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Actes del Primer Simposi sobre l'Ensenyament a distància i semipresencial de la Tradumàtica
Traducció i Tecnologies de la Informació i la Comunicació
Bellaterra, 6 i 7 de juny de 2002
http://www.fti.uab.es/tradumatica/papers/

The profile of the professional translator.
Developing competencies for a rapid incorporation into the industry.

Celia Rico Pérez
Dept. de Traducción e Interpretación
Universidad Europea CEES
celia.rico@ti.fil.uem.es

Abstract
A commitment to training translators in such a way as to enable them to be incorporated almost immediately into the working world is posing the agents responsible for drawing up curricular models, study plans and subject syllabuses the challenge of reconciling the sometimes-conflicting interests of academic training and the industry.

This article analyses both perspectives and focuses on translation technology as a factor that is crucial for the design of a training programme that conforms to the current profile of professional translators.

Key words
Translation and technology, didactics, resources for translators

Introduction
In a report published by the LEIT (*LISA Educational Initiative Task Force*) in October 1998, on the subject of the requisites that translators were asked to meet by the localisation industry at that time, the basic requirements to be fulfilled included proficiency in terms of the methods encompassed by translation studies, recognition of the importance of cultural aspects in translation and the ability to use a word processor. Other skills of a technological nature were added to those listed above, such as a capacity for searching for and managing terminological databanks, the ability to use the internet to obtain documentation and an advanced working knowledge of translation memories.

While this report may not be the only parameter that determines the profile of the translator, it does provide very meaningful data as regards the direction in which the training of future professionals should be heading. For example, we should bear in mind that private-sector forecasts for the worldwide translation market in 2004 stand at close to $20 billion, and that Microsoft alone undertook approximately 1,000 software-translation projects in 1998, representing earnings of some $5 billion (Sprung, 2000). In this context, the role of universities is to train translators in such a way that enables them to be rapidly incorporated into the industry and to participate in any changes that may occur therein.

In this respect, we should not forget the reports produced by the LETRAC (*Language Engineering for Translator Curricula*) project. Although the data therein has not been updated since 1999, it does provide valuable information on the needs of the business sector, translation agencies and translators, along with a study of the situation as regards translator training in various European countries and a proposal for the design of curricula.

Clearly, a commitment to this type of training requires universities to make a substantial investment in dynamism, resources and the adaptation of the profile of students. In this respect, when designing content for education on new technologies as part of a Translation and Interpreting degree, it must be taken into account that the overriding objective consists of reconciling the changing demands of the industry and technology with the need to train future translators to think critically, reason logically, innovate and adapt to new environments.

Competencies for the industry

It is useful to add a series of data taken at random from three sources regarded as benchmarks in the world of professional translation to the overall market figures referred to above. Specifically, these sources are the journals Multilingual computing and Language International, plus the translator-oriented website Aquarius. Given that the aim of this article is not to perform an exhaustive study of the translation market, it will be sufficient to note the first impressions obtained from an analysis of the tables of contents of articles published in the two journals, the offers of work posted on Aquarius, the subject matter of the conferences announced and the issues discussed in translators' mailing lists to deduce that something has already changed in this industry.

It is evident that a thorough analysis of these and other sources would provide not only a genuine reflection of the type of technological skills sought by the market, but also a clear, up-to-date profile of the world of professional translators. For the time being, we shall see what a brief overview reveals.

Firstly, the articles published in the two journals revolve around project management, localisation, language engineering, the management of multilingual content, knowledge of XML and other standards, quality control and management and the translation of websites. Meanwhile, the news items featured provide information on the latest progress made in terms of localisation, programs for text-to-voice conversion, the appearance of global products and the creation of business-management services on an international scale. Lastly, the types of skills that are most sought after by companies such as McDonald's, Data Becker, ArchiText, Lionbridge, Lingo Systems, Canon and LinguaPoint are website translation, experience with tools such as RoboHelp, the adaptation of software applications and documentation for the global market, project coordination and the translation / editing / testing / verifying of software, among others.

