DESIGNING ATC-BASED CURRICULA: A COMPLEX AND CHALLENGING UNDERTAKING. A CASE STUDY OF THE MOST IN-DEMAND SUB-COMPETENCES REQUIRED BY POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS ON THE ROMANIAN TRANSLATION MARKET

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Abstract: In order to keep up with the accelerating market trends, a convergence between the curricula of academic programmes focused on translator nurture and the requirements imposed by potential employers on the market is, if not compulsory, at least preferable as far as academic training is concerned. This study explores the profile of the translator in an era of modernization and digitization as highlighted by a number of potential employers in the Romanian translation industry. As the updated list of skills imposed to professional translators frequently surpasses those encompassed by the paramount linguistic (bilingual) sub-competence, the need for particular add-ons has also been considered. In order to gather precise information, quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed, most notably a questionnaire distributed to several enterprises located in Timișoara. This paper seeks to analyse the emerging results and comment on their significance.

Keywords: linguistic add-on; multinational corporation; service provision; TQA procedure; translation agency; translation office; translation sub-competence; translator nurture.

1. International context and rationale

The primary motivation for conducting such study consists in the need for empirical data in the field, particularly in the development of the correlations between the academic curricula and the industry expectations. As a result, programmes specialised in Translation Studies might benefit from considering the employers' perspective on multiple levels, most notably on updating their existent curricula in order to train their students more efficiently. A wide range of studies regarding the parameters considered in translation nurture and their applicability to the market demands has been conducted over the course of the past decades. In such studies, scholars usually resorted to mixed research methods in order to achieve their results, namely surveys or questionnaires paired with interviews and (c)overt observation (Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2020). On a macro level, the comparative approach has been widely used when researching the sub-competence levels set by employers.

Particular emphasis has been laid upon the application process, namely on the interviews and examinations that candidates must sit and go through in order to get employed (Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2020 Biel, 2011). At the same time, it is to be noted that candidates are no longer tested exclusively on their mastery of the language(s), but also checked on their use with computer-assisted-translation (CAT) tools. In this context, an increasing number of employers provide in-house training for their staff prior and after

the selection process which is definitely helpful for aspirants who need further technical assistance when asked to work with such tools. As far as linguistic tests are concerned, they might be classified according to their length (short/ long) and degree of specialisation (general/ specialised). As for the instrumental sub-competence exams, basic/ advanced use of CAT tools is usually tested (Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2020: 122).

2. Linguistic add-ons

In order to align itself with the market demands, an academic programme specialised in training future professional translators needs to focus on developing additional skills such as those required for the "documentation work in the source and target languages, terminology work, revision, edition, and desktop publishing, interpretation and subtitling" (Aula int., 2005: 137 Sakwe, 2015: 96). The range of linguistic add-ons that staff translators should perform may vary according to the size of the organisations they are working for (Aula int., 2005: 137). While small and medium-sized organisations are interested in recruiting "versatile translators" that could also fulfil the tasks of a terminologist, reviser or proofreader, translation projects carried out by large companies require the "supervision of a project manager" who is usually in charge of assigning the tasks to each member of the translation project/ team and the one who must make sure that all the steps are fulfilled accordingly (Aula int., 2005: 137).

In the endeavour to get a comprehensive overview on the existent stages in the translation process, two international standards targeting translation services were considered, i.e., EN 15038 (adopted in 2006 and withdrawn in 2015) and the standard superseding it, ISO 17100 (adopted in 2015). ISO 17100 identifies four steps that are included in the *pre-production* stage – "enquiry and feasibility", "quotation", "client-TSP agreement", "handling of project-related client information" (ISO 17100: 7-8); six steps in the *production* process – "translation", "check", "revision", "review", "proofreading", "final verification and release" (ISO 17100: 9-11); and two final steps belonging to the *post-production* stage – "feedback" and "closing administration" (ISO 17100: 11).

Additionally, EN 15038:2006 depicts a sequence of six steps that must be comprised in the translation process, i.e., "translation", "checking", "revision", "review", "proofreading", "final verification" (EN 15038: 11-12). While rendering the original message in the target language (transfer stage), translators should consider terminology (complying with specific fields and being terminologically consistent throughout the process), grammar (syntax, punctuation, spelling), lexis (lexical cohesion), style (complying with the client's style guides), locale (regional conventions), formatting, target audience, and purpose, also referred to as 'skopos' (EN 15038: 11). For an overall presentation and classification of standards, see Dejica (2016, 121-123).

