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## Training translators: why, how, what for?

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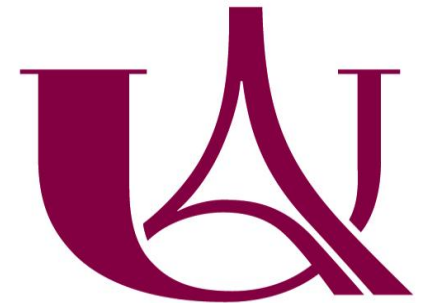
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# Training translators: why, how, what for?

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Université de Paris

- Thank you!
- All apologies!
- *Where would my field of competence lie?*
- In my experience as translator and head of a small translator company (1987-2003):
  - A very focused activity
  - In my current job as translator trainer (2006-present):
    - Taking the broader view
    - Both in France (AFFUMT, the French association of translation training programs)
    - And in Europe (EMT, European Master's in Translation)
  - Regarding your country, however,
  - More questions than answers
  - So let us end this with a dialogue

**This is not an introduction**

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- An old (very old) story...
- A few stylized fact:
- *Translation is an art (or possibly a craft)*
- Hence, no need for training
- *Anyone who knows foreign languages can translate*
- Hence, no need for training (again)
- *Translating means translating novels*
- It is thus meant for literary minded persons (with no financial ambition, to boot)
- *Translation is first and foremost a question of practice*
- Hence, training for it and reflecting on it can only harm
- *Machine translation will make all translators redundant and obsolete*
- Hence, it is best to go look elsewhere for a real job

# Translation and misunderstanding

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- An ideal locus for preconceived thoughts
- A widespread ignorance of realities
- Hasty generalizations (*I know a translator who... ; Thirty years ago, when I did some translations...; It worked with me, so everyone should follow my example...*)
- Naive representations (*Translation is about languages, not culture or civilization...*)
- In other words, we are very tempted to speak nonsense
- But in a convincing (and convinced) way

**A few additions, just in case..**



- Importance of the literary field, and norm?
- Stems from the ancient domination of religious thought on translation
- Predominance of practice?
- Stems from a period where translation meant totally different and separate things at university and in the professional world (at least in my country...)
- Translation: strictly for linguists?
- *Ditto*
- Machine translation (MT) will wipe us out?
- Denotes a misunderstanding of the way MT works

**Those opinions are  
historical products**

- The world is changing fast
- « Now Barbarians are laying our country waste, and uncertainty is all-pervasive. » (Jerome, Vth century, quoted by Von Campenhausen, 1969, p. 176)
- Hence, some trouble defining our very field
- A tentative solution : Translation : « *Any form of dealing with imbalances between languages and cultures* ». (Gouadec, 2005, p. 16)
- One thing for sure : translation, today, is a vast set of varied professions

**Some things are true, though...** 6

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- (1) Translation : an essential means for disseminating cultures (all and any cultures):
- « A country that fails to translate is a country where the ghost of dictatorship looms large. » (Yves Chevrel, December 2019)
- (2) To sell any good or service efficiently, it is best to sell it in the buyer's own language
- An example: China in Portugese-speaking African countries
- (3) Access to public services in a language one masters is a prerequisite of democracy and citizenship in the European Union (EU)
- An example: the 2011/24/EU directive
- therefore: translation = culture, economy, democracy

**And also three common principles**

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- Translation (in the time-honored sense, with varied subfield)
- Interpretation (again, a composite domain)
- Revision
- Project management
- Terminology
- Localization
- Postedition
- Transcreation
- Technical writing/communication
- And a lot more (some not even invented yet...)

**Translation: an umbrella term for  
a vast array of professions**

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- Not anymore
- But one has to be cautious with figures here:
- Numbers rarely add-up, neither do definitions: we are talking about orders of magnitude
- A global turnover of 48 billion euros (NIMDZI, 2019)
- Apparently unaffected by COVID-19 (EUATC 2021)
- A 7.9% yearly growth rate over 2009-2019 (NIMDZI, 2019)
- 49% of the market is in Europe
- Around 400 000 translation professionals in the world
- What about France? Some 20,000 (SFT, unpublished, 