As can be seen, we are dealing with a change that has already happened, and which points to a near future in which translation is a part of the product and is developed in concurrence therewith. Meanwhile, electronic commerce is already generating a whole new range of multilingual services, translation teams are distributed throughout the world and, in many cases, outsourcing is the preferred option of large companies that require substantial volumes of translation. By way of a preliminary conclusion, it can be said that the trend may be summarised as follows:

- A greater volume of translation
- Shorter deadlines
- Experience in the use of specific IT applications for translation
- Adaptation to the needs of the client in order to determine the nature of translated material (printed and online documentation, help files, electronic editing)
- Creation of worldwide production / translation teams
- A need to reuse translation materials
- Emergence of the profile of the translator and project manager

However, a training programme that aims to formalise serious university education cannot be at the beck and call of the demands of the working world and become a "factory in which the exact type of professional that each company requires is produced to specification" (Sarriegui, J.M., 2001: 59, my translation). Such a programme should, however, reconcile these demands with the development of competencies that facilitate a capacity for reasoning and

for adaptation to changing technology, as well as with the use of skills that make it possible to develop intellectual abilities.

The translator's curriculum This is an appropriate point to reflect upon the way in which such conflicts can, in principle, be expressed, given that, on one hand, the act of translating entails activating high-level cognitive processes, converting "raw" intellectual capabilities into behavioural patterns that function in a complex universe, and processing and interpreting information.

On the other hand, the industry today requires that translators work in a global team and that they perform the roles of a qualified project manager, an IT technician, an information officer, a specialist in electronic editing, a language engineer, an assessor, a terminologist, a localisation expert and a technical writer. The question is, firstly, if students can really have assimilated all the competencies that define the professional described above at the end of their period of training. Secondly, it is necessary to remember that what is currently valid in the professional world may shortly be rendered obsolete, and that, taking the need for greater dynamism in university education as a given, universities neither can nor should modify students' curricula in order to adapt them to each new change that takes place in the market.

At the same time, there are a number of competencies that should be constant features in translator training (Pérez González, L. 2001: 861):

- Communicative competency. This encompasses the following five dimensions: (1) linguistic (understanding and correct usage of the formal aspects of language); (2) sociolinguistic (capacity for producing a discourse that is appropriate to the communicative situation); (3) discursive (related to the organisational mechanisms of discourse, such as maintaining consistency and coherence and the use of anaphoric markers); (4) strategic (use of the appropriate techniques for ensuring that a discourse remains fluent); and (5) sociocultural (knowledge of the cultural aspects that filter into the language).

- Procedural competency. This consists of a range of instrumental strategies that make it possible for translators to perform their work, and which, among others, take the form of the adequate usage of reference materials (dictionaries and glossaries) and the appropriate selection of translation strategies to be applied in each case and for each text type.

- Assessorial competency. This is directly related to translators' use and management of language, as well as their capacity for logic and self-analysis as a professional. This skill makes it possible to adopt a creative and critical attitude towards work carried out.

So, if we consider the demands of the industry on one hand and those inherent to university education on the other, a fundamental question arises and must be answered before a curricular design can be established: how is it possible to formalise the intelligence that translators put into practice in an industrial context?

The source of the response could be the statement that computers are currently at the heart of the translation process, which has thus ceased to be an exclusively human activity.

Computers at the heart of the translation process
The notion of the translator's workstation first emerged in 1980 (Kay, 1997). Since then, many changes have taken place and it may be that there are still many more to come. The field's specialised bibliography shows that this is definitely an area that is currently growing and that the world of translation is unavoidably influenced by technology. In this respect, and as table 1 shows in a schematic form, if translation-related tasks are grouped together at three key points in the time sequence, it becomes clear that computers are a constant value.

The translation cycle begins with a commission and the planning of the job. At this point, it is usually the project manager (in an agency) or the translator themselves who judges whether the translation can be carried out in the time envisaged and whether the (human and infrastructural) resources required to complete the work are available. In this respect, technology provides translators with tools for the extraction and detection of terms, the segmentation of texts and alignment, these being tasks that should be performed during a stage prior to the actual translation.