All the steps mentioned in such standards might be associated with several translation sub-competences that, although not always belonging to the transfer stage itself, play nonetheless an important part in delivering high-quality translations. For example, tasks assigned to revisers and reviewers might fall within the evaluative sub-competence spectrum, as reflected in the internationally standardised Petra-E Competence Framework. In a similar fashion, the traditional tasks assigned to a terminologist might also be associated with the research sub-competence (as referenced in Petra-E Framework).

Considering the outlines and translation sub-competences reflected in both Petra-E and the EMT Framework, it is safe to say that the European Union needs professional translators properly trained and ready to perform any language-based activity undertaken within large-scale translation projects, be it revision, editing, documentation or terminology work, etc.

3. Translation Quality Assurance (TQA) procedures

The debate that still stirs discussion is the extent to which revisers can change translated texts. As with translators who are responsible for informing the client of any necessary adaptations/ changes considering the target audience and purpose (Corpas Pastor, 2006: 50), revisers must also keep to a minimum their interventions in the target text, avoiding retranslation if the original equivalents fit the intended purpose (Parra Galiano, 2016: 41). According to Parra Galiano (2016: 44), several parameters must be considered when performing revision-based tasks, most notably the "revision of the content" (targeting specialised language and factual info), "linguistic revision" (targeting the adequate use of the target language and the adaptation for the target audience), "functional revision" (targeting the degree of accuracy and completeness) and "revision of the presentation" (targeting the overall layout).

The degree of revision complexity might sometimes differ depending on the category of documents under discussion. In order to facilitate "prioritization of revision", EU institutions have classified documents (Biel, 2017: 36) as follows: "legal acts" (Category A), "policy and administrative documents" (Category B), "information for the public" (Category C), "input for EU legislation, policy formulation and administration" (Category D). As expected, A-rated documents undergo a much more complex and sophisticated revision process, while D-rated documents are subject to much looser scrutiny. Parra Galiano (2016: 41) emphasizes three major revision principles that any reviser should adhere to: "revision cost-effectiveness", "minimal corrections", and "justification for the changes made". Being able to justify any changes performed either during the pre- or post-editing stage (revision) could also be linked with the evaluative sub-competence referenced in Petra-E Framework, which indicates that a professional translator should also be trained in order to fulfil revision-based activities.

TQA procedures could also be classified according to the way the concept of 'quality' is perceived, i.e., as a "question of individual perception", a "cultural issue", "meeting the clients' needs", "fulfilling the skopos", "fitness for use", the "degree of equivalence between the source and target language texts" (Yildiz, 2020: 571). These considerations lead to the portrayal of 'quality' as being both an objective and subjective phenomenon. While its objectivity lies in its intended realistic standards, achieving a purely objective assessment of translation might be challenging and "even impossible" at times (Williams, 1989 cited in Yildiz, 2020: 572).

4. Research methodology

This case study is based on the administration and analysis of one questionnaire disseminated to several potential employers on the Romanian translation market (Timișoara). A wide range of profiles was targeted, starting from small and medium-sized

enterprises (translation offices and agencies) and leading up to large organisations (multinational corporations), particularly in order to identify any similarities and discrepancies regarding entry requirements, selection process, job profile, and translation sub-competences required.

The sampled population consisted of four translation offices, two multinational corporations and one translation agency. Data mining took place between September and November 2020. Participants were provided with the online version of the questionnaire and were ensured that their anonymity would be preserved. The selection process proved to be extremely challenging at times, especially in the case of large organisations whose policy of accepting and completing questionnaires was far more complex compared to the preliminary discussions held with small enterprises. The questions featured in the questionnaire are exclusively based on written translation, with the oral counterpart (interpreting) only being considered within the linguistic add-on range. As the purpose of this study is investigating the set of translation sub-competences on which the requirements imposed by employers are based, two international competence frameworks (Petra-E and the EMT 2017) along with two international standards (ISO 17100 and EN 15038) created by European Union bodies were considered in order to design the questionnaire.

