questionnaires. Given the reduced number of male subjects (3 out of 15), sex differences have not been measured, and the following mean scores (and corresponding standard deviation values) have been calculated on the 15-subject sample: FS 18.53, sd 4.838; PT 20.07, sd 4.114; EC 19.87, sd 3.815; PD 13.20, sd 5.158. Comparing these mean scores with Davis’ ones for females, the former are higher on three scales, with the smallest difference (0.57) obtaining for the FS scale and the largest (2.11) for the PT one. Our mean score for EC is instead lower by 1.8 points. Each subject’s PT and EC scores have subsequently been set against the mean values for the two scales (see line chart in Appendix 3). A subject’s empathic disposition has been classified as either high or low if two conditions are met:

1) his/her scores for both scales are either above or below the scales’ mean values;
2) at least one score of either scale is 24 points and above, or 16 points and below.
All other instances have been classified as medium (see Fig. 2, second column).

Interactional data from role-plays have been transcribed and subjected to a threefold analysis to identify:

1) verbal perspective-taking and attentive listening devices (e.g. checking understanding, reformulating, expressing approval, reassuring, backchannelling, etc.; see Merlini, 2015);
2) cues of prosodic empathy (reduced speech rate, lower pitch, pausing, intonational and rhythmic matching, etc.; McHenry et al., 2011; Weiste and Peräkylä, 2014);
3) non-verbal empathic displays (e.g. gesturing, touching, facial expressivity, eye-contact, open posture; Haase and Tepper 1972; Riess and Kraft-Todd, 2014).

Based on the analysis, a synthetic assessment of each subject’s interactional conduct as exhibiting high, medium or low empathy has been formulated (see Fig.2, third column). Where empathic devices from all three categories featured extensively and in strong mutual interplay with one another, the subject’s interactional conduct has been graded as “high”. Where displays were less frequent, and devices either belonged predominantly to only one of the above categories or were not employed in synergy, empathy has been classified as “medium”. A “low” label indicates either the scarcity or absence of empathy devices. Considering the scope of the present study, no interactional excerpts are shown here; yet, where relevant, observations on the various types of empathic displays have been included in the discussion of findings.

Subject feedback reports were searched for comments about the inhibiting effect of the didactic frame, in terms of either student-lecturer status distance (SD) or “ethics of conviction” orientation (ECO), or both.

The table in Fig. 2 provides a comparative overview of the findings; these will be discussed in the next Section, together with the most indicative and interesting cases.

Note that “d.c.” stands for difficult to classify, and that the empty cells in the FR column indicate that the corresponding feedback reports did not contain any observations concerning the impact of the didactic frame.
Table 1: Comparative overview of findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECTS</th>
<th>IRI degree of DE</th>
<th>RP degree of IE</th>
<th>FR ref. to SD/ECO</th>
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<tr>
<td>S1 (male)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2 (female)</td>
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<td>high</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<td>SD, ECO</td>
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<td>S15 (female)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Comparative overview of findings
IRI: Interpersonal Reactivity Index/DE: dispositional empathy
RP: role-play/IE interactional empathy
FR: feedback report/student-lecturer status distance (SD) or ethics of conviction orientation (ECO).

3.3. Discussion of findings

The present study aimed to investigate four research questions (see Section 1). The first one concerned the correspondence (or lack thereof) between subjects’ dispositional and interactional empathy levels. As illustrated in Fig. 2, findings show that the two are aligned in two thirds of cases. Of the five instances of mismatch (S1, S5, S8, S10, S15), three (S1, S5 and S10) entail a decrease in the level of displayed empathy. The hypothesis, as derived from our second research question, was that the didactic frame might inhibit empathic expression. Analysing these three subjects’ feedback reports, however, reference was found to both student/lecturer distance and ethics of conviction orientation only in one case (S5: I had difficulty getting into my part. It was puzzling to see my lecturers perform roles. Probably, I stuck rather to my translator role and did not empathize much with the patient).

Overall, explicit mention of student-lecturer status distance and/or ethics of conviction as empathy-inhibiting factors is present in one third of cases (5 out of 15). With the above-mentioned exception
of S5, the subjects in question (S2, S4, S7, S11) display a match between IRI test scores and IE levels during role-play performances. The analysis of the four feedback reports has yielded the following results. S2’s self-reported inclination towards a highly empathic behaviour was confirmed in the role-play, where she deployed a vast array of verbal, nonverbal and prosodic empathy devices. Yet, she commented: *I had difficulties stepping into my role, getting truly involved in the interaction, and establishing rapport with the patient, since I kept seeing her as my lecturer. I also abstained from any form of physical contact for this same reason, whilst I would have resorted to it in a real interaction.* The didactic frame was clearly perceived as a hindrance, but its impact was of no major consequence in her case. Similar feedback on SD was provided by S11 (whose case is discussed at some length further down) and S7 (*I was conscious that it was a simulation, I was unable to overcome the student- lecturer relationship and get into the part, I felt emotionally uninvolved*). As in S5’s case, the latter subject makes an almost identical additional reference to a normatively conceived “translator role”, implying a supposed contrast between it and empathy (S7: *I stuck to a translator role and did not manage to establish rapport*). Whereas the very low degree of S5’s interactional empathy may have been due to the didactic frame, S7 did in fact empathize with the patient (especially during the dyadic sequence) contrary to her self-assessment, and despite her mentioning both SD and ECO. The only other reference to an ethics of conviction orientation is in S4’s FR, where the subject admits that she was aware of the patient’s need for comfort (*I saw the patient was quite demoralized and I was tempted to put my hand on her shoulder to encourage her*) but did not act on this drive out of concern for role boundaries, as she herself clarified during class discussion. S4’s interactional performance was in any case in line with her IRI scores (just like S7’s), and featured attentive listening, as well as nonverbal empathy devices such as eye-contact and smiling. Incidentally, the most eloquent interactional indicators of simulation-related difficulties included inconsistent switching between formal (“lei”) and informal (“tu”) personal pronouns when addressing the patient, and incorrect selection of language in the renditions of primary speakers’ turns (i.e. addressing the Italian-speaking one in English, and vice versa).

Summing up on the impact of the didactic frame, this did not turn out to be a major obstacle to the subjects’ manifestation of empathy. The inhibiting effect of the ECO factor, in particular, was diminished in two ways: firstly, through a focused planning of class contents, whereby issues of professional ethics were dealt with later on in the
Course and during post-practice collective assessment and discussion sessions; and, secondly, through the adoption of a learner-centred pedagogical model, fostering reflective and interactive knowledge construction as against passive normative compliance (see for instance S15’s comment: *Seeing the woman was distressed and disoriented, I tried to get close to her and understand her situation. I think I departed from the neutrality principle that is required in interpreting, and I instinctively asked some questions on my own initiative*).

Leaving aside the research and didactic frames, what can be the possible causes of the decrease in S1 and S10’s interactional compared to their dispositional empathy levels? And, more generally, what difficulties affected the subjects’ rapport-building behaviour in interaction? The cross-analysis of role-plays and feedback reports has revealed three critical areas: partiality due to ideological bias on the topic of elective abortion; self-centred discomfort; and need for interactional control.4

S1’s unempathic attitude (as emblematically evidenced by his keeping silent and leaning back on the chair, arms crossed, throughout the long initial monolingual sequence) was motivated as follows: *Probably, I have not been empathic enough; probably, I felt more inclined to side with the psychologist.* Conversely, resistance against what was felt to be an attempt at restricting the patient’s freedom of choice was observed in four cases (S9, S11, S12 and S13). The four female subjects identified so much with the patient as to show manifest annoyance and even contrariness at the social worker’s questioning routine. S11’s behaviour is taken as a representative example of ideological partiality. Despite the reference to the didactic frame in her feedback report (*I was initially influenced by the academic context, and the classroom environment did not help me get into the role-play*), she soon forgot it was a simulation, and noted: *Seeing P was traumatized by SW’s questions, I tried to protect her.* Advocacy characterizes S11’s entire performance – on hearing the social worker’s joke about the patient quitting on her partner, she first put on an expression of disbelief, and then addressed him on her own initiative saying: “Maybe we should stop asking these questions”; in translating the social worker’s explanations about the aim of the counselling session, she distanced herself through the repeated use of hedges (“a quanto pare”, so it seems); during the social worker’s momentary absence, she went as far as expressing doubts regarding his competence; and finally, she asked him if the patient could see a

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4 Conclusive evidence in support of these findings emerged from class discussion.
medical doctor. Autonomous contributions were made also by S12 and S13, who told the patient that she should feel free not to answer, and that the counselling session was not compulsory. S9 made explicit reference to abortion in her feedback report: *I was quite rough with SW and, acting in P’s interest, I kept asking him the reasons behind his questioning. I told him that P had already decided. I felt awkward; speaking about abortion is never easy.* Subjects’ nonverbal signals of self-centred discomfort (i.e. self-touch gestures, such as hair and upper leg stroking or neck scratching, throat clearing, and sighing) were also highly indicative. S12, in particular, provided the following feedback: *When SW started asking personal questions, I saw that P was feeling anxious, and although I tried to make her feel more at ease, I was anxious myself. My voice trembled. When SW moved away, I told P that the decision was only hers. I did not want her to feel judged, as I would not want to feel judged if I were in her situation.*

By disaligning themselves, verbally and nonverbally, with the service provider, these subjects hampered the construction of rapport and mutual trust between primary speakers, with the result that their manifestations of empathy towards the patient (where present) were ultimately ineffective.

The last two cases worthy of notice are S10 and S3, with the latter deserving a discussion of its own (hence the d.c., difficult to classify, label). S10 exhibited a degree of empathy which does not reflect his high IRI scores, as he fluctuated between attentive listening and perspective-taking displays on the one hand, and unempathic moves on the other (e.g. he rendered the social worker’s joke as a serious question thus puzzling the patient, omitted the former’s rapport-building reference to his being aware of the difficult psychological state of women who are in the patient’s situation, and prosodically kept a fast speech rate throughout). Highly revealing of S10’s “control seeking” concern is this comment: *I wanted to be fully in control of the situation and manage it with self-confidence. I single-handedly decided to put an end to the monolingual sequence and started translating, without consulting P.* An even stronger preoccupation with interactional control was observed in S3’s performance. In the initial monolingual sequence, she kept butting in to offer her assistance, despite the patient’s willingness to speak directly to the social worker, and the latter’s explicit request to refrain from intervening if not strictly necessary. During the dyadic exchanges, she

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5 Though Personal Distress was not considered for the purposes of this study, S12 had an extremely high score, in line with this scale’s correlation to anxiety and self-centredness.
intrusively asked the patient why she wanted to have an abortion, and if it was for economic reasons. It may be hypothesized that her assertive conduct combined with a rather artificial construction of empathy was a self-conscious attempt at aligning with some presumed expectations of interpreter agency which she may have erroneously associated to the research frame. The following comments would seem to support this hypothesis: When SW invited me to let him speak directly with the patient in Italian, I found this to be a contradiction: ‘If they have asked for me to be present then surely I must be of help!’ So more than once I did not comply with his instruction. When I was left alone with the patient I sought to understand why she wanted to have an abortion, so as to convey the reasons to SW.

One final consideration: although the male vs. female empathic differences have not been an object of scrutiny in this study, it is nonetheless interesting to note that, overall, the performances of the three male subjects exhibited comparatively lower levels of interactional empathy. Aside from a generally lower empathic disposition of the male population, the topic of the encounter is likely to have held them back from the patient’s emotional sphere.