Technological aspects of translation	***Time sequence***	***Tasks in the translation process***
Term extraction and detection Text segmentation Alignment	**Before**	Commission ↓ Planning
Translation memories Automatic translation Online dictionaries Terminological databases	**During**	↓ Translation
Verification of consistency Revision	**After**	↓ Editing ↓ Delivery and invoicing
↺	**Reusing of materials**	↻
↔	**Project management**	↔

Table 1: the translation process (adapted from Melby, 1998)

Once the commission has been assessed and it has been verified that it will be possible to carry out the work in the time established, without exceeding the envisaged costs, using the resources assigned and providing the required level of quality, the next step consists of planning how, by whom and when the translation will be carried out. This task corresponds to the area of project management and, given its importance in translation in an industrial context, we will leave a detailed study of the tools, processes and methodology used in this

area for another time (Rico Pérez, forthcoming). For the purpose of this article, namely the definition of the content of translator training, it is sufficient to make a note of this point.

We thus come to the key moment, at which point the translator tackles the original text alone, when nothing can replace the intellectual process that goes on in the human mind and which leads to the production of an appropriate translation. There are various technological tools, with a varying degree of sophistication, which are specifically intended to assist the translator in this work. They range from those that facilitate the consultation of electronic glossaries and dictionaries (online or on CD-ROM) or access to terminological databases and databanks, to those that make it possible to reuse translated material thanks to translation memories, or which automate the task to the greatest extent possible through automatic translation.

Lastly, specific software applications for the purposes of verifying the consistency of the texts produced, electronic editing and quality control are available for the stage of revision, delivery and invoicing, which is just as important as the other stages in the context of professional translation.

However, we must not forget that, despite the evident presence of technology, there are still certain people who have undergone traditional training who are not in a position to adapt to the requisites established by the new objectives of the industry, as noted by Schäler (1998: 153). The result is that translation is now often in the hands not of translators but of those who have less reservations as regards technological progress. It is therefore essential that a curriculum that standardises the various components of translator training be designed.

Curricular models and the development of content

Mention was made at the beginning of this article of the work carried out by the LETRAC project, the aim of which was to create a reference framework for the training of translators and interpreters which took the industry's requirements into account. Specifically, the report on curricular design formalises the proposal in three modules:

a) Module A. Introduction to IT.
b) Module B. Information technology and translation.
c) Module C. Language engineering.

Depending on the module, the training programme encompasses everything from an introduction to data storage and manipulation and the study of key concepts in electronic editing, to case studies involving controlled language or project management. Of course, along the way it also covers areas that are now traditional in this field, such as translation memories and an introduction to automatic-translation techniques. To a certain degree, LETRAC's proposal profiles an ideal framework, which evidently has to be adapted on the basis of the options open to each institution and the availability of infrastructures, study plans and resources. In general, the training of translators in the use of new technologies usually focuses on the following content:

- Introduction to new technologies and translation
- The internet as a tool for communication and a source of documentation
- Terminological management systems
- Parallel corpora and translation
- Translation memories
- Introduction to automatic translation and the assessment of systems from the point of view of the user

In summary, this is a programme that revolves around the key tasks in the translation process, as defined in table 1. It is thus taken for granted that students have prior knowledge of office applications and are sufficiently familiar with the working environment of an advanced user, although this may not always be the case. By way of an example, the content developed by Austermühl (2001) constitutes a complete guide to training translators in the use of new technologies.

Additionally, it is essential to mention the possibilities that the internet offers as a didactic tool, not only as an instrument for documentation and communication, but also in terms of free access to material, software, institutions and companies which offer their assistance for the purpose of translator training. In this respect, the effectiveness of this tool, which provides reliable, up-to-date content, a range of options as regards interactivity in and out of the classroom (in a synchronous and asynchronous manner), and the chance to develop semi-professional skills, has been sufficiently tried and tested (Folaron, 2002: 20). Without claiming to be exhaustive, the list that appears below gives details of various types of material found on the internet which can be used as part of the content of a translator-training programme.

