



This is a contribution from *Cultus: the Intercultural Journal of Mediation and Communication* 2019: 12

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## The Future of Translator Education: A Dialogue

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**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.<sup>1</sup> 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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<sup>1</sup> The Translation Automation Users Society (<https://www.taus.net/>). See, for instance, van der Meer and Joscelyne (2017), Joscelyne (2018).

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 transcoding 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 transcoding 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.<sup>2</sup> 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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<sup>2</sup> 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,<sup>3</sup> 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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<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.est2019.com/>; their contribution was entitled “Transcreation as a paradigm for new approaches to translator education: defining new roles for human translators” (<http://www.est2019.com/thursday/>).



**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),<sup>4</sup> 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 provision 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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<sup>4</sup> 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, R uth 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-faceted 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 Zurich<sup>5</sup>. 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

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<sup>5</sup> The IUED Institute of Translation and Interpreting at ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences, <https://www.zhaw.ch/en/linguistics/institutes-centres/iued/>

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.

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