4. Conclusions: Looking through and looking ahead

"O Tiger-lily," said Alice, addressing herself to one that was waving gracefully about in the wind, "I wish you could talk!"
"We can talk," said the Tiger-lily: "when there's anybody worth talking to."
(Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There, 1871)

The lack of a systematic correlation between dispositional and interactional empathy, as evidenced in our data, provides food for thought on at least three counts: people with a non-empathic disposition may act empathically under specific circumstances, and vice versa; empathy is a context-dependent, interactionally achieved outcome; and empathic skills may be acquired. This concluding section attempts to provide exploratory answers to the following research

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6 It should be noted that S3 exhibits the highest PT score in the sample, while her EC score is significantly below average, which could also partially explain her intellectualized approach to the task.
questions: whether empathic responsivity can be developed in a simulated learning environment; and whether this is a desirable learning outcome in healthcare interpreter education.

While we cannot say precisely how far the simulated environment impacted on interactional conduct, the cross-analysis of the three data sets seems to indicate that its empathy-inhibiting effect was of only limited relevance, as testified by the manifest emotional involvement of most of the subjects. To reduce the impact of the didactic frame even further, a possible improvement on the research design might have entailed a semi-authentic scenario acted out by a real healthcare service provider, with primary participants speaking mutually unintelligible languages. Although this activity too is envisaged in the Course, for the purposes of the research study the scripted role-play performed by lecturers was thought to guarantee higher uniformity and comparability. In the classroom environment, empathic responsivity can indeed be developed through the combined use of a variety of pedagogical tools, with post-simulation collective assessment and discussion sessions being most fundamental to unravel the complex interplay between rapport-building and other motives for action.

So delicate a topic as elective abortion is bound to raise ideological and personal issues which should not, however, affect interpreting behaviour. Both the role-plays and the feedback reports have instead revealed, in quite a number of cases, the subjects’ tendency to violate the principle of impartiality and take sides. By drawing a clear-cut distinction between impartiality and unempathic conduct, student interpreters learn how to build rapport while keeping within the confines of professional ethics. Not only will they come to appreciate that empathy is not at odds with the principles and guidelines of correct practice, but also that empathy work implies the co-construction of rapport by all participants. Interpreters’ empathizing with one party while openly disaligning with the other for ideological reasons may seriously jeopardize the outcome of a service encounter. The most successful role-plays were the ones where subjects manifested humane concern for the patient, conveyed the social worker’s attempts at empathizing with her, and always involved the service provider back into the relational dynamics. Especially eloquent was the subjects’ behaviour in the absence of the service provider and upon his return. Just like the Tiger-lily finds Alice to be a worthwhile conversational partner, and replies: “We can talk […] when there’s anybody worth talking to”, so the patient opened up to the student interpreter. It was then up to the latter to extend the empathic opportunity to the service
provider enabling him to prove himself as someone equally worth talking to.

Coming to the last research question, developing empathic responsivity awareness through reflection on one’s own and others’ communicative behaviours can be crucial in helping healthcare student interpreters *Through the Looking-Glass*. Moving beyond one’s own reflected image and truly “seeing” the other by entering their own world is the very essence of empathy, as the father of modern empathy research wrote a few decades ago:

“to be with another in [an empathic] way means that for the time being you lay aside the views and values you hold for yourself in order to enter another world without prejudice”. (Rogers 1975: 4)

Finally, looking ahead to the future of interpreter education, once this self- and other-awareness is consolidated, a desirable evolution might entail “reaching beyond a rule-based, legalistic enterprise, toward an individualized and meaning-based practice” (Charon, 2001: 1901), as is happening in medical education.

**Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my former MA students, Claudia Corso, Attilio De Tommaso and Vanessa Vecchioli for transcribing the data and laying the groundwork for the interactional analysis. My gratitude also goes to Dr. Georgia Sinibaldi for her expert contribution to statistical analysis.

**References**


Appendix 1: Role-play script

Setting: A publicly funded clinic, where pregnancy options counselling sessions are compulsory prior to any medical course of action.

Scenario: The Italian-speaking patient (P) goes to the clinic for a voluntary termination of pregnancy, and is not aware that a preliminary counselling session is required. An English-speaking male social worker (SW) meets her for the counselling session. Knowing no Italian, she has required an Italian-English interpreter to be present. P initially thinks SW is a medical doctor, and starts speaking to him in poor English.

SW: Hi, welcome, come in, please.
P: Hi. You doctor?
SW: No, I'm not a medical doctor, but I work here at the clinic. How can I help you?
P: I pregnant. Don't want baby. They say I come here.
SW: So, you do not want to carry on with your pregnancy. This means you are here to ask for a voluntary termination, am I right?
P: I want no baby.
SW: And what about your partner, does he agree? Are you married?
P: No, not married.
SW: Do you live with the baby's father?
P: No.
SW: Did he split up with you when you got pregnant?
P: No, I left.
SW: You quit on him? (smiling) Well done! Good for you! No, seriously, why did you part?
P: Now, over.
SW: So, it's over, you say. Was it love?
P: Yes, for me.
SW: Did he not love you?
P: I don't know. He had things to me.
SW: (looking at the student interpreter) Shall we continue in Italian, so maybe she relaxes a bit?
P: Perché tutte queste domande? A che servono? Io pensavo che saresti venuta qui che un dottore mi avrebbe semplicemente fatto una visita e che poi avrei fatto qualche devo fare e me ne sarei tornata a casa [Why all these questions? What's their purpose? I thought I would come here, and that a medical doctor would simply examine me, and I would do what I have to do, and then I would go back home]

SW: Well, it is not as simple as that. I'm a social worker, and when you come to a place like this there's an initial consultation, where I have to ask you some questions, some personal questions. Now, when you don't understand ask her/him (referring to the student interpreter), okay?
P: Okay.
SW: Before you terminate a pregnancy, you have to talk with someone like me, because when you want to have abortion it's no easy decision for a woman; (in a softer and more empathetic tone of voice) so we give women the possibility to talk with someone, to let their pain out, because women who decide not to carry on with their pregnancy are desperate, aren't they? So, do not take it as if I were prying into your personal life, as if you were being interrogated. Do not close up and be on the defensive. See this as a chance to let everything out, to cry even, to let your pain out.

(Someone knocks at the door, gets into the room and asks to talk with SW. SW stands up, moves away and the two start talking. P is left alone with the student interpreter. After 5 minutes SW comes back)

SW: What I was saying was that we are trying to understand your situation, your psychological condition, to be able to then help you as best as we can, so that you may take the best decision for you, for your life. Whether you decide to interrupt or carry on with your pregnancy, we are here to help you.
P: Certo.
Appendix 2: Summary overview of data

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<th>Sex</th>
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<th>Date of RP and FR</th>
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Appendix 3: Line chart of subjects’ PT and EC scores
Crisis Translation Training
Challenges Arising from New Contexts of Translation

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Minako O’Hagan (University of Auckland, New Zealand)
Sharon O’Brien (Dublin City University, Ireland)
Patrick Cadwell (Dublin City University, Ireland)

Abstract

Focused on material design and self-reflective practices, this article discusses a Crisis Translation Training pitched at master-level translation and interpreting students, developed within the research activities carried out for the INTERACT International Crisis Translation Network. The course was designed to enable them to develop a broader skillset in support of multilingual crisis settings. The learning objectives underpinning the materials address training lacunae in enabling linguists to be involved in relief operations (Federici, 2016; O’Brien, 2016). The authors perceive the complementary skills as crucial in the development of language mediation services assisting linguists operating in such zones of liminality as are crisis settings. Multilingual communication in crisis includes professional forms of translation, signing, and interpreting, as well as forms of intercultural mediation, and social work (Drugan, 2017). Emergencies and prolonged crises have an impact on the communicative dynamics among international relief operators, local institutions, and crisis-affected populations.

The authors developed training materials to prepare students to work in crisis settings by harnessing their language competences in crisis translation as a form of community translation (Taibi and Ozolins, 2016). Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities often need support in language combinations that rarely match commercially.

1 The research for this project received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement no. 734211 – INTERACT, The International Network in Crisis Translation.

Minako O’Hagan received funds from Global Engagement Fund from University College London to contribute to developing training materials during a secondment in London in 2017. Federico M. Federici was awarded a UCL Grand Challenges grant to explore whether cognitive and emotive load would trigger different behaviour in translators when operating in crisis settings; the preliminary findings of that study enabled him to focus on risk communication as part of the material design discussed in this article.
viable combinations (Federici and Cadwell, 2018; Shackleton, 2018).
This article critically reviews non-language specific Crisis Translation Training, delivered in three iterations across two sites. Reporting on the first phases of the process of material design and enhancement, the article reflects on bow issues in delivery, emerging findings regarding the authentic needs of mostly untrained translators, and different pathways of delivery shaped the re-definition of the initial learning objectives and pushed towards a translator trainer approach that would suit a range of new contexts of language mediation.

1. Introduction

Focused on material design and pedagogical self-reflections, this article discusses insights gained from the process of developing and delivering training materials to build capacity for crisis translation consultants – a role enabling better collaboration between disaster/emergency management practices when working with translators and interpreters. Crisis translation is operationally defined here as any form of linguistic and cultural transmission of messages that enables access to information during an emergency, regardless of the medium. In emergencies, the confines between written, oral, or multimodal modes are narrower; many means of communication are needed, and multiple solutions are required. In emergencies, disasters, and crises (see discussion of differences in O’Brien and Federici, 2020), crisis managers, who coordinate resources, personnel, and activities, often need, seek, and deploy translators and interpreters without necessarily knowing what to expect and what to ask as they react to urgent needs, in time-constrained contexts.

The term ‘crisis manager’ will be used here as a convenient label to refer to coordinators and managers of resources during the response phase of a crisis. Instead, ‘disaster managers’ applies to natural-hazard related disasters and ‘emergency manager’ to large-scale localised emergencies, such a major car crash or incidents involving multiple responders at once – such as paramedics, firefighters and police.

The four co-authors designed and delivered the materials in academic settings to support the development of additional skills among students enrolled in master-level degrees in translation and interpreting. The co-authors developed the Crisis Translation Training whilst conducting research within the EU-funded
INTERACT International Crisis Translation Network project\(^2\), when they were all based in Auckland, New Zealand. While the goal of the INTERACT project is to “to enhance human skills, competences and cross-sectoral collaboration across academic, humanitarian, and industrial sectors involved in crisis translation” also through “citizen translator education”, it became evident that Crisis Translation Training could not directly provide language support for rare language combinations.

The skillset of crisis translators however can include an ability to analyse emergency plans to offer language support in multilingual crisis settings where, for multiple reasons, no professional translators or interpreters are available. The focus of pioneering research in disaster interpreting (Moser-Mercer and Bali, 2007; Moser-Mercer et al., 2014) can be expanded to the role crisis translation plays across different phases and contexts of crisis (O’Brien, 2016; O’Brien and Cadwell, 2017), with an emphasis on the fact that better multilingual communication practices can be part of emergency planning and risk reduction (Federici, 2016).

