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Approaches to didactics for technologies in translation and interpreting

Introduction to the special issue of *trans-kom*, Part II

Abstract

Technology and translation are closely linked through the rapid development of CAT tools, machine translation (MT) and artificial intelligence (AI). These elements are undoubtedly leading to a redefinition of the traditional concept of “translation”, and of the translator’s role(s), and have helped expand the reach and scope of translation and of translation studies (TS), opening new and exciting areas of research. Part I in *trans-kom*, volume 11, issue [2] (2018) includes articles that illustrate some of the options, solutions, experiences and approaches developed so far for the integration of technology in the training of future professionals for the translation market. Part II in *trans-kom*, volume 12, issue [1] (2019) offers references to the use of social media, e-platforms, cloud technologies and corpus-assisted translation as well as an example of university-industry collaboration.

Technology and translation are closely linked through the rapid development of CAT tools, machine translation (MT) and artificial intelligence (AI). These elements are undoubtedly leading to a redefinition of the traditional concept of “translation” and of the translator’s role(s). Behind this process, there are new professions and new profiles: language programmers, terminologists, linguists with cultural sensitivity, translators who know how to use CAT tools, post-editors, localizers, and an endless list of professionals whose limits of their activity are no longer clear. These terms are some of the usual ones seen in the offers of large companies providing language services, or in market studies on future translators (Parra 2017: 20–28). Along with these terms are new ways and tools for translating development such as transcreation, multimodality, or audio description.

In this environment, questions arise about the quality of the translation, the cost-effectiveness of the product, the necessary immediacy, competitiveness, or relations with and between the *lingua franca* and the “other” languages. At the same time, collaborative work, outsourcing of language services, associations of companies providing language services (EUATC, GALA), or the greater impact of freelance translators have also emerged. Moreover, translation is rapidly evolving towards models in which different types of CAT tools coexist with automatic translators that use huge amounts of data.

The transition from the era of printed culture and mass media to the era of electronic media and, more recently, digital culture, together with the development of multilingual communities that lead us towards postmonolingualism is having a significant impact on the debate about the human translator's role(s).

All this diversity gives rise to the question whether there are limits to translation or if it is diversifying so much that it is ceasing to exist as an independent discipline. In Gambier's words:

The word translation seems to suffer from a bad reputation. It is often replaced by or competes with other terms, such as localization, adaptation, versioning, transediting, language mediation, and transcreation. [...] It can also complicate the purview of the discipline. [...] How broadly can the definition of the term be extended to encompass the evolving communication situations and new hierarchies implied beyond the labels? (Gambier 2016: 412)

In the same line, the University of Innsbruck in December 2017, held a conference with the theme "Redefining and Refocusing Translation and Interpreting Studies". It is said that the topic was deliberately chosen in the absence of agreement, within the field itself, on what Translation Studies (TS) are or should be. The differences range from the definition of what TS is to the variety of methodological approaches and research objectives that could be admitted. The stigmatization of translation and the need to return to "translation proper" is mentioned. Thus, we read in the call for papers: "What seems particularly alarming is the fact that Translation Studies, which has been an independent discipline since the end of the 1980s, has largely removed professional translation in the form of translation proper from its sphere of activity and stigmatized it" (TRANSLATA III 2017).

At the European Commission in the context of the Translation Europe Forum 2018, Karim Benmamar, a philosopher specializing in transforming thought, gave a lecture under the title 'Reframing translation' about the management of change, at a time when this drift towards what appears to be a technological revolution in the translation sector is seen with fear or as detrimental. His proposal was to reformulate the way translators see their profession and their future.

Along the same lines, the Université Paris Diderot in Paris, announced a conference on the topic of 'Traduction, traductologie: la fin de l'histoire?'. In the call for papers, the hyperspecialization of the translation profession and the multitude of activities it encompasses such as localization, subtitling, overtitling, locution, terminology, or proofreading are mentioned followed by comments on how, paradoxically, this hyperspecialization dilutes the specificity of the profession and somehow anonymizes the translator whose name disappears behind other names: localizer, subtitler, supertitler, terminologist, proofreader, etc. Moreover, it is announced that the advances of MT and AI along with the massive development of free collaborative translation are leading some to predict the end of human translation (or biotranslation) as a profession and as an independent discipline.

These comments might lead us to witness the end of an era or rather the disappearance of Translation Studies, as we know it, diluted in the fragmentation of written text

and the production of different text types and the adoption/emergence of a broader perspective of translation as a model of transdisciplinary concentric circles.

In the historical continuum, the automation of translation is hardly surprising considering the 4.39 billion internet users in 2019, an increase of 366 million (9 percent) versus January 2018, and the large number of active websites (Internet Stats and Facts for 2019).

