Translation Technology Course Design: From Practice to Theory

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Introduction

Translation technology has rapidly developed over the past decades and therefore technological skills are considered to be one of the major skills that translators must possess in order to practise their profession. As Bowker (2020) observes, people nowadays have been convinced that translators have to embrace translation technology in order to survive in translation market rather than resist it. The digital revolution is bringing about changes in translation pedagogy and a need currently exists for the introduction of theoretical matters in the translation technology classroom. Indeed, in light of the continuous changes in the market of translation and its implications for the teaching process, it should be questioned whether and to what extent current curricula meet not only with the technological needs of the translation industry but also with theoretical issues related to the use of technology such as the ethical dilemmas that arise, the constraints of using translation technology tools apart from the benefits and pedagogical limitations in teaching translation theory.

Theoretical Background

The Concept of Translation Competence

One of the main subjects widely addressed in the fields of Translation Studies regards the kind of competences required for the professional translator in order to promote a successful career in the industry. Within this framework, the concept of competence needs to be further analysed as a notion that encompasses a series of elements and procedures involved in the process of translation.

In Europe, a competence-based approach to translator training has been established in higher education translation programmes. Many theorists have endeavored to identify the different components of the notion of competence and set specific criteria indicating its multifaceted nature which is continually evolving. Hence, several multidimensional models have been proposed and validated by different empirical evidence. One of the most frequently cited models has been developed by the PACTE Group (2005) which suggests that translation competence consists of "bilingual, extra-linguistic, knowledge of translation, instrumental, strategic subcompetences and also psycho-physiological components".

Another suggested model is the EMT (European Master's in Translation) Competence Framework named initially "competence wheel" which was developed by an expert group in 2009 and updated in 2017 by the EMT Board presented as a mechanism composed of cogs representing the movement and smooth functioning of all competences as a whole. The updated version includes the following components: language and culture, service provision, translation, technology, personal and interpersonal and service provision training students to possess the necessary skills and expertise in order to perform effectively in their future workplace.

Kiraly (2000) develops a constructivist approach based on the distinction between translation competence and translator competence with the former focusing on the linguistic aspects of the translation process and the latter focusing on the development of various skills, knowledge acquisition and attitude forming regarding the practical matters of the translator's profession.

Finally, Krajcso (2018) relates translation competence to the market demands of the professional world of translation by emphasizing the strong relationship between the activity of translation and the development of technological competence and stressing the need for further research on "operational competence" which is related to the translator's ability to handle issues such as marketing, risk management, legal aspects and ethical issues in the translator's profession.

Translation Technology Competence

Over the last decades, the progress in information technology has led to the development of advanced technological tools that have proven to be very powerful instruments for the translator's profession. O' Hagan (2013) talks about "the technological turn" that the translation sector has embraced with certain consequences in Translation Studies and the pedagogical approaches to be adopted in the teaching process. This transition has had an important effect on translator training since translation technology subcompetence has become one of the key elements of translation competence development allowing for more effective and efficient results in the practice of translation.

The PACTE Group considers "technological competence" also known as "instrumental knowledge" as a key-element of translation competence defining it as "procedural knowledge related to the use of documentation resources and information and communication technologies applied to translation". Another approach of what technological competence entails is described by the EMT (European Master's in Translation) as "all the knowledge and skills used to implement present and future translation technologies within the translation process".

Li et al (2023) propose a translation technology competence model that is composed of six basic elements: machine translation, post-editing, information literacy, terminology management, translation memory and computer-aided translation. Translators use machine translation as an assistant tool in order to increase their production in a variety of thematic areas within the translation industry and improve the quality of translations. Post-editing makes up another main component which involves reviewing and improving the output of machine translation in order to check qualities such as its accuracy and appropriateness for purpose. Information literacy that concerns the translator's ability to detect and utilize information constitutes an essential part of his technological competence. The introduction of the Internet has enormously expanded the information sources available to translators by transforming dramatically the detection of information in the translation process. Terminology management involves the process of identifying, extracting, storing, utilizing and keeping term records up to date. Since terminological analysis makes up the foundation for translating specific thematic fields, one of the aims of translator training programmes is to instruct students in constructing terminological databases and develop terminology management skills. Translation memory makes up another useful technological tool for professionals by referencing and reusing existing translation texts when producing new translations. It provides users with the opportunity to work and ensure compare their work to previous consistency especially in thematic areas which are characterized by a high rate of specialised vocabulary and syntactic structures. Computer-aided translation involves the translator's capacity to utilize computer-assisted translation software and other computer programmes in order to meet the demands of their tasks and produce quality translations.

It is essential to train students on the above-mentioned subsectors so that they gain knowledge of the most advanced technological developments and high level of proficiency since technology is becoming nowadays an integral part and common practice in the professional world of translation.