In crisis settings, communicating with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities might mean communicating with vulnerable groups. Lack of preparedness means that ad-hoc, hastily-organized solutions prevail (Federici, 2016: 8-13; O’Brien and Cadwell, 2017). Even though a shift towards enhancing capabilities by creating standardised resources is required, the unpredictability of language needs requires considering flexibility as key to any training approach. In this article we will use the term ‘Citizen Translation’ to mean translation practice conducted, sometimes voluntarily by an individual or a community of individuals who are at best partially trained (see Federici and Cadwell 2018; cf. Basalamah 2005). Compared to technical or literary translation, this translational activity often carries the assumption of achieving the common good. The term Citizen Translator, in turn, refers to a person who performs Citizen Translation. Crisis Translation Training refers to practices focusing on embedding support to multilingual communication in crisis settings by familiarising trainee translators and interpreters with operational contexts in which crisis managers operate. These include the need to supply translation or interpreting services in language

\(^2\) For details on the project, see https://sites.google.com/view/crisistranslation/home
\(^3\) See https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/734211
combinations that are not available on the market.

The article discusses the analysis of training materials and on the process of delivery. These were delivered by the tutors several times and monitored through an action research approach described in section 1.1. The tutors designed the materials collaboratively and assessed them together before first delivery. After each time, each tutor added personal notes about delivery, needs for revision, and points for review and discussion in a shared Google Doc reflective journal. Tutors delivered their sessions after consulting each other’s entries in the journal to ensure a degree of organic delivery and to reflect consistency in the learning objectives.

This article is divided into four sections: firstly, it looks at the pedagogical rationale for the study. Secondly, it discusses the didactic methods used to design and deliver the materials. Thirdly, it considers the issue of flexible delivery by focusing on the observations made by the tutors delivering the teaching in different locations. Fourthly, it discusses how the self-reflective teaching influenced the re-organization of both teaching aims and learning outcomes as part of the training process.

1. Crisis Translation: learning outcomes

1.1. Action Research: Active Learning and Learning by Teaching

Non-language specific Crisis Translation Training sessions were delivered once at the University of Auckland (UoA), New Zealand, and twice at University College London (UCL), United Kingdom between 2017 and 2018. Materials were designed, delivered, and reviewed following action research principles (Cohen et al., 2013; Lewin, 1946; Wright, 2015; Nicodemus and Swabey, 2016).

Action research is an educational approach that uses cycles (plan, act, observe, and reflect; repeat) to improve the delivery of teaching and learning activities (a task, a unit of learning, or an entire module). The cyclical approach aims to ensure future deliveries of the same activity, consider what has worked and what has not in order to produce more efficient, refined materials for future delivery of the

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4 A further iteration was ongoing at Dublin City University at the time of completing this article, but due to time constraints it could not be discussed here.
The approach is commonly used in educational settings to engage with fast-changing learning needs. Indeed, both tutors and students may be observers, and carry out regular reviews of teaching materials. This continued review of content and delivery influences teaching practices as the module progresses, with the ultimate aim of retaining continued student engagement.

The article critically reflects on team-taught lectures that were delivered in three cycles within the action research approach. The rationale for adopting this approach is two-fold. First, it is “a powerful tool for change and improvement at the local level” in terms of altering learning and teaching dynamics within the same group of learners (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2013: 344); and second, it can “change the life chances of disadvantaged groups in terms of housing, employment, prejudice, socialization and training” (ibidem). From the same perspective, the sessions drew from active learning didactics (Baldwin and Williams, 1988; Wright, 2015) that privilege learners’ full participation in the classroom. In active learning, students can also be directly involved in teaching their peers. The most established example of active learning is a seminar presentation delivered by a student open for discussion to their peers. More complex forms of active learning include sharing acquired knowledge through tasks designed by students, followed by peer discussion without the tutor’s guidance, and peer assessment.

Action research methods (plan, act, observe, reflect) were used in the cyclical evaluation of the teaching, learning, and students’ response to the activities, as well as their level of participation in active learning tasks. These included a variety of data sources: tutors’ planning meetings and reflective journals, and students’ logs (UoA-only). Action research was chosen because one of the founding principles of the method posits fact-finding and reflective analysis of problems with trainers and trainees as a tool to improve both training and intergroup relationships in society (Lewin, 1946). Operational relationships between crisis managers and professional translators and interpreters are complex. Urgency and lack of specific competences mean non-professional and ad-hoc solutions often feature in the response phase of a crisis when driven only by crisis managers. This module envisages the training of crisis translation consultants as the potential link to establish strong intergroup relationships between crisis managers, professional associations of translators and interpreters, and (where market/training does not
provide professionals in the right language combinations) citizen translators. The Crisis Translation Training could hence benefit management of multilingual crises, by supporting trainee translators to learn about the potential roles they could play in the intergroup operations that follow a disaster or that happen during a crisis. In these settings, crisis managers, emergency responders, and multiple operators collaborate in complex contexts in which urgency and efficient decision-making carry additional constraints on multilingual communication. For example, interpreters and translators may be directly affected by the crisis; depending on language combinations; children speaking rare languages are used in dangerous rescue operations; written translations may be needed to be broadcast or the target text may need to be read out loud, etc.

Our reflections then focus on learners’ skills and trainers’ continuously-reviewed materials and their delivery. Focusing on all the agents in the learning process for us was crucial to verify whether a form of Crisis Translation Training could create crisis translation consultants able to better link translation and interpreting to accommodate language needs in emergency plans for multilingual crisis settings (O’Brien et al., 2018). Action research facilitates activities in which learners take initiative and carry out research proactively. In this case, learners assess national emergency plans and information on how language needs are catered for, enter their own data on policy analysis or crisis contexts in international databases, and compare their data with those from recent research. These activities in turn provide learners with the opportunity to change teaching content, while the learning process is still ongoing. So, the learners are empowered, and become part of the community of researchers. As such, they will learn to use a range of data collection methods, such as desk-based policy analysis research, contacting crisis managers, surveying national crisis management practices, and so on. In doing so, learners develop the essential subject-specific knowledge (both translation competences and notions from a range of fields in terms of Crisis Translation Training).

This active research approach is not unique, nor is the typology of cycle that we adopted; we refer readers to the extensive bibliographies from the educational perspective in Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon (2013); Mitchell-Schuitevoerder (2014) also offers, an already dated yet, extensive overview from a translation-specific perspective. Furthermore, Nicodemus and Swabey (2016) contextualize action research as a research tool in Translation Studies.
to investigate problems in concrete situations while assuming no single, correct, and unequivocal solution. In its epistemology, action research often entails partnership or collaboration between trainers and learners, as there is a common problem on which they work together to solve. Both learners and teachers critically review their learning and teaching (Parsons and Brown, 2002), thus making the learning process explicit and raising awareness of acquired skills and knowledge.

The other focus was on crisis response. From the 1940s, wartime efforts to protect the civil population have evolved into forms of community-driven preparedness to mitigate risks for local populations. Crises need to be managed efficiently to diminish their impact on society. Initially developed as command-and-control mechanisms for civil defence, emergency plans provide efficient responses and were seen as connected with discipline and the clear chain of command of military, with distribution of responsibility by rank. However, in the last 15 years, research in disaster risk reduction suggests that collaborative approaches which also involve affected communities are likely to produce better results (see Kapucu and Garayev, 2013; Waugh and Streib, 2006). Hence, emergency plans have become forms of civil protection in which multiple agencies respond to mitigate the impact of crises (Alexander, 2002b). This shift has greatly influenced training, as responders with diverse skillsets need to collaborate in crisis response scenarios during training. Yet the role of translators and interpreters in multilingual crisis situations continue to be overlooked: ‘translation’ is not even considered in these collaborative crisis training scenarios. The collaborative paradigm of emergency planning and disaster risk reduction motivated the authors to consider ways of supporting unpredictable language needs in crisis situations, through training materials that might connect language mediator (translators, signers, interpreters) skillsets with those of crisis managers. As action research focuses on improving intergroup collaboration whilst learning, its approach to the educational setting was particularly suited for developing the skillset that students taking this module would need in authentic crisis settings.

1.2. The learning objectives and teaching principles

Our initial discussions to organize the materials focused on

a. Integrating intended learning outcomes of Crisis Translation
Training with UoA module objectives (see 2.2.1 on how the learning outcomes were aligned in the UCL module).

b. Differentiating overall intended learning outcomes from specific session objectives and whenever possible introducing essential concepts to retain after the module ("takeaways").

c. Coordinating delivery, active learning activities, and their sequential logic across individual lesson plans for UCL.

Each 3-hour lesson was designed individually then shared for group discussion. The initial face-to-face discussions were crucial for the development of complementary and cumulative sessions with a cohesive learning progression. Each hour was broken down into a series of tasks ranging from 7-to 30-minute each, with 10-minute breaks. The longer 30-minute tasks required discussion, reporting, and peer-work, often involving physical movement. For example, during group-work, diagrams/notes were created on flipcharts by students moving to other groups’ flipcharts and ranking their ideas.

In the UCL tutorials, students had to find evacuation plans for the floor of the building in which the teaching took place and report evacuation instructions using forms of chuchotage. For example, a student working in a group that went out to locate the evacuation plans would report in Mandarin Chinese, and a student from another group would interpret into English. All the students who would access the evacuation instruction in English would then translate them in writing into another language. This task would be followed by an assessment of difficulty of moving swiftly across modes, and by an assessment of what kind of information is missing in the pivoting activity. These types of tasks would then lead to discussion of note-taking techniques as well as reflections on the ethical issue when there is information loss.

The action research approach led us to "transformative reflections" (Biggs and Tang, 2007: 43). As tutors, we recorded our observations regarding the ways in which the temporal and spatial distance between planning, classroom delivery, and changing contexts of delivery altered learning and teaching. Each session’s teaching/learning activities were aligned with the takeaways; and learners were recommended preparatory and further readings. The alignment of intended learning outcomes and teaching and learning activities was unnegotiable in our learning plan to achieve the constructive alignment. For instance, we finely scrutinized the distinction between "risk communication" and "crisis
communication”, given the confusion these two different communicative strategies and priorities create in the field. By embedding an assessment of crisis communication practices as well as of priorities in risk communication in the course, we recognized the need to raise learners’ awareness of overlapping yet also distinct communication strategies, which reflect the different perspectives of the two cognate disciplines, because they have an impact on the ways in which information is delivered to crisis-affected populations and on the training that crisis managers receive. Crisis communication techniques are planned and strategized in emergency plans. The emergency plans will recommend overarching communicative strategies to give information on how to be better prepared; stimulate discussion with specific communities to become aware of hazards; and give information on health risks, presenting immediate concerns for the population. Though all emergency plans will overlap in some ways, some crisis communication will also focuses on brand reputation, government credibility, and other communicative issues irrelevant to crises in which the reader may be involved.

Different communicative objectives and different phases in which communication occur in crisis contexts require the learners to acquire flexibility. In particular, they need to be able to connect communicative practices, text types, and other factors with specific phases of a crisis, the means and modes of delivering messages, and so on. For example, a warning system regarding a natural hazard may be pre-written, pre-recorded, and pre-translated; while information on where to collect medicines, access medical support, and how to avoid contagion in an ongoing response to an evolving epidemic needs real-time translation and/or interpreting (these are also clear examples of risk communication needs).