The different types of digital products have also given rise to several sub-branches of TS, including videogame (O'Hagan/Mangiron 2013), or smartphone/tablet app localization (Roturier 2015). Furthermore, the continuing evolution of the WWW and the merging of content and new platforms mean that new and unexplored research areas will continue to emerge. In the 21st century, as O'Hagan and Mangiron already pointed out, the "interrelationship between translation and technology is only deepening" (O'Hagan/Mangiron 2013: 503), and consequently, the "widespread technological impact on translation" and obviously, on TS, "is only likely to increase" (O'Hagan/Mangiron 2013: 514). Crowdsourcing and volunteer translation of websites (Jiménez-Crespo 2013, 2015) is an example that attracted the most interest in the late 2000s when Facebook and many other social networking websites started to crowdsource the localization of their websites to users. Other trends of interest include the web localization of different web genres and subgenres depending on the different areas of interest around the world. These include such areas as web accessibility or the merging of mobile app and web localization. This evolution seems necessary given the increasing shift from computers to smartphones and tablets to access web content.

The above comments seem to indicate that the education and training of translators is a shared responsibility of universities and language service providers.

This cooperation between the two seems essential. Universities must ensure that students intending to work in the translation industry know what the current and future needs of their potential employers are. Universities must give the students the opportunity to acquire a wide range of both linguistic and translating skills, as well as knowledge of CAT tools, project management and quality control. This knowledge will enable them to occupy various positions within the translation industry, where a multidisciplinary profile is increasingly called for (Valero-Garcés 2018).

The translation industry needs to incorporate professionals with new skills to answer to the new fields of work such as creation and management of large volumes of data (Big data) to feed huge computers, engine training, revision of the MT product (post-editing), automation of translation quality assessment, outsourcing and fragmentation of translation processes, production of multimodal texts, or voice recognition, among others.

These activities indicate that varieties of profiles are needed with a broad command of English established as *lingua franca*. Facebook, Twitter, Google, and Booking.com are good examples, but there are also other institutions such as the EU, the UN, NATO and specialized translation companies or associations (EUATC, GALA) that are creating and/or training their own translation engines.

From an academic point of view, the studies presented reveal the importance of working on updating the training programs to increase the benefit of an academic degree.

From the industry, Rudy Tirry, president of EUATC, also expresses his fears in his 2018 report on market trends: “Price pressure, competition that is often perceived as unfair, and technological advances that are not initiated or controlled by the respondents remain the main concerns that the language industry – like so many others – is struggling with” (Tirry 2018, Language Industry Survey 2018: 31).

Palumbo, in a recent publication talking about the future trends in the practice of translation writes:

The future of this process is not easy to predict, due to its connections to developments in information and communication technology. However, some trends may indicate how the translation industry and the practice of translation might evolve in the coming decade. Translations will be produced with major changes in two key respects: Who translates, how, and why and how machines are integrated in the process of translation. (Palumbo 2019: 321)

Palumbo also points out that language technology and MT research on the one hand and Translation Studies on the other hand have proceeded on fundamentally separate tracks. He claims that technologies have forgotten to involve practitioners or scholars who might have provided feedback on their research. O’Hagan also argues that “no proper technological turn” (O’Hagan 2012) has been observed in Translation Studies. She advocates the incorporation of experts in language and culture transfer to the relentless technological advances in translation.

The second part of the special issue on *Approaches to didactics for technologies in translation and interpreting* offers new examples of how the field of professional translation has been affected by the technological revolution and has led to new research, professional and didactic paradigms. The articles included in *trans-kom*, volume 12, issue [1] (2019) illustrate some more options, solutions, experiences and approaches developed so far for the integration of technology in the training of future professionals in translation. We found references to the use of social media in an emerging specific area in TS – Public Service Interpreting and Translation, also known as Community Interpreting and Translation. We also found allusions to e-platforms, cloud technologies and corpus-assisted translation. The last article of volume 2 ends with an example of university-industry collaboration.

A brief summary of each article follows.

Cedillo Corrochano, in *Les possibilités d’utilisation des médias sociaux dans les cours de Traduction et Interprétation*, analyzes the possible use of social media in Translation and Interpreting classes in order to improve the media presence of Public Service Interpreting and Translation, PSIT, in Spain and also sets forth the positive consequences that media could have on the current deregulated situation of PSIT in the country.

Hui, in *Deployment of an e-platform for interpreting novices’ self-directed learning*, presents how an e-platform newly deployed for interpreting novices facilitates their self-

directed learning and complements classroom learning, and explores their perceived benefits brought by the system.

Malenova, in *Cloud technologies in a Translation classroom*, focuses on peculiarities of using cloud TM environments for teaching translation in a university classroom. The author discusses advantages and disadvantages of said systems using the examples of cloud translation solutions by Smartcat and Memsourc.

Vigier Moreno, in *Corpus-assisted translation of specialised texts into the L2: from the classroom to professional practice*, discusses the results of a training initiative based on the use of monolingual, electronic corpora in the translation of specialized texts into English as a second language, considering their usefulness not only as a pedagogical tool, but especially as a professional resource that provides the translator with relevant and authentic information for more informed decision-taking, which in turn increases their self-confidence and their self-concept as a professional translator.

Mihalache, in *La transformation de l'université: initiatives de formation conjointes Université-Industrie (UI) en technologies de la traduction*, proceeds to reflect upon the potential contribution of translation studies to the analysis of the university-industry collaboration (U-I) phenomena.

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