Resorting to the EMT Competence Framework (2017) was extremely useful when designing the instrumental and personal/interpersonal sub-competence-based questions that target primarily the use of computer-assisted-translation (CAT) tools and the so-called 'soft skills' (time management, adaptability, interpersonal relationships). In addition, Petra-E Framework lists two key sub-competences applicable to several other categories of jobs, i.e., terminologists (heuristic/ research sub-competence) and revisers (evaluative sub-competence), a major plus considering the market need for 'versatile' translators. Since professional environments (enterprises and organisations) were targeted, two international standards for translation services were also considered when establishing the stages that belong to translation service provision (TSP) and the corresponding linguistic add-ons required for each stage (e.g., revising work in the case of post-editing).

In order to identify the revision principles applicable to post-editing in the case of each enterprise/organisation surveyed, TQA-based questions pointing the degree of revision undertaken were also included in the questionnaire. Due to its nature, this case study is mainly of a qualitative nature (data-driven investigation presupposing a worm's eye view approach).

5. Data mining and preliminary results

Considering the fact that the survey in which this study is grounded is a pilot questionnaire, only a small audience of employers was targeted (10 potential employers were invited resulting in a total of 7 answer submissions). Nevertheless, variety was the number one priority when inviting prospective employers (translation offices, translation agencies and multinational corporations were invited) in order to explore any existent similitudes and/or discrepancies regarding the translation sub-competences required according to the employer's profile.

The questionnaire is divided into four primary sections: application process (entry requirements and examination), job profile (work-relevant scenarios and tasks based on

the range of translation sub-competences listed in Petra-E and the EMT frameworks), soft skills (time management, adaptability, and interpersonal relationships), and suggestions on improving the existent curricula of academic programmes focused on translator nurture. By analysing the data collected, a correlation between the resources made available to candidates by employers prior to sitting the examination (targeting either the linguistic or instrumental sub-competence), the employers' feedback on the level displayed by aspirants and the suggestions made towards improving the academic curricula was explored. Out of pragmatic reasons, only the first two sections of the questionnaire are to be detailed on in the following.

5.1. Entry requirements according to the employer's profile

This sub-section (see Table 1 below) aims at providing a clearer overview on the academic training aspirants must receive in order to be considered for the job of professional translators. There were 7 participants (100%) answering the semi-closed questions "Do aspirants need to hold a bachelor's degree from a Faculty of Letters", "Do aspirants need to hold a master's degree from a Faculty of Letters", and "Do aspirants need to hold a professional certificate (e.g., the passing of a public exam)".

Requirement	Employer's profile						
	TO 1	TO 2	TO 3	TO 4	MC 1	MC 2	TA 1
BA in Translation Studies	√	√	√		√		
BA in Translation Studies or Literary Studies				√		√	√
BA degree - irrelevant							
MA in Translation Studies	√	√	√			√	√
MA in Translation Studies or Literary Studies							
MA degree - irrelevant				√	√		
Professional certification	√	√	√	-	Depending on the level of job	√	-

Table 1. Application process – entry requirements

Legend: TO 1 – Translation Office 1; TO 2 – Translation Office 2; TO 3 – Translation Office 3; TO 4 – Translation Office 4; MC 1 – Multinational Corporation 1; MC 2 – Multinational Corporation 2; TA 1 – Translation Agency 1

The emerging statistics unveil that the overwhelming majority is interested in recruiting graduates that hold both a BA and MA degree in Translation Studies or Literary Studies, with the former (BA) being a prerequisite laid down by all participants. It is quite interesting to point out the fact that answers differ according to the profile of the employer participating. For example, 3 out of the 4 translation offices answering are interested in recruiting aspirants that hold a master's degree in Translation Studies, while only one multinational corporation participating imposes such requirements to candidates. As far

as professional certification is concerned, candidates are usually expected to meet such requirement, with 4 participants opting for the affirmative answer (57,1%). Nonetheless, respondents have also pointed out that the applicability of this criterion depends mainly on the "level of job" as "entry level jobs do not always require specific certifications other than BA". It is worth pointing out, however, that translation offices tend to require a professional certification especially due to the fact that the vast majority of source documents pertain to legal genres.