Active learning and participatory methods were introduced to elicit pro-active, critical, and enquiry-based learning in the students. Crisis Translation Training focuses on an under-researched area in which national and international humanitarian aid sectors, operating in multilingual contexts, often struggle to engage in multidirectional dialogue with crisis-affected communities. Training translation and interpreting students to support translation activities in these types of crisis settings also requires them to identify the barriers to communication in crises. Even though cross-disciplinary literature has highlighted the issue, the linguistic complexity of multilingual crisis communication is often underestimated (e.g. Pyle, 2018). From problem-solving, via information mining, to active evaluative
participation in the learning process during the classes and in-between, the action research approach tested tutors’ didactic approaches and styles of classroom management.

Instructors’ critical reflections were collected in journal entries, such as “the first consideration to make is: could we learn from WP3 [INTERACT Work Package 3: Language simplification] instead of [thinking about] translation?” As the students were involved in small group activities, we jotted down observations (on paper or electronically). After each session, tutors would type up their own reflections ranging from 700-1500 words approximately. Each tutor would share their reflections on Google Docs. The tutors’ individual reflections were discussed in a meeting before the module in New Zealand, then remotely via the shared folder. Prior to the next cycle, each tutor looked back at their own journal reflections for their sessions, as well as other relevant points emerging from the other tutors’ revised materials. Through this revision, the tutors reorganized their lesson plans and materials to respond to their own and their peers’ observations. The reflections were distilled into three intuitive phases following the “What, So What, and Now What” framework (see Rolfe, Freshwater, and Jasper, 2001). ‘What’ refers to “reporting what happened, objectively”, entailing presentation of methods without judgement or interpretation. ‘So What’ means “interpretation. What you learned”, discussing one’s feelings, ideas, and analysis of the session. ‘Now What’ considers future revisions.

As open tutor reflections were shared as collaborative documents before and/or after the delivery of their respective sessions, the discussion was non-linear; thus forcing a continued critical engagement with gaps and issues in previous experiences and entailing a time distance that furthered self and peer criticism in favour of sharper and more efficient training solutions. To maintain this approach, tutors added new thoughts in relation to the given session without using a pre-determined format.

2. Flexibility of deployment: Cycles of teaching

2.1. University of Auckland (UoA) cycle

This section describes the Crisis Translation Training at UoA – the first action research cycle in 2017. We discuss the course settings, the design, and the delivery mode together with relevant local
background information. Then, we briefly analyse the pedagogical approach we adopted.

Regarding New Zealand as a site for Crisis Translation Training, it is important to note that the country, with a population of less than 5 million, is home to a diverse range of immigrants and is known for seismic activity. The major damage caused by the 2010–2011 Canterbury and 2016 Kaikoura earthquakes has led to an increasing awareness among policy makers for the need to implement disaster management approaches which embrace the needs of CALD communities (Wylie, 2012; Zorn et al., 2016). The training will therefore be of increasing importance for students considering working in New Zealand. As an additional background, translator training at a tertiary level in New Zealand is relatively limited with just a few institutions offering full postgraduate degree programmes. There has so far been no specialised translator training focused on crisis translation. At the time of writing the whole country was still reeling from the terrorist attack on mosques in Christchurch, highlighting the unpredictable nature of crisis translation contexts, which now include terrorism as well as disasters triggered by natural hazards.

The Crisis Translation Training was delivered as part of the existing semester-long Community Interpreting and Contextual Studies course which is offered to students pursuing either the MA or the Postgraduate Diploma in Translation Studies at the School of Cultures, Languages and Linguistics at UoA. Although not by design, the course provided a logical home for our pilot content within the broad remit of community translation and interpreting. Of the twelve face-to-face 3-hour weekly sessions, the training took place in the first four classes with expected 17-hour independent study per week. These sessions were followed by medical terminology and community interpreting classes.

Of nine students who registered for the course there were native speakers of Chinese, Malay, English, and Japanese. Six students had prior and ongoing translating or interpreting experiences. The students were at varying stages of completing their respective postgraduate degrees with six out of nine students having taken a translation theory course. The profiles of the students were therefore heterogeneous in terms of their practical experiences and background knowledge in translation studies.
2.1.1. Course Aims and Content

The CTT component of the module aimed to address:

(i) the role of community translators in emergency settings relating to disaster management, and
(ii) to raise students’ awareness of the essential skills and knowledge enabling them to operate effectively and ethically under constrained circumstances typical of crisis communication.

In terms of intended learning outcomes, the students were expected to:

1. Become aware of the critical role played by community translation in crisis communication;
2. Minimise the risk of miscommunication under the various constraints of crisis communication;
3. Apply problem-solving skills, including the use of technology, to respond to time-critical translation demands; and
4. Be able to make ethical decisions in acting as a translator in crisis communication.

These outcomes were assessed through an authentic project in collaboration with the New Zealand Red Cross (NZRC), together with the weekly submission of students’ reflective diaries. Students made use of a simple template that was made available on Canvas, the Virtual Learning Environment used by the University of Auckland. In 2017, the NZRC facilitated the community translation of an Earthquake Preparedness Guide published by the Wellington Region Disaster Management Office (WREMO; see Shackleton, 2018). Having been introduced to the NZRC project, the Crisis Translation Training students were required to prepare a briefing document and a set of guidelines for CALD communities to translate the earthquake guide with a 10-minute hypothetical “pitch” to promote the project among community translators. Students gave presentations of their briefing documents to the NZRC representative in charge of the community translation project – who, in turn had been instructed by WREMO risk reduction and crisis managers on the specific needs for this translation. The project is a quintessential example of crisis communication that focuses on
building better prepared multilingual societies as a way of mitigating risks and supporting WREMO crisis managers, in case any of the natural hazards were to trigger one of their emergency plans. The NZRC representative shared her experience of working with many different stakeholders in the collaborative project which was aimed at increasing general preparedness and on mitigating potential impact of risks to the CALD communities.

In accordance with the learning objectives we developed the content based on the following weekly topics:

- Week 1: Introduction to Community Translation - Crisis Translation
- Week 2: Communicating in a Crisis: Organizing Translation and Interpreting
- Week 3: Real-World Constraints on Crisis Translation: The Case of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake
- Week 4: Crisis Translation: Exploring technology applications.

Our key interest was to introduce the specialised and emerging topic of crisis translation, incorporating insights derived from crisis communication and crisis management research (e.g. Schwarz, Seeger, and Auer, 2016), as well as issues informed by community translation research (e.g. Taibi and Ozolins 2016). In particular, the relevance for the topic to local contexts and the authentic assessments were aimed to increase student engagement. The students were given readings before and after each session (for an illustrative sample, see Appendix 1).

The sessions took place in a computer lab with multiple computer terminals on shared island desks and large TV screens positioned around the room connected to the instructor’s terminal to enable students to collaborate and access resources as individuals and in small groups as the lessons progressed. Informed by the needs of a participatory approach, we were equipped with flipcharts, coloured pens, and flexible classroom configurations to allow the students to break into discussion groups. Interactivity through physical movement (standing up, moving around to work on different flipcharts, etc.) formed part of the participatory approach as well as the active learning philosophy. As active learning is characterised as involving “students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing” (Bonwell and Eison, 1991, p. 2) it encourages
students to develop higher order thinking such as analysis and synthesis as a way of externalising cognitive processes. Active learning also seeks to provide students with the opportunity to explore their own attitudes and values through learning activities explicitly and making it part of their learning process (Matsushita, 2018). We wanted the students to be able to extend their pre-existing translation constructs to crisis translation as a specific and somewhat different instantiation of translation, connecting translation to social and, specifically, to disaster contexts.

For instance, in Week 3, one of the tasks asks learners to select essential ways to support language needs of CALD communities. Once the learners identify ways of accommodating language needs, they need to reduce them to a list of essentials to be included in emergency plans. As groups, they discuss concepts of multilingual communication in order of priority. Each group writes their group’s suggestions on a flip chart sheet with a black marker; they then hang the sheet on the wall and present their suggestions to the other groups. After the presentation every group goes around the room to read the other groups’ priorities adding additional suggestions in a different colour; and, finally they grade the most significant suggestions made by their colleagues to consolidate initial suggestions in shared, revised, and agreed recommendations (this is an example of a ‘carousel activity’).

This participatory form of peer-assessment familiarises the learners with collaborative practices in determining priorities often used in multi-stakeholder environments. It enables them to reflect actively on their knowledge of translation and interpreting concepts and on the ways in which the role of language mediators in multilingual crisis contexts does/does not reflect them, and how language mediation knowledge could be better embedded in current crisis and risk communication practices.

We designed the course to appeal to students’ broader interest in social issues and current affairs both from local and global perspectives, and to encourage participation through peer-based learning activities. The selection of learning activities was of paramount importance and, in our case, these took mainly the form of small-group discussions as well as individual tasks, e.g. “What language provision should be considered in an emergency plan for the city of Auckland/London?”. The use of short bursts of discussion, summary presentations and other small-group tasks aided by flip charts as instruments was intended to facilitate the students’
internalisation and externalisation of the key concepts introduced by the tutor and through prior readings. The next section provides an analysis of tutor reflections as the main source of data in relation to the training needs and provides directions for future iterations.

2.1.2. Data Analysis

When we revisited our collective reflective records of experience in designing and delivering the course content, common patterns emerged. The What, So What and Now What framework structured the systematic analyses of our reflections.

What

Tutors were concerned about how to retrofit new content on crisis translation into the pre-existing course without negatively affecting its flow. They recognised their own desire to introduce as much content as possible into a limited space while having to skip over some planned tasks. The reflections indicated the significant time spent on devising learning activities to match the learning objectives, ranging from the content of discussions to role plays. There were also concerns about the extent to which the students would engage in the activities. In theory, participatory methods presume that each learner report to the whole class, discuss, or write down information for the group in each task. In reality, some learners preferred to be involved in pair activities, but were less participative in group or class activities; some engaged very enthusiastically driving the discussion for the group, but one or two learners seemed less at ease with the participatory methods. Overall, as the weeks went by nearly everyone became comfortable with the participatory style. Content was designed with a particular interaction in mind, and when that interaction did not take place, tutors would have had to come up with an ad-hoc strategy.

So What

Three tutors felt that the students were responsive to the prepared learning activities, and that the key goals of each session were largely met. This was later confirmed in the students’ reflective diaries and course evaluations, where they stated that the content was relevant and interesting. As well as the clear local relevance of the topic in relation to the recent major earthquakes experienced in New Zealand, the students’ comments in their end-of-module
questionnaire suggested that having different tutors from different countries teaching similar classes piqued their curiosity, positively contributing to their learning. While the use of participatory methods was new to most students, they found it refreshing and they also indicated a certain degree of apprehension. Similarly, because of the on-the-spot nature of the participatory method, two tutors expressed unease, for example, at how to properly integrate the students’ responses to the given tasks back into the lesson. This cannot be fully pre-planned due to the element of unpredictability of the interaction with the students, as reported in active learning literature (e.g. Lee 2015).

One incident which was not anticipated was in reference to a student who became emotional during class when recalling her experience of a major earthquake. The student recovered without requiring additional support, but it was something we discussed among ourselves for future revision. In following cycles, we added links for mental and well-being support in the module materials, and we have become even more explicit about the fact that the discussion may bring up traumatic experiences. At UCL, there was also some indication that the module was chosen by trainee translators and interpreters who already have experienced a crisis (often after a disaster triggered by a natural hazard).

Now What

A range of issues emerged from our reflections regarding the content, the target audience and the delivery. In relation to the content there was a concern raised about over-simplification of definitions, such as crisis, emergency, and disaster). The differences are not only semantic but correspond to different ways of financing responses and budgeting actions of preparedness. Over-teaching also emerged, such as the focusing on nuanced differences in communicative practices, while the whole question of translation and interpreting provision itself is currently given little consideration in emergency plans.