1) Documentation (reference material and articles)

   a) Introduction to translation tools: http://www.transref.org This website is geared to professionals who are interested in technology and translation. Its content includes an up-to-date set of articles related to this field, a section that features the opinions of experts, a list of associations, and mailing lists that focus on translation and technology, as well as other sections on research, training and localisation.

   b) Online journals:

      i) *Translation Journal* : http://www.accurapid.com/journal This journal is only published on the internet and contains articles in which various translation tools are assessed.
      ii) *Language International :* http://www.language.international.com The complete version of this journal is only published in paper format. Selected articles are available on the internet.
      iii) *Multilingual Computing and Technology*: http://www.multilingual.com As was the case of the previous journal, the complete version is only available in paper format. In addition to articles from past editions, the website offers news and information on activities related to the world of translation technologies.
      iv) *Meta*: http://www.erudit.org/erudit/meta/index.html Although this journal does not focus on new technologies and translation, it does contain some articles that could stimulate reflection on the role of the translator in this context.

   c) Automatic translation: as this is a discipline with a long tradition of research in the field of language technology, there are many websites from which documentation is available. Some of the most interesting are listed below.

      i) Computing Research Repository: http://www.acm.org/pubs/corr/ This is a database containing articles on computational linguistics.
      ii) *Wired:* http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/8.05/timeline.html In May 2000, this journal published a series of articles on automatic translation which can be used as an introductory course for translation students.
      iii) Arnold, D. (2002): *Machine Translation: an Introductory Guide*. http://www.essex.ac.uk/linguistics/clmt/MTbook/
      iv) Cole et al. (1996) : *Survey of the State of the Art in Human Language Technology.* http://cslu.cse.ogi.edu/HLTsurvey/HLTsurvey.html
      v) EAMT (*European Association for Machine Translation*): http://www.eamt.org

2) Applications (free downloads of trial versions and software)

   a) ToolsGarage: http://www.lai.com/tg.html This site provides a list of all the tools available on the market, with links to the sites from which free and trial versions can be downloaded.

3) Communication (mailing lists, professional associations)

a) TransRef: http://www.transref.org The Business and Contacts section contains links to the main translation mailing lists and associations.

b) Yahoo Groups: http://www.yahoogroups.com Many translators' mailing lists use this free service.

c) Red Iris: http://www.rediris.es/ This is a communication service of the Spanish academic and scientific community, in which mailing lists such as TRADUMATICA are based.

4) Databases:

a) Access to terminological databases:

i) Eurodicautom (the European Commission's translation service): http://europa.eu.int/eurodicautom/login.jsp
ii) Termite (*International Telecommunications Union*): http://www.itu.int/search/wais/Termite/index.html
iii) Euterpe (European Parliament): http://muwa.trados.com/ie/asp/QueryPage.asp?DBName=Euterpe
iv) TIS (European Council): http://tis.consilium.eu.int/utfwebtis/frames/introfsEN.htm

b) Consultation of parallel corpora:

i) RALI (*Laboratoire de Recherche Appliquée en Linguistique Informatique)*: http://www-rali.iro.umontreal.ca/
ii) BancTrad (UPF): http://glotis.upf.es

All these materials complement classroom-based work and make it possible for students to continue learning independently.

At http://www.uem.es/traduccion/personal/crico/index.htm, an example can be seen of how content has been organised for the subject "IT applied to translation", as taught by the author of this work as part of the Translation and Interpreting degree course at the Universidad Europea CEES.

Conclusions

The aim of this article was to open up an area of reflection as regards the need to train translators in a way that enables them to be rapidly incorporated into the working world and prepares them to adapt to the changing environment of the industry, obviously bearing in mind the fact that they must have the translation skills that would be expected of a good professional. Following that initial reflection, this piece of work has shown how computers are at the heart of the translation process and how, consequently, this fact should be taken into account when preparing content. It is clear that a training programme such as that outlined here requires a substantial investment in resources, dynamism and the adaptation of the profile of students. To a certain degree, these aspects depend on the focus adopted by institutions at which translation studies are taught.

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