Method: Toward a Theoretical Approach to Translation Technology

Although attitudes toward new technologies range from acknowledging their usefulness to considering them "inconvenient" (Corpas Pastor et al., 2015), they now make up a necessary component of the act of ranslation, and more widely on the act of human communication. Such an attention to translation technology in the academic world is definitely a positive step forward, however, we recognize the need for the introduction of a theoretical approach of translation technology in the translation curriculum in general, and, more specifically, in the translation technology classroom. The current study aims at offering a framework of reflection on the implications of technological developments for the theorization of translation by proposing a theoretical approach to translation technology. The main issues tackled in this chapter are the aims and content of a theoretical approach toward translation, pedagogical difficulties in translation theory teaching and basic criteria for content selection.

Aims and Content

Critical Thinking and Translation Technology Competence

One of the subcomponents of the notion of translation competence is related to critical skills development that helps translation students to further improve their performance on translation tasks and tests. The ability to think critically is the key to improving translation competence by providing translators with the necessary intellectual tools to assess the target audience expectations of their work, to make appropriate selections of translation methods and strategies and be able to examine critically the available resources. Translation technology competence is highly impacted by critical skills since many of the tasks in the translation task such as machine translation work or post-editing are affected by the translator's critical ability through self-regulation (Yang & Wang, 2020). Thus, one of the primary goals of the theoretical component in translation technology courses should be critical skill development that should have a strong impact on the translator's technological competence.

Cultural Awareness and Translation Technology Competence

Bennett (2003) defines cultural intelligence as "a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts" with four basic components: cognitive, metacognitive, motivational and behavioral. Cultural intelligence is related to the concept of cultural competence which is connected to the individual's ability to recognize and respect cultural differences as well as to his ability to interact effectively with people from other cultures.

In the field of translation, modern approaches view translation not as a mere transcoding process, but as a form of action across cultures, as a cross-cultural event (Arrojo, 2005; Venuti, 1995; Bassnett-McGuire, 1980). According to the EMT Competence Framework programmes, the intercultural stage of translator training should aim at developing student sensitization to the cultural differences among societies and their implications for translating, since the acquisition of cultural and transcultural knowledge makes up the basis for the acquisition of ranslation competence. One of the main goals set at translator training programmes is the study of the role culture plays in translation, focusing mainly on the linguistic and cultural resources employed by translators in their attempt to serve as mediators of cultural messages. Thus, cultural competence is strongly linked to translation technology competence since translators need to be equipped with adequate information technology literacy in order to access sources of information so that they can bridge cultural gaps between texts that are due to cultural differences.

The Ethical Dimension of Translation Technology Competence

Many of the discussions in Translation Studies tackle the question of ethics in translation focusing investigating matters such as the obligation of the translator to be accurate and faithful, that is, "how to translate" (Pym, 2001). Chesterman (2001) describes four different models of ethics in translation: ethics of representation that stresses issues such as fidelity, faithfulness, accuracy, alterity and true representation of the other; ethics of service which aligns with theories of functionalism and compliance with the translation brief; ethics of communication stressing the importance of communicating with others and the role of the translator as mediator working to achieve cross-cultural understanding" and norm-based ethics which involves behavior in accordance with the norms of a certain time and culture regarding the criteria of an acceptable translation product. In the case of PACTE, ethics makes up part of the concept of psychophysiological competence, defined as "a critically reflective morality aimed at identifying, examining and addressing practice problems" (Borstner & Smiljana, 2014). For Göpferich (2009), ethics forms part of the "translator's self-concept/professional ethos", where issues of social behaviour are raised. The ethical subcompetences is considered to be an essential component of the translator's professional behaviour.

While ethical issues of the translation process are by no means new in the field of translation studies, technology has not been addressed adequately in its theoretical dimension. Although there had been some attempts back in the 1990s to ethical matters related to machine translation (MT), in the late 2000s theoreticians raised ethical matters that translation technology created which are closely related to wider sociocultural matters coming out of the translation process. Bowker (2020) provides a comprehensive model of the concept of ethics in translation that entails the following six elements: the sharing and commoditization of translation resources; privacy and confidentiality of data; fidelity and collaboration; professional identity, autonomy and job satisfaction; productivity, time and money; and cultural hegemony versus the linguistic diversity paradox.