Although the student reception (seen in their reflective diaries and the learning outcomes as assessed through their project) was overwhelmingly positive, the tutors mentioned the challenge in striking the right balance between theory and practice. Specificity of content tied to a particular teaching site was another issue raised (e.g. Auckland content may not be relevant in London, and vice-versa). But, above all, the most pertinent question discussed among us
related to the target audience.

The action research approach allowed us to learn from the first cycle and ensure that trainee translators and interpreters were to be equipped with an understanding of the complex operational context of multilingual crisis settings and of the translation and interpreting needs corresponding to different phases of a crisis. Their integrated (translation and interpreting plus crisis/risk communication) competences would in turn become more effective in “facilitator roles”, by supporting crisis managers to better work with translators and interpreters. Furthermore, we began considering the possibility of involving people trained though the Crisis Translation Training to deliver the INTERACT Citizen Translator Training, which focuses on developing human resources in language combinations unavailable in the local market (see full discussion in section 4).

Another key issue concerned the difference in the mode of training delivery based on face-to-face active learning and participatory training as opposed to online, as specified in the INTERACT training plans, stipulated in the EU-funding application. The kinetic dimension of the group reporting – with the group speaker presenting from a variety of positions in the classroom, and standing or sitting – were not reproducible in the webinars that integrated the participatory lectures at the course delivered UCL (see discussion in 2.2). Grading activities and relay activities included moving around within the room, which was more difficult in an online environment because of the fixed camera limitations to “carousel” activities of peer assessment and their role in supporting discussions among the students.

The next section reflects on the second cycle of delivery at University College London (UCL), prior to concluding with a section bringing together reflections from all the cycles.

2.2. University College London cycles

In the UK hazardscape, flooding and storms are the most likely natural threat to people and property. However, multilingual crisis settings abound, with London as an exposed superdiverse megacity. For example, the 2017 Grenfell Tower Fire killed 72 people, forcing evacuation and the ongoing (as of 2019) resettlement of residents who needed information in 18 languages other than English. Evidence suggests that available data on multilingualism are not used in emergencies, and emergency plans only partially address the needs
of the superdiverse society (O’Brien et al., 2018). The tragic events of the Grenfell Tower increased the learners’ awareness for the relevance of the Crisis Translation Training module at UCL.

No other UK programme besides UCL’s 15-credit course entitled Crisis Translation focuses on training for crisis contexts, at the time of writing.5 Offered to postgraduate students pursuing master’s degrees at the Centre for Translation Studies, the course was designed as an instance of UCL Connected Curriculum in which students are actively involved in ongoing research as part of their own learning. In this setting, the module was solely focused on crisis translation with a syllabus designed for integrating and expanding the training materials to be delivered by the INTERACT researchers. Compared to the UoA cycle, the UCL module was composed of six 3-hour active learning lectures, four 2-hour webinars, and 4 tutorials totalling 10 hours. The 36-hour module was assessed through two assignments: an analysis of a multilingual crisis setting with focus on deployment of translation and interpreting resources and personnel, and initially a “technological test” of the students’ ability to mine for information digitally at speed whilst using server-based data collection systems. This assignment was then revised (see discussion in 2.2.2). At the time of writing, the module has been delivered to twenty students (12 in the first cycle, 8 in the second). Students attending the module were being trained in other modules of their master degree to become professional translators or interpreters into Arabic, Cantonese, Chinese, English, French, German, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian, Portuguese, Spanish, Swedish, and Welsh.

2.2.1. Course aims and content

Approved as a full module in January 2017, the intended learning outcomes of the Crisis Translation Training at UCL predated (and are somewhat less explicit than) those at UoA, which were developed after the INTERACT project had started. The intended learning outcomes of the module expected students:

5 The Crisis Translation Training content was also leveraged for a module on Crisis Translation at Dublin City University, in Spring Semester 2019. The different target audience, students enrolled on MA in Refugee Integration, most of whom had no background in translation, imposed some customisation of the content towards refugee and humanitarian crises.
1. To gain an understanding of the cognitive and emotional challenges of operating in crisis communication.
2. To gain an understanding of the linguistic and technical issues of communicating in contexts and phases of crises.
3. To operate supported by a range of technologies.
4. To become able to support intercultural communication in crisis settings.

The team-taught sessions were delivered in a seminar room with chairs and tables forming a U; a large TV screen for projection, a portable flipchart, and colour markers completed the setup. Students were asked to bring one laptop per group to complete information mining tasks. Learners could move around, but room sizes reduced the levels of kinaesthetic interactivity – e.g. group spokespeople reported on their group activities while sitting down. Despite this overall change to the kinaesthetic and dynamic learning (e.g. no “carousel activity”, no moving around, etc.), the students’ participation levels were high.

Working in small groups, each student contributed to the discussion, they had to write down notes, work on diagrams, translate, provide on-the-spot unplanned interpretations of the discussion to the classroom, and produce schematic representations on flip charts. In order to prevent cultural clashes dictated by different classroom dynamics and the educational expectations in the international composition of the group, opportunities for pair, group, and class discussions were made available to put all learners at ease. From the outset we explained that the instructors were themselves “learners” in the process of researching translation in crisis settings, thus describing it as learning within a community of researchers.

UCL works on the principle of an extensive, inclusive, and innovative curriculum in its approaches to blended learning. Tutors are encouraged to record live lectures and offer webinars. The Crisis Translation Training standalone module format allowed us to test how the introduction of webinars and remote teaching could work in combination with active learning and participatory approaches. The training itself was delivered in a variety of forms in terms of length/number of credits, as a standalone module, or a set of lessons within another module. At their inception, in addition to these different institutional settings the sessions tested various modes of delivery. The training was intended to be standalone, and it is being
assessed for inclusion in professional development plans by national associations of translators and interpreters (and it will be proposed for inclusion in training packages for crisis managers expected to work with professional translators and interpreters). At UCL, the Crisis Translation Training materials were delivered as a full module, which allowed us to ascertain their viability of preparing translators, or crisis translation consultants, via remote training when infrastructural, time, or resource issues impede tutors to deliver training in situ.

2.2.2. Data Analysis

Once again, tutors followed exactly the same approach making observations of their teaching, adopting the note taking system discussed in section 2.1 and following the same What, So what, and Now What procedure. The main difference was that following the participatory lectures there was no opportunity for debriefing in situ immediately after the sections as a group, because after each iteration at UCL, the tutors returned to their institutions. As before, tutors carried out their discussions on Google Docs. The students’ answers to the end-of-year questionnaire became the point of feedback for both cycles of delivery of the module.

What

Firstly, some UCL students had experienced crisis situations too. Secondly, as the second and third cycle progressed, we all concurred that the module content should prepare trainees to support citizen translators, rather than to become translators who operate in crisis settings. Thirdly, the students’ interest in personal experiences of needs and operational activity in crisis settings prompted us to reflect that more resources based on authentic experiences in translating and interpreting are needed. Those provided by the tutors, or those emerging from an ongoing survey collecting data from translators working in crises are a starting point; more examples would better reflect the complexity and diversity of crisis settings. Text types include travel documents, information on natural hazards, humanitarian response project updates, news reports, health emergency messages and training documents in long-lasting crises.6

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6 For the Great Easter Earthquake in Japan, as a disaster triggered by a natural hazard, see examples discussed in Cadwell 2015. For long-lasting crises, see examples of text
So what

As the training is offered as an optional module, the relevance of discussing disasters and crises was a lesser concern as the subject area interested the students enough *a priori* for them to elect to take the module. We revised the materials developed for the first cycle in UoA and delivered these twice, switching to an entirely student-led active learning, significantly reducing frontal-lecture content. The discussion regarding data available on the multilingual population of the UK led to the development of a focused discussion of “training needs for crisis managers”. On the one hand, the very diverse composition of the cohort engendered discussion of disaster settings in different national contexts and the challenge to accommodate language needs of the local population. On the other hand, as the discussions revolved around defining concepts and classifying knowledge in relation to possible use in real-life settings. Citing from the end-of-year questionnaire, some learners perceived the active learning approaches as providing content that was based on “common sense” – probably meaning that because they were sharing peer knowledge and/or direct experience, their observations were driven by common sense only.

The sessions were planned to engage with the complex materials accessible. The students learned about emergency plans, the differences between disaster phases, and those between crisis and risk communication. They were also introduced to varieties of means of communication, of modes of communication, of complex language requirements, and to the use of translation technologies. They also learned how different crisis phases call for different approaches. However, UCL students did not find it easy to engage with the open and analytic structure of the first cycle of module.

The attempted “constructive” alignment (Briggs and Tang 2007: 249) between our intended learning outcomes, our teaching-learning adjustments, and the assessment tasks were criticised by the students in the institutional, end-of-module evaluations as “disjointed” and as structurally unclear. In the second UCL cycle, learners did not mention structure in their end-of-module evaluations and three out of eight students decided to write their dissertation (one third of their overall degree credits) on crisis translation. Although the sample was small and feedback only indicative, the feedback for the second cycle confirmed our hypothesis that logistic issues were responsible for the

Types discussed in Al Shehri 2020.
UCL criticism, such as the erratic timetabling that was outside the tutors’ control and room allocations - and not our planning. This problem however highlights the significance of the learning space in the active learning approach and in its focus on kinaesthetic activities.

Now What
After the two UCL cycles, it became clear that training materials for translators operating in crisis that INTERACT intended to produce as part of its goal to support “citizen translator education” have two distinctively diverse audiences, as well as intended outcomes that are complementary:

1) resources to support training of citizen translators in rare language combinations;
2) resources consolidating the ability to link up training of citizen translators with the needs of crisis managers are dependent on the openness, experience, and decision making of crisis managers in charge of each individual event.

The two typologies of training to enhance multilingual communication in crises, from the point of view of translator training, are complementary and equally needed in rare or low-resource language combinations. Open access Citizen Translation training materials (e.g. Federici and Cadwell, 2018) have to be integrated by Crisis Translation Training that enable trainee translators and interpreters to support competence and knowledge of crisis managers when the latter need to support efficient communication in crises.

The Crisis Translation Training is a risk reduction tool to increase the resilience of multilingual societies or the effectiveness of entities operating in international, multilingual settings. Whereas, the Citizen Translation training is an additional response tool to support urgent needs in language combinations that are not fully supported by local translation and interpreter professionals and by the offer on the local market.

As teachers-observers in the action research classrooms, our own perceptions of dealing with multilingual crisis settings were brought to the fore by the students. Our own experiences of accessing translated information or of contributing to translation projects in crisis settings were perceived by the students as useful to understand
at a human level how translators and interpreters perceive the emotional and cognitive challenges of operating in a crisis. This consideration reinforced our intuition that research into crisis translators’ own accounts of the operational challenges needs to inform revisions of the Crisis Translation Training described here.