5.2. Application process – examination and available resources

In this sub-section of the questionnaire (see Table 2 below), the types of examinations administered were explored (particular emphasis was laid upon the linguistic and instrumental sub-competences). Additionally, questions concerning the range of resources made available by employers prior and after the selection process (in-house training) were comprised in this section.

Examination type	Employer's profile						
	TO 1	TO 2	TO 3	TO 4	MC 1	MC 2	TA 1
Linguistic (specialised lexis)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Linguistic (literary genres)		√					
No linguistic examination required							
CAT-based (entry level)	√			√		√	√
CAT-based (advanced level)		√			√		
No CAT-based examination required			√				
Linguistic resources made available by the employer			√		√		
Technical assistance provided by the employer			√	√	√	√	√

Table 2. Application process – examination and available resources

Legend: TO 1 – Translation Office 1; TO 2 – Translation Office 2; TO 3 – Translation Office 3; TO 4 – Translation Office 4; MC 1 – Multinational Corporation 1; MC 2 – Multinational Corporation 2; TA 1 – Translation Agency 1

On a particular note, there were 7 participants (100%) answering the semi-closed questions "Choose the options that best reflect the type of linguistic and CAT-based examination that aspirants must sit in order to get the job" and "What type(s) of resources are available in order to prepare for the examination".

As far as the linguistic type of examination is concerned, all the participants opted for the translation of excerpts belonging to specialised/ pragmatic typologies, with one respondent providing specific details: "the type of examination would depend on the type of job applied for and translating medium length excerpts (job-specific) and revising translated texts are definitely to be expected as a form of examination".

This answer brings forward the idea that candidates are expected to perform additional language-based activities (linguistic add-ons) to the core, translation. As for the CAT-based testing component, 6 out of the 7 participants would require technical mastery of such resources, either on an entry or advanced level. These statistics show

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that testing the skills comprised within the instrumental sub-competence spectrum has become a top priority for employers when recruiting professional translators and one that has gained as much importance as examinations based on linguistic components. Although linguistic tests are still part of the selection process, only two respondents (28,6%) provide language-based support for aspirants (samples).

On the other hand, there is a higher degree of consistency between the type of tests and assistance provided in the case of examinations based on the instrumental sub-competence. 71,43% of the respondents provide in-house technical assistance such as workshops targeting the use of computer-assisted-translation tools. It is to be noted, however, that employers who require advanced use of CAT tools do not always provide in-house technical training but expect candidates to possess such knowledge based on previous academic training (e.g., translation offices).

5.3. Job profile – top translation sub-competences required and emergent add-ons

In this section of the questionnaire (see Table 3 below), participants were invited to rate several work-relevant parameters according to their degree of importance. The first part (pre-production processes) targets the textual, instrumental, and linguistic sub-competences listed in both Petra-E and the EMT Competence frameworks, while the second (production and post-production-related processes) primarily targets the transfer and evaluative sub-competences referenced in Petra-E.

Parameter	Stage in the translation process	Sub-competence targeted	Rated as	Employer's profile
Identifying specific genres, text types and registers	Pre-production	Textual Linguistic Cultural	Essential/ Very important	TO, MC, TA
Resorting to appropriate style guides	Pre-production Production	Textual Transfer Cultural Linguistic	Essential/ Very important	TO, MC
Terminological consistency	Production	Linguistic Transfer	Essential/ Very important	TO, MC, TA
Self-reflection on translation projects (personal work)	Post-production	Evaluative	Essential/ Very important	TO, MC, TA
Revising other colleagues' translations (linguistic add-on)	Post-production	Evaluative	Essential/ Very important	TO, MC, TA
Text (pre-)editing via CAT tools	Pre-production Production Post-production	Instrumental Textual Evaluative	Essential/ Very important	MC, TA

Table 3. Top translation sub-competences required by potential employers on the market

Legend: TO – Translation Office; MC – Multinational Corporation; TA – Translation Agency

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The parameters featured have been inspired by the LT3 descriptors depicted in Petra-E, and by the two international standards inspected (ISO 17100 and EN 15038). "Identifying specific genres, registers and text types" prevailed over the other parameters being rated as "essential" by 5 (71,43%) of the 7 employers participating (100%). Second in line comes "resorting to appropriate style guides", rated as "essential" by three respondents (42,9%). The task in which potential employers were the least interested according to the answers was "summarising or adapting the texts in the target language", rated as "not particularly important" by two participants (28,6%). It is to be noted, however, that answers tend to differ according to the employer's profile. While multinational corporations rate as "essential" the preparation of the document for "technology processing", translation offices rate the same activity as "not particularly important" or, at most, as "important".