Integrating ethical issues in translation technology classes is essential especially at the beginning of the translation process since the social, legal and ethical considerations of technology should not be underestimated. Drugan (2017) makes an interesting proposal of "an integrated, inter-disciplinary approach to bringing ethics into translator training" involving the introduction of ethics into translation technology classes with the main pedagogical approach the use of case-studies that would provide students with the opportunity to examine real-life problems and consider a variety of parametres in taking translation decisions and solutions. The current study was inspired by Bloom's taxonomy (Drugan and Megone, 2011) that consists of four main levels: a. understand, b. apply, c. evaluate, d. create. The overall aim of the specific approach is to help students to understand general ethical issues related to translation technology, then to identify them in specific contexts, afterwards to justify their response and, finally, to create new approaches that would help them to handle ethical issues.

The Ideology of Translation and Translation Technology Competence

The translator's ideological role is closely connected to the notion of ethics in the act of translating. The integration of the ideological dimension of the translator in translation technology classes could be one of the essential components of a comprehensive theoretical approach to translation technology so that students realize their moral responsibilities to society in transferring sociocultural messages. Althusser (2021) acknowledges that ideology dominates in the act of translating by stressing that "there is no practice except by and in ideology". While every type of text entails an ideological nuance, specific types of texts are representative of the ideological load they bear such as political texts, religious texts and media discourse.

Since the major aim of translation programmes is to train future professionals employed in the translation industry, teachers of the corresponding major must be well aware of the above-mentioned aspect of translation and take the necessary actions in adjusting the curriculum so as to align the teaching concept in accordance with the ideological aspect of translation and the development of translators as ideological mediators. Hence, students who finish new translation technology classes will show greater sensitivity toward the ideological aspect of translation compared with students who have been trained under the traditional curriculum system.

What is proposed in the current research is the integration of a systematic theoretical tool in translation technology classes that would aim at making students understand the notion of ideology in translation and how it is linked to translation technology competence development. The role played by ideology in translation and that of the translator as ideological mediator should make up another main component of translation technology classes in academic translator training programmes.

History of Technology

Knowledge of the history of translation is of vital importance to students that would help them to eliminate their misunderstanding on the benefits and limitations of translation technology and develop a rational and objective expectation of translation technological tools. Mossop (Gambier, 2012) suggests that we should avoid being charmed by technologies themselves and "not to teach the instrument but the principle". The most important of all is that translator training maintains its humanistic character which is often depreciated by technoscience.

One of the questions translation students often ask in translation technology courses is why professionals who are mostly concerned with practical problems of translation to approach translation technology in a historical context. Woodsworth (1995) who has discussed the significance of studying the past of translation provides the following answer: "Or, for those whose primary goal is professional practice, because one ought to be familiar with the history of one's discipline in order to practice efficiently".

Therefore, teachers of translation should design a translation technology course that would focus on the relation between technology and translation through centuries and the role of technology as a means of communication. It is essential that students acquire consciousness of the philosophy of technology so that he continually tests it and evolve with it.

Furthermore, their reflection on past of technology would help them to develop their critical ability as one of the most significant subcompetences for the translator's profession. Benmouhoub (2019) stresses the significance of critical thinking in helping them "question the things around them and act critically in their academic and professional career".

Another practically-oriented benefit of studying technology in its historical context is to make students reflect on the process of translation in its sociological and cultural context and as Alenezi (2021) says, "recognizing the differences between the source text and target text cultures at different levels is important for learners who seek to become translators". Within this framework, the study of the history of translation technology would have practical value toward the understanding of the sociocultural aspect of translation and the translator's role as that of ideological "transformer and mediator".

Content

Within this framework, the current research proposes a comprehensive and reinforced theoretical approach to translation technology as integrated part of a translation technology course that would comprise the following components:

- Knowledge of the history of Computer Aided Translation as well as the philosophy of technology throughout centuries in order to acquire consciousness of the philosophy of technology, so that translator training can maintain its humanistic character.

- Examination of the ways in which electronic communication has been used to enhance communication between translators, especially through Internet forums for professional translators. The communicative aspect of the translation procedure must be an element which should be stressed through this academic-oriented technology course which could contribute to the improvement of the translators' communicative competence.

- The effect of information technology on the translator's role as ideological and cultural mediator. The integration of the social dimension of the translator could be one of the basic elements in the particular theoretical approach so that students realize their moral responsibilities to society as transferring social and political messages.

- The concept of professionalization of translation since technology has really changed the translation profession. The notion of professional competence could be integrated in such an approach with 'professional competence' including these subcompetences:

- Organizational: the ability to design and manage a translation task assigned to the translator in order to acquire career management skills.

- Interpersonal: the ability to work collaboratively and develop interpersonal relations with the people involved in the translation task.

- Instrumental: knowledge of the available resources and ability to apply them to the translation process.

- Psychological competence: acquisition of self-awareness and self-confidence which is closely related to the translators' performance and helps them handle the psychological stress during the translation procedure.