Our takeaways from the active learning lectures were numerous. Obviously, the possibility of delivering the Crisis Translation Training as a standalone module allowed further explicit discussion of the learners’ potential role as recruiters, assessors, or trainers of citizen translators, when serving as crisis translation consultants. Our reflective journals remained open to debate and evaluation to all four co-authors for all the cycles, while the tutors’ journals kept the reflective trajectory as intended in our action research approach. The different contexts and changes to the cycles made us realise that we had to make a balance. We needed detailed lesson plans, focusing on the duration and order of tasks, to achieve some fair and consistent delivery of the intended learning outcomes. We also needed the space to introduce specific examples of crises (preferably recent) that were geographically meaningful in terms of hazard to notice changes in practices for multilingual communication. As a result, we provided examples of texts referring to natural hazards warnings, news reports, health communication, or weather forecast warnings from a range of local disasters involving multilingual communities. Examples included the 2010 Christchurch and 2011 Canterbury earthquake; the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire in London; the 2018 Ophelia storm in Ireland, the 2011 Great Eastern Japan Earthquake. International events involving multilingual personnel and multilingual crisis-affected communities were also included, such as the 2014 Ebola epidemic and the 2014-ongoing Yemen crisis. The balance between fixed task order and flexible examples for the collaborative sessions were very necessary to retain coherence in the delivery without restraining the materials from including locally meaningful examples of crisis translation situations and of activities in training translators.

The webinars at UCL enabled learners to reflect on their knowledge of the fundamental principles of translation, especially once the assessment tasks were better aligned in the second cycle. The assignment now became the creation of a 3-minute video presentation in which the student provides voice-over instructions to share their knowledge on crucial notions of translation to a non-expert, novice audience. In particular, the tasks provided evidence of
the students’ ability to step up as consultants if involved in supporting responders. UCL’s end-of-course questionnaires are institutionally administered before the assignments are completed and marked, hence no data on learners’ reflections on the assignment are available for discussion. This is a known limitation, which the tutors had tried to bypass by preparing both pre and end-of-module informal questionnaires. However, the UCL learners did not engage with these in viable numbers (we had only 2/12 complete pre-module questionnaires for the first cycle and 2/8 for the second cycle).

Nevertheless, constructive feedback emerged through the learners’ meetings with their Personal Tutors (who agreed for positive feedback to be passed on to module tutors); at the Staff-Student Committee meeting, during discussions in the sessions, and via email. The learners explicitly mentioned how the CTT had altered their perception of the role of translation in multilingual societies, and the assessment tasks represented a welcome diversification compared to other modes of assessments in their degree programme.

### 3. Tutors’ reflections

The action research cycles have enhanced the students’ abilities to aid actions in support of language needs in crisis settings. However, neither the means of providing such support, nor the role of Crisis Translation Training learners developed as we had anticipated, but rather progressed in the cycles of organic revision and enhancement. This section explains how the materials developed into useful tools to support multilingual crisis communication.

An overarching epistemological question emerged which regards the link between crisis translation and other types of translation. The first cycle at UoA took place by adding crisis translation as a type of community translation within the course focused on community interpreting and translation. The UCL cycles catered for trainee translators and public service interpreters. As learners had limited familiarity with community translation, crisis translation and citizen translation there was no clash with existing knowledge.

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7 Across the 2 cycles: 6 learners via email correspondences, 8 learners in conversation at the end of sessions, or in meetings during the lecturer’s Feedback and Advice Hour.
Defining the target audience for the Crisis Translation Training became central to all the revisions of the syllabus. The action research cycles convinced the authors that the training should target professional or trainee translators (and interpreters, but with additional materials). Even at their relatively early stage of specialised translator training, all learners in the three cycles showed that prior knowledge in approaching the various aspects of translation would influence their decision-making regarding means, translation modes, and personnel training in crisis situations.

The first cycle at UoA showed that there are potential interferences between the learners’ strict application of the professional rules for the commercial sector, which they are acquiring concurrently to taking the Crisis Translation Training, to the specific circumstances of working with (often non-commercial) rare language combinations in crisis settings. For instance, their UoA assignments asked them to develop a translation brief and specific guidelines for CALD community translators, and logically the learners directed CALD translators to the professional codes of ethics and conduct of the New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters.

Despite the discussions during class sessions highlighting the different expectations between professional and CALD community translators it proved difficult for many of the students not to impose very similar standards on the latter as if they were on par with the former. For example, the professional codes of ethics and conduct advises translators or interpreters not to take on a job which is deemed outside their expertise. Yet, this is a moot point with CALD community translation projects which by definition come under areas in which the community translators are not specifically trained, given the general lack of professional translator training in the needed language combinations. Quality is to be achieved, but individual citizen translators may not have the skillset to assess quality. Yet, successful community translation projects will deliver a translation that is accepted and well-used by the given community due to the consensual aspect and also due to the trust and the ownership of the translation, which have been developed from the ground up rather than imposed upon them. The authors embraced the action research finding that the liminal zone of operation in which this Crisis Translation Training is needed depends on translation and interpreting graduates using competences acquired in their master-level studies to support responders to match their
language needs.

From the first cycle, we had learnt that there is a difficulty for trainees to remember that their own language awareness is not necessarily shared and that this set of meta-skills is as relevant if not more so than their immediate support with a particular language combination. The UoA assignment enabled learners to act as project managers, while the UCL settings and assignments enabled learners to act as language consultants. The collaboratively-designed materials could cater for both roles.

3.3. Theory versus practice

The tutors’ reflections showed concern for the course content not having sufficient theoretical bases, given that the INTERACT goal is research-informed training. Providing students with practical training in disaster settings, while at the same time ensuring they are versed in key theoretical disaster risk reduction notions, was a challenge. As implicit in one of the tutors’ reflections, one of the areas which provides scope for theoretical applications may be ethics. Because of the largely unpredictable nature of disaster settings, one has to have a solid theoretical understanding of ethics to have cognitive readiness when a disaster strikes. In this way the work on crisis translation could feed into the theoretical basis of ethics in translation and interpreting, incorporating the increasingly complex settings surrounding ethics – a common pursuit of UoA and UCL professional translation degrees (respectively NAATTI-endorsed and FIT associate member). In both institutions, ethics takes a central position in role-plays and in case-study analysis of crisis settings (e.g. Drugan and Megone, 2011).

3.4. Use of participatory methods

We reflected on the use of participatory methods and its pedagogical merit in relation to different learning styles and delivery modes. We found small group-based discussions and activities conducive to high student engagement, ideally aiding effective internalisation and externalisation of the cognitive processing of new information. Lee (2015) highlights the advantage of active learning in engaging students who are more accustomed to traditional transmissionist teaching approaches. We also found the active learning approach useful in enforcing more distributed participation by the students.
regardless of the learners’ academic background and previous studies. However, we sometimes needed to intervene directly in grouping the learners to encourage equal participation and engagement across groups of mixed-backgrounds, who tended to reorganize themselves according to region, if not country of origin. In the anonymous end-of-module questionnaire for the UoA cycle, five out of the nine learners commented on the value of learning from peers and found it highly effective and rewarding. One wrote in the reflective journal: “The input from fellow students helped me understand the topic from different angles which was useful”.

For the UCL second cycle, six out of eight learners responded to the questionnaire, four of whom valued highly the interaction with peers in the classes. One learner observed that: “What I found most interesting in terms of theory was the introduction to emergency planning and humanitarian crisis as an academic field. I enjoyed how we were encouraged to view translation as an essential part of this and felt empowered to be able to actually take what I’ve learnt inside the classroom and apply it to real world scenarios.” Another learner commented on the fact that the “first three interactive lectures are relatively too demanding compared to the webinars and tutorials”. This comment highlights the significance of comparing demanding participatory methods with other teaching modes, and the challenges that tutors will face, if they were to deliver this training remotely to support translation in crisis settings.

4. Conclusions

The three cycles of Crisis Translation Training confirmed our two-fold hypothesis. Firstly, training of translation and interpreting graduates as crisis translation consultants to support crisis managers is conceptually justified in relation to known lacunae in current policies (O’Brien et al., 2018). Secondly, we must refine our understanding of training needs of those actually providing language support in crises.

The Crisis Translation Training materials discussed here will be revised to reflect data collection of challenges experienced by translators operating in authentic crisis settings. Although no student voiced any concern regarding possible traumas, it may be necessary to collect some background information in a tactful, confidential, and ethical manner prior to running such modules. The training itself
does not aim to enhance the students’ resilience to trauma, and this area might need further attention. Future revisions will be grounded on the findings from an ongoing INTERACT survey administered to commissioners of translation in crisis settings and to crisis translators (see a region-specific preliminary analysis in Al-Shehari 2020). Once the survey closes in 2020, the training materials will embed further authentic training needs of translators operating in crisis settings. In those regions in which professional translators and interpreters in language combinations needed in crises are not immediately available, the crisis translation consultants will seek to uphold deontological and ethical values connected with professional translation and interpreting whilst liaising with crisis managers who may only have access to non-professional and non-trained bilinguals. In supporting crisis managers, the roles of crisis translation consultants will be multiple, from engaging the national associations of professional translators and interpreters to delivering the citizen translation training (discussed in Federici and Cadwell 2018). Translation and interpreting graduates may not necessarily have the needed language combinations in a multilingual crisis but can be trained to acquire extra skills to deal with specific challenges arising from crisis translation, such as understanding crisis communication and risk communication practices, or understanding expectations set out in local language policies to support language needs.

Also, reflections on global versus local content emerged as a shared concern among the four tutors. They indicate that in future, local trainers can incorporate training content as required by the locale, in addition to the common core training material as in the INTERACT training module which has to be designed for global, non-language specific use. The action research methodology will allow us to continue to test the materials in the next cycles planned in the UK, Ireland, and New Zealand.

The most significant observations that emerged pertain to re-orientation of the training. The materials, as developed in a postgraduate programme, have the privileged position of referring to a body of knowledge that the students have, or at least are in the process of attaining. The metalanguage is shared; and the conceptualizations from the debates in the discipline (House, 2017) are becoming part of their new identities as proto-professionals. These luxuries, however, are not available in most crises. Low-resourced, rare, and endangered languages are the most vulnerable in crisis settings for accessing information, because they seldomly have
professional practitioners (Taibi 2017; Taibi and Ozolins, 2016). The Crisis Translation Training fills this gap by linking up translation and interpreting expertise with crisis managers’ needs for practical, yet robust solutions to accommodate language needs that are not available in the commercial market, nor are supported in professional or academic training at the time of a crisis erupting. The next steps will entail a focus on capacity building by establishing collaborations involving professional translators and interpreters in crisis management training.

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Appendix 1 – Reading Materials

Participatory Lecture 1


Participatory Lecture 2


Participatory Lecture 3


**Participatory Lecture 4**


Collaborative Work in Translation Education: A case of Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Abstract

Ever since translation studies became an independent academic discipline, theoretical approaches in this field have progressed rapidly. The same can be said for translation teaching methods. However, in some countries the traditional “hand-me-down” approach to teaching activities still prevails, the one in which translation educators and trainers and student translators are on the opposite sides. The academic community has been urged to rethink its approaches to translation education and scholars have emphasized that translator educators and curricula developers need to attempt to break these traditional roles and work on new and innovative pedagogical approaches to translation (Kiraly 2000a, 2000b; Baer and Koby 2003; Durban et al., 2003; Calvo, 2011; Kelly, 2014).

In a financially under-resourced academic environment of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) (Jabić, 2016), modern language faculties and translation educators need to address these approaches bearing in mind the limitations they face on a regular basis, which mainly stem from the lack of funds as well as from the absence of translation education institutions in the country (Hadžiahmetović and Pavlović, 2016). Along with all the key players such as translation agencies and other prospective employers, they need to design and practice such activities that would ‘equip’ prospective graduates to successfully face the challenges of their future tasks.

