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 automisation 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 Bordieu'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 conflate 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 beaurocratic 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

Bernardini, S. 2004. "The theory behind the practice Translator training or translator education?"In Kirsten Malmkjær (Ed.) *Translation in Undergraduate Degree Programmes*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 17–29.

Katan, D. 2009. "Translation as intercultural communication". *The Routledge companion to translation studies.* London: Routledge, 74-92.

Perego, E. 2019, *Audio Description: Evolving Recommendations for Usable, Effective and Enjoyable Practices*, in Pérez-González L. (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Audiovisual Translation*, Routledge, New York, pp. 114-129.

Pietrzak, P. 2019. "The potential of reflective translator training". *Intralinea.* http://www.intralinea.org/specials/article/the_potential_of_reflective _translator_training