Difficulties in the Teaching Process

Another matter to be explored concerns the difficulties that teachers of the particular major might encounter in integrating the theorical aspect of translation technology competence related to students' knowledge and background in the use of technologies, their attitudes and opinions toward technology and technology teachers' academic background.

- Students' background in the use of new technologies

Students' background in the use of technology may present a diversified picture. At first, it is of great importance for teachers to investigate students' level of technological knowledge before they decide on the teaching methods and content of a translation technology course. Next, they should adopt varied teaching techniques in accordance with students' profile and specific needs. This implies that teachers should form a general picture of the make-up of each student group in order to decide on their teaching methods and course content design.

Furthermore, the increasing heterogenous composition of students' groups in translation programmes has possibly made teachers more aware of various learning styles, although, as Kelly (2005) supports "learning styles exist and have always existed in the most apparently homogeneous groups". However, an important premise is that students' individual features and their prior educational background affect their learning styles which according to researchers are so deeply rooted that they may be very difficult to change.

• Students' attitudes toward the use of technology

For the majority of students who come to university have relatively little experience in using computers for translation purposes so the first steps toward mastering computer skills might be a painful experience. In this type of course, it is essential to explore right from the start through questionnaires and other research instruments their attitudes and opinions regarding the contribution of translation technology to their future career as professionals. Furthermore, it is essential for translation teachers to investigate in the design stage of their course students' opinions on the contribution of a theoretical approach to translation technology to the translator's profession as one of the main difficulties involved in the teaching of translation results from students' prejudiced attitude toward the theoretical component of their training (Mossop, 2005). Gentile (1995) calls the particular attitude "atheoretical", a term that he uses in order to stress the belief among a considerable part of student community that one does not need a theoretical background in order to be able to translate. It is certainly important for students to realise that theoretical knowledge is closely connected to the practice of translation and that some theoretical background in translation background will certainly help students to produce better results and it makes up necessary prerequisite for professionals in the translation industry.

• Translation technology instructors with knowledge of pedagogic and didactic principles

One of the most serious problems in teaching translation technology is that quite often teaching is assigned to experts who are entirely cut off from humanistic sciences or ignore basic pedagogic and didactic principles. This certainly influences translation students who become demotivated and lose their interest in a comprehensive approach toward translation technology. We might also encounter difficulties in the implementation of a theoretical approach toward translation technology due to academics' negative attitude toward technology. More particularly, theoreticians, by fear of "dehumanization" of the translating process, may adopt a negative attitude regarding the use of technology as lacking any academic "prestige".

Features of Theoretical Components in Translation Technology Courses

Another issue that is raised is related to the specific traits that theoretical components should have in order to integrated into a practical translation technology class. The following are some useful criteria adopted by Mossop's model (2005) that are proposed to translation teachers in formulating the theoretical component of their class in order to provide an aspect of academic prestige to translation technology classes.

• Components should be directly relevant to the students' needs. It is important that they provide practical answers to questions and problems actually faced or likely to be encountered by students and graduates.

• Components should be easy to understand by being simple in structure so that students are not discouraged in abstracting theoretical notions resulting in adopting a negative attitude toward the theorization of technology.

• Components should be recalled throughout the course and the practical implications of theoretical components should be stressed repeatedly during the correction of practical translation

technology exercises.

• Theoretical elements must ensure that motivation is maintained.

This could be achieved by making students realize the contribution of a theoretical approach of translation technology to their future career as professional translators.

Conclusion

The advancement of technological tools has brough about a new insight into the traditional translation theories and practices. Considering the increasing demands of the translator's profession in the twenty first century, it is time for an integrated pedagogic approach to translation technology teaching that could combine theoretical and practical components, by careful adaptation to each training context, student population and other important parametres.

Acquiring the know-how is not sufficient for ensuring that students will possess the necessary technological competences that they will need as future translators. The effectiveness of computerized instruction will depend to a great extent on an approach, combining theory and practice, education and training, so that we can avoid both a technological approach which is cut off from its sociopolitical environment and a certain technophobia which keeps individuals away from technological development.

The main goal of the proposed approach is to help students develop awareness of both the benefits and, mostly, the dangers of using technology so that they can make their own conscious choices regarding the use of technology. Knowing how to use it, how for and for what purpose and to what effects, is difficult to achieve but it should be the main objective of a translation technology course.

Above all, it should encourage students to move beyond directed instruction and acquire autonomy as lifelong learners and users of new technology. Translation technology teaching must aim at cultivating students' ability to adapt dynamically to the tools of the profession as they evolve in their career as translators. As Biggs (2003) points out, simply teaching students how to use new technologies does not make learning more effective or innovative. Instead, he introduces the term "education technology" in an attempt to remind teachers that the overall aim should be to enhance learning and motivate students to be lifelong learners.

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