The article examines the practical application of in-class collaborative translation activities at an institution of higher education in BiH, partially following Kiraly’s model of introducing authentic experiential work in translation education (2005, 2012, 2013) by means of collaborative educational experience. It explores the main features of collaborative vs. individual translation, highlighting translation problems and solutions as well as the quality of such translation. The objective is to examine the usability of collaborative work in the current institutional practices and its further upgrade and incorporation in translation classrooms. Without any intention to generalize the results of the study, this article shows how small-scale research may be utilized to provide insights into specific elements of translation pedagogical practices within this particular institution and to promote similar research among translation scholars in BiH.

Key words: collaborative work, translation education, individual translation, translation educators
1. Introduction

Although not new, the term collaboration has been increasingly fashionable in translation research in recent years. The rapid development of the Internet introduced translation to a new scenario characterized by “the speed of communications and the complexity of having a higher number of agents interacting with each other” (Costales, 2016: 1). It is precisely this characteristic of multiple participants in translation that provides a number of approaches to research that cover a string of possible topics for discussion, from literature regarding the translation process to translation technology and education.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), as an under-resourced academic environment, traditionally lacks translation education institutions. That is why modern language faculties are expected to take an active role in educating prospective translators and make sure that their graduates are prepared for their future professional challenges. Bearing in mind the lack of resources, translation educators and scholars in this country need to invest their efforts in devising activities that would change the often-used teacher-centered approach and help their prospective graduates to develop positive attitudes to translation education tasks.

Over the last few years, small-scale research studies have been conducted on at the translation courses taught at the English Language Department, Tuzla University. The main aim of such studies has been to define the strengths and weaknesses of the programs offered, including course and syllabus design as well as individual, task-oriented activities (Pavlović, 2013; Hadžiahmetović Jurida and Pavlović, 2016; Pavlović, Hanić, and Hadžiahmetović Jurida, 2018). These research activities are seen as the tool that might help change the rooted hand-me-down paradigm within this institutional learning environment in which translation educators are seen as central figures in the classroom. The paper reports on a part of a larger research study conducted with the aim of examining collaborative translation activities in translation classroom.

2. Literature review

As Alfer (2017: 275) states, in recent years collaboration has emerged as a “buzzword in translation circles”. With the advent of new technologies and translation mediated through the web, collaborative translation processes nowadays mean online collaborative practices such as crowdsourcing, fansubbing, gaming, software localization, thus changing the world of translation. Jiménez-Crespo (2017: 5) emphasizes that
scholars from different perspectives have started to realize the need for increased theoretical and practical analysis of group processes in all types of translation activities.

2.1 Collaboration in translation - past practices

Collaboration in translation involves as Alfer (2017: 276) says “a myriad of both human and textual stakeholders in the translation process” and is “anything but a recent, let alone new phenomenon.” References to collaboration in translation are certainly not a new thing. Earlier instances of collaborative translation were primarily used in literature to explain the emergence and translation of religious texts, literary works of art, and scientific texts involving Greek, Latin, Arabic, and some other languages. Collaborative effort in both, writing as well as translating, is referred to through the prism of authorship, a significant if not the key feature in discussions of this concept (Bistué, 2017: 37-38). According to Jansen and Wegener (2013: 4), literary criticism has long reflected on the notion that literary creation is by no means a solitary activity, but rather co-operative if not actually collaborative. In line with these instances come the common models of collaboration in translation that can be divided into three general types: collaboration between a translator and the author; collaboration between the author and a group of translators, each working in a different language; and collaboration between two or more translators working on the same text, translating into the same language (Zielinska-Elliott and Kaminka, 2017: 169).

Definitions of the labour of translation currently include many activities that have not been considered to be translation in the traditional sense of the term, to the extent that in current usage, “collaborative risks become a synonym for notions such as social, transaction, production, or even relation itself” (Cordingley and Frigau Manning, 2017: 4), as they affect not only the concept of authorship but also the multiple parties in the social network such as the writer, the translator, and the publishing institution. These new activities may affect the roles of prospective translators in the translation market to the extent where they no longer would be required to serve as intermediaries between source text/culture and target text/culture but to be what Cordingley and Frigau Manning (2017: 4) call “an active node in an evolving and dynamic web.”

Collaborative translation practices have been receiving increased scholarly attention in recent years and have also given rise to attempts to conceptualize translation as an inherently collaborative phenomenon (Alfer, 2017: 275). Bistué, 2017: 45) states that today, scholars may want to incorporate the forgotten practice of collaborative translation into their
histories. As Cordingley and Frigau Manning claim (2017: 15), contemporary interest in collaborative dynamics encourages translation scholars to “redefine past practices” and offer new insights into this concept.

2.2 Collaboration in translation - contemporary views

Apart from the literature-oriented investigations of collaboration in translations, scholars have also addressed this issue from the perspective of translation process research, modern technology, and education. In the early days of translation process research, it was introspective methods such as verbal reports recorded in think-aloud protocols (TAPs) that were mainly applied in translation process research (House, 1988, 2000). More recently, new tools such as keystroke logging software, screen recording and eye tracking as well as cognitive approaches have opened up new research lines (Lee-Jahnke, 2005; Massey and Ehrensberger-Dow, 2011). The development, achievements and limitations of TAP have been discussed in the literature (see Kussmaul, 1991, 1995; Tirkkonen-Condit, 2000). Protocols involving more than one person have been termed joint translation protocols. Pavlović (2007: 46) proposes a common term for the method: ‘collaborative translation protocols’ (CTPs). These protocols are a product of collaborative translation tasks in which a pair or group of people translate the same source text together, basing their decisions on mutual consensus. In such tasks, the understanding of the ST meaning and the creation of the target text (TT) occur after individual cognitive processing and the interaction among the members of the group. Pavlović (2007: 45) concludes that naturally occurring instances of collaborative translation, that is, translation involving more than one person working jointly on the same ST, would thus provide a possible source of authentic data.

The advent of the Internet and technology created a new discourse which alters the definition of collaborative translation. New technologies gave impetus to exchange of information among people, facilitating the transfer of knowledge as well as to the procedures followed at large translation agencies, which have also reshaped their translate-edit-proofread practices. As Costales states (2016: 4), professional practice of translation faces a dynamic and complex scenario, which inevitably includes collaboration. As “the ultimate goal of translation education in institutions of higher learning is providing an entry to a professional community of practice” (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017: 228), the academia also needs to take an active role (Jääskeläinen, Kujamäki and Mäkisalo, 2011)
by researching such practices and incorporating them in their curricula when needed.

In emphasizing the need to move away from teacher-oriented activities, still applicable in certain undergraduate programs (Kelly, 2014), some scholars have specifically addressed collaborative translation in education. Although “translator training has evolved, not only alongside Translation Studies as a discipline and alongside linguistics […], but also with educational approaches in general (from teacher-centered to student-centered), it is still possible to find variations on the traditional model in translator training courses today” (Kelly, 2014: 11). The conventional trial-and-error approach to teaching, or as Kiraly (2005: 1100) calls it the ‘who’ll take the next sentence’ approach, is criticized as being “perhaps the key obstacle to the development of a dynamic pedagogical culture in the domain of translator education (ibid.).

Kiraly’s works (1995, 2000a, 2000b) point to the turn towards collaborative approach to translator training. In Kiraly’s words (2000b: 60), “learning is best accomplished through meaningful interaction with peers as well as full-fledged members of the community to which learners are seeking entry. As Kelly (2014: 102) suggests, teamwork has been seen as useful and positive in translator training for several reasons. Apart from educational research showing that collaborative learning is richer and more effective, teamwork is an important social and personal experience for students, which results in interpersonal skills that are not only an important element of professional translator activity, but also an essential generic skill in much demand by employers.

Kiraly (2013: 213) emphasizes that each participant in any collaborative process of translation (and this includes all translation processes) also influences every other participant. His model (2013: 214) calls into question conventional didactic models in which learning is largely the result of teaching where a teacher is understood to transmit knowledge, skills or competence to learners. His model also highlights the value of collaborative interaction in the learning process and of a reassessment of teachers’ roles in the classroom – away from distributors of knowledge, and towards those of assistants, guides, facilitators and advisors. Adopting a view of translator competence as an emergent process, Kiraly (2013: 215) offers an innovative step towards improving and refining collaborative, learner-centered approaches to translator education.

Researchers have been increasingly active in calling for changes in practices in translation education so as to better adapt them to rapidly changing market needs. A need for closer connection between what happens in the classroom and actual professional practice has been a common standpoint in translation studies for over two decades (see
Translation educators and researchers have been seeking alternatives that will be better suited to the needs of students and employers against the “backdrop of the radically changed market conditions over the past half century” (Kiraly 2005: 1098). As Baer and Koby write:

[…] We may hope to better prepare students for the workplace by offering them appropriate tools, but if our teaching methodology is of the traditional kind […] we may fail to produce translators who are capable of the flexibility, teamwork and problem-solving that are essential for success in the contemporary language industry (2003: vii-viii).

In line with the above, observation of interaction and learning in situated translation projects within educational settings is seen as a potentially viable approach for investigating various aspects of translation education. As Kiraly (2005: 1110) states, “it may also help us break the stranglehold of the ‘who’ll take the next sentence’ teaching technique on translator education.” In a broader spectrum, it is hoped that such discussion will contribute to a reassessment of existing and emerging pedagogical approaches with a view toward improving their coherence, consistency and cogency (Kiraly, 2012: 93). Likewise, Kiraly (2016) believes that new research should encourage translator educators incorporate authentic experiential learning into their teaching.

3. Methodology

The study aimed at examining actual collaborative work in translation teaching, focusing on aspects such as the characteristics of collaborative and individual work, and the potential implementation of such work in future classroom translation activities. Two non-technical, general-language STs were chosen, one in English and one in Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (BCS). Both STs were up to 140 words long and both were excerpts from travel guides. The English ST was taken from a guide to Ireland - a short story about the history of the Welsh language while the BCS ST was from a guide to Tuzla, created as a book with photographs. The texts were chosen based on the potential of their actual usage in the translation industry in the BiH market. In the central part of the study, the subjects were asked to fill out a pre-translation questionnaire which comprised questions about the students’ practical experience in translation prior to this task; main difficulties they encountered prior to
this task; their preferences between individual and collaborative translation and direction of translation, as well as the satisfaction with their knowledge of English and B-C-S. They then collaboratively translated two STs: one into their mother tongue (L1 translation) and the other into English (L2 translation), without time limitation. This was followed by a post-translation questionnaire with questions probing their perception of the entire activity, difficulty of the task, satisfaction with the activities and the translations made, as well as the relations in the team during the group translation activities. The collaborative sessions were audio-recorded, the collaborative translation protocols obtained from the sessions were transcribed and coded. The TTs (the translations) were collected and given to the external evaluator for evaluation.

Control translation tasks were conducted with a set of comparable subjects, also student translators), who were asked to translate the same two STs individually at home. The students were instructed to accompany their translations with Integrated Problem and Decision Reports (IPDRs), the term coined by Gile (2004), which represent additional notes made by the translator on the translation task. These notes include the problems the translators experienced while doing the task, the tentative solutions, and the resources consulted. The control-group subjects were asked to fill out the same pre- and post-translation questionnaires (except for the questions related to group activities) that were used in the main research study. Their translations were evaluated according to the same criteria as the translations from the main group. The data from the Integrated Problem and Decision Reports were used to supplement additional information.