5.4. TQA procedures performed according to the employer's profile

As far as TQA (Translation Quality Assurance) procedures are concerned (see Table 4 below), a substantial majority of respondents (6, representing 85,71%) chose "entire document (revision degree – superior)" for both bilingual and monolingual types of revision. These results might be associated with the incoming category of documents that undergo translation-based processes – for example, 3 out of the 4 translation offices participating opted for superior degree revision for both bilingual and monolingual revision. Considering that the vast majority of incoming documents in the case of translation offices consist of legal acts (A-rated documents), translation offices comply with the TQA procedures imposed by EU bodies, hence adhering to the range of principles concerning the categorisation of documents (A, B, C or D type).

Employer's profile	Monolingual revision		Bilingual revision	
	Superior	Intermediate	Superior	Intermediate
TO 1	√		√	
TO 2		√	√	
TO 3	√		√	
TO 4	√		√	
MC 1	√		√	
MC 2	√		√	
TA 1	√		√	

Table 4. TQA procedures performed according to the employer's profile

Legend: TO 1 – Translation Office 1; TO 2 – Translation Office 2; TO 3 – Translation Office 3; TO 4 – Translation Office 4; MC 1 – Multinational Corporation 1; MC 2 – Multinational Corporation 2; TA 1 – Translation Agency 1

5.5. Suggestions and feedback – the employer's perspective

In this section of the questionnaire, respondents were invited to provide feedback and suggestions on possible ways of improving the existent curricula of academic programmes (BA and MA-level) specialised in Translation Studies. In order to be

provided with an in-depth overview on possible suggestions, no pre-established answers were included, as participants were entirely free to share their thoughts on the matter.

To the open-ended question "How could universities potentially improve the curricula of their bachelor and master's programmes in order to meet the market demands", respondents came up with extremely interesting and potentially useful recommendations for universities, most notably: "collaborating with local companies to train students", "providing further training based on the use of computer-assisted-translation tools, particularly translation memory software", "developing several programmes depending on the student's needs or wishes - types of programs could and include, and not be limited to: specific technical translations, literary translations and other fields (medical, political, mass-media etc.)", "focusing more on practice and adapting to the latest demands in the field (i.e. use of CAT tools)", "further training targeting specific translation sub-competences would be proper for the students who want to pursue a career in this field - maybe also an exchange programme with other foreign universities would be good", "training on specific genres, technical and medical", "further training in the area of CAT tools would be extremely useful".

It is worth pointing out the fact that 3 (42,9%) out of the 7 potential employers participating (100%) emphasised the need for further training of the instrumental/ technological sub-competence (primarily targeting the use of CAT tools), showing a significant correlation between the exam resources/ training made available to aspirants by employers and the suggestions put forward in this section (two of the five employers that provide in-house technical assistance for the use of CAT tools also suggested further academic training in this area).

6. Conclusions and future research directions

Considering that the nature of the primary research instrument used for data mining is that of a pilot questionnaire, general statements regarding the data obtained should not be made. As only a limited number of target employers was considered for sampling, this questionnaire would rather constitute a starting point in designing and defining the set of questions that will be comprised in the final version. Although variety was the top sampling priority for this draft version, results were surprising in the case of textual typologies as literary genres were dramatically overshadowed by their specialised counterparts (it is to be noted, however, that no publishing house was invited to fill in the questionnaire). Increasing the number of participants as well as adding variety to the employer's profile will be of major concern when designing and disseminating the revamped version of the questionnaire.

Although the number of questions and participants is by no means exhaustive, preliminary results obtained through data mining depict the overriding market need for versatile translators able to perform complementary activities such as revision, pre-editing, or assisting trainees if the situation so requires. In addition, aspirants to translator jobs and academic programmes specialised in *Translation Studies* must be aware of the

increasing need for people capable of performing translation technology processing and of using CAT tools, most notably translation memory (TM) software.

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