All the participants in the collaborative translation protocols were student translators, there were 13 third year students, divided into three groups of three and one group of four. Another 11 subjects (eight third year and three fourth year students) took part in the control research study aimed at comparing collaborative and individual translation. The subjects were native speakers of B-C-S. Their previous experience with translation in the educational setting had included mainly individual work (in class and at home) and very limited collaborative work usually in pairs. The subjects were not assigned to groups but used self-selection (Pavlović, 2007: 70).

An external evaluator was chosen to do the evaluation of the TTs obtained in the translation tasks. The evaluator was asked to evaluate the translations in both directions. She was not acquainted with the aims of the study or how the translations were produced (in terms of collaborative or individual works). She was sent anonymous translations and instructed to evaluate the translations using red and yellow cards (following Pavlović,
Red cards were used to mark parts of the TTs considered unacceptable either because they distort what the evaluator perceives to be the plausible interpretation of the ST, or because they contain an unambiguous target language error (of whatever kind) and as such could not be published. Yellow cards were used to indicate parts of the TTs that could be revised in any way. These would be the parts of the TTs that were good enough but could benefit from improvement or editing. In other words, the evaluator could perhaps think of an option that was more idiomatic, more readable, more conforming to target usage norms, etc. To facilitate quantitative comparison, red cards were counted as one negative point and yellow cards as half a negative point. The negative points were summed up allowing for the calculation of the revisability scores (the higher the score the lower the quality of the translated texts). The group and the individual scores were then compared.

Questionnaires were used to collect data on participants’ previous experiences in translation, their attitudes towards individual and collaborative work, and the relations and atmosphere in their teams during collaborative work. We measured (on a 1-5 numerical scale) the subjects’ satisfaction with their product and their enjoyment in the process as well as their attitudes to group interaction (the atmosphere and relations during the teamwork and the contribution of group members to the final version of translation, etc.). We counted the number of problems, tentative solutions, spontaneous solutions, solutions from external sources, red and yellow cards, and revisability scores. Additional comments given by the participants were also processed, which allowed for the combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis.

4. Results and discussion

Since the study focused on potential in-class usage of collaborative translation, the translation process included problem-solving (Tirkkonen-Condit, 2000) in both the collaborative and individual translation tasks. For that purpose, translation problems were understood (as defined by Livbjerg and Mees, 2003: 129) as any word or phrase in the text for which the participants expressed any degree of doubt about the proper translation.

4.1 Translation problems

The transcribed collaborative translation protocols and the data from the subjects’ IPDRs was analysed and grouped into shared problem areas:
orthographic, morphological, lexico-semantic, syntactic, and textual (following Pavlović, 2007). The size of the problems varied according to group, individual as well as the direction of translation. In the collaborative translation tasks, the number of problems registered in L1 translation ranged from 53 (Group 2) to 62 (Group 1), while the number of problems registered in L2 translation ranged from 46 (Group 4) to 70 (Group 3). For the control group (individual work), the number of problems was significantly lower. The problems ranged from 2 (Individual 1) to 10 (Individual 11) in L1 translation and from 1 (Individuals 1 and 3) to 12 (Individual 11) in L2 translation (Graph 1).

Graph 1: Translation problems in collaborative and individual work

Most of the translation problems in individual work were lexico-semantic, followed by orthographical and syntactic problems. Morphological and textual problems were not reported. The comparative analysis of problems encountered in both collaborative and individual translation tasks clearly showed that these two methods differed in the number of problems encountered. For example, as the collaborative translation protocol transcripts show, morphological problems were identified and solved in collaborative tasks through participants’ communication and discussion of morphological rules, which developed into exchange of ideas and knowledge. Indeed, the higher number of all types of problems identified during collaborative translation tasks can be linked to the very nature of collaborative work that fosters interaction.

4.2 Solutions to translation problems

Another segment in the focus of the research study included the solutions offered by the participants. They were divided into:
- tS: tentative solutions (proposed as a possible way for dealing with the problem defined and characterized by participants’ uncertainty that it might be the appropriate solution),
- spont.: spontaneous solutions (proposed as a result of the knowledge of the participants, characterized by participants’ confidence in their suggestions), and
- extern.: from external sources (found in dictionaries, glossaries, etc).

The number of tentative solutions in collaborative work ranged from 121 to 167 for L1 translation and from 80 to 177 for L2 translation. The groups considered up to 23 tentative solutions per problem in L1 translation and up to 20 solutions per problem in L2 translation. In all groups and in both directions, the number of spontaneous solutions was much higher than the number of solutions found in external resources, which indicates that the participants relied more on the knowledge and ideas of group members rather than formal sources such as dictionaries and glossaries. Graph 2 shows group average data.

The analysis of solutions provided by the subjects who translated the texts individually was affected by the type and quality of the data obtained from IPDRs and questionnaires. The data proved to be rather limited due to the very nature of individual work which lacks the elements of interaction and verbalization. The number of tentative solutions per problem in L1 translation ranged from 1 to 3, while in L2 translation, this number ranged from 1 to 1.7. The average values of spontaneous solutions per problem in both directions of translation are lower than...
those for external solutions, which indicates that the subjects mainly relied on external sources when they encountered translation problems (Graph 3). Individual subjects did not consider as many options as the subjects who participated in the collaborative translation tasks, which is in line with the statements that collaborative settings allow for natural verbalization instances while individual translators may not report on all the instances of their work (Pavlović, 2007).

![Graph 3: Solutions – individual translation](image)

4.3 Revisability score

When we compare the revisability score figures calculated by summing up red and yellow cards, in L1 translation the subjects who participated in collaborative work got a lower number of red but a higher number of yellow cards than the subjects who translated individually. As a result, their revisability score (2.87) was slightly lower (meaning better) than for the individuals (3.18). The situation was completely the same for L2 translation where the revisability scores was 6.37 for collaborative translation and 6.90 for individual translation.

The data presented in Graph 4 show the average values, which indicate only a slight tendency for the subjects who participated in collaborative work to achieve better results. This means that collaboratively translated TTs contained fewer unacceptable parts than the individual translations. However, as no statistically significant difference was evident, the link between collaborative work and the quality of translation should be investigated further and with larger samples.
The analysis of the transcribed data as well as the data from post-translation questionnaires revealed a rather positive overall experience among the participants in collaborative work. The relaxed atmosphere confirmed by instances of jokes and laughter in the recorded material as well as the satisfaction these participants expressed when filling out the questionnaires support this claim. The additional comments that the participants provided shed more light on the overall perception of collaboration in translation.

The analysis of the participants’ answers to the questions “Are you satisfied with your final translation” and “Did you enjoy working on this translation?” showed that the subjects were rather satisfied with their final translation as the group average for L1 translation was 4.29 and for L2 translation 4.22. Very high average values for the level of enjoyment in the task (4.91 for L1 translation and 4.93 for L2 translation) showed that the subjects experienced the tasks as positive and pleasant.

A detailed analysis of the atmosphere and relations during the teamwork was conducted, based on the answers to the questions such as “How would you describe the atmosphere and relations in the team during the translation task?”, “Do you feel that the other members of the team did their share of work?” and “Did you feel you had the opportunity to say what you wanted?”. The results showed that the relations in the teams were cooperative (the average value 4.29) and that the atmosphere
was particularly creative (the average value 4.52). In their opinion, their team members did their share of work (the average value 4.53) and most of them felt they had the opportunity to express their ideas (the average value 4.54).

The participants were also provided with the option to write whatever additional comments they had about translating in groups. The comments in which they state that in such type of activity they “can learn more” and that they “should have more activities of this type” clearly signal positive perception of the entire task. Group work was “more fun and relaxed”, with cooperation among team members frequently mentioned: “reaching a compromise” and “listening to other people’s opinion”. Students also addressed the issues of reaching a compromise and democratically deciding on translation solutions.

The participants also mentioned the disadvantages of such practice, pointing mainly to the longer time needed for the completion of the task as well as instances of competitive spirit that at times prevailed and prevented them from finding the final version sooner. Some participants drew the attention to time-management emphasizing this aspect of the activity as being negative at times as “too much discussion prevented” them from reaching the final decision sooner.

When asked to pinpoint the major points of difference between translation tasks that they are usually involved in-class and the collaborative activity they performed, student translators highlighted the communication aspect of the group activity, finding the atmosphere much more relaxing, with each participant having their own ideas whilst at the same time listening to what others have to say.

The findings of the study, although limited in scope in terms of the number of subjects, point to the fact that collaborative translation in an institutional learning environment may be used to examine group dynamics of student translators and the influence of such learning environment on problem-solving activities. Although collaborative translation protocol and IPDR data are very different in nature and cannot be directly compared, this difference may not be the only reason for such a high discrepancy between the number of problems encountered. It may be assumed that some problems in individual work were not verbalized due to the nature of work, but it cannot be ruled out that some passed unnoticed. However, bearing in mind the sample size, this needs to be examined further using additional qualitative research methods such as post-activity interviews.

To conclude, the collaborative working environment in this study had a positive psychological impact in terms of feeling less pressure, being relaxed, counting on support from others, and developing social skills. In
addition, the results of this study indicate that collaborative work may improve the development of problem-solving skills and help create a positive attitude of student translators towards the translation activities in the classroom.

5. Afterword

Kiraly (2016: 9) acknowledges the virtual absence of significant teacher training for translator educators worldwide. While doing so, he urges translator educators to reflect on their own understandings of what it means to know, to learn and to teach as they set out to educate translators competently and wisely in this still new millennium. “Starting with observations of what actually goes on in our own classrooms, followed by systematic plans and actions for change, we can create a groundswell of local research that can inform our common search for alternative teaching methods and techniques” (Kiraly, 2003: 25).

The results of the study indicate that collaborative and individual translations performed within this institutional setting exhibit differences in terms of problems and their solutions. Student translators involved in collaborative translation encountered more problems and registered a significantly higher number of solutions than those who worked individually. This can be attributed to the previously mentioned setting of collaborative translation which urges subjects to interact. The quality of the final products for collaborative translation was not significantly higher when compared to individual translation, which signals the need for more studies into translation quality in collaborative educational settings.

Emphasizing the absence of training for translator educators as well as translation teaching institutions in the context of the BiH academic reality, this article hopes to provide but a small insight into the way classroom activities may be designed so as to follow Kirali’s directions. It is hoped that the study may be of use to translator educators who have not yet explored the possibility of incorporating collaborative work into their teaching. In line with Kiraly’s (2016: 9) statement, the study may serve as a starting point for further research into authentic experiential work in translation education as well as to the incorporation of authentic experiential learning in translation classrooms.

As collaboration in translation practice and education is still a relatively unexplored terrain in BiH, more research needs to focus on such practices in translation teaching. Attention may be directed towards the effect collaborative activities may have on increasing translation skills as well as developing interpersonal skills. Further studies may focus on the potential
of collaborative work as a learning tool and the usability of such in-class activity in building the group work experience, which would be a valuable asset for our prospective students in their future careers. In addition, research interest revolving around translators’ impressions of the entire activity may help translation educators in designing effective and interesting activities. This may provide a better understanding of the ways in which translation education can benefit from collaborative practices and help translation scholars and educators assess if collaboration can become a suitable setting for fostering the acquisition of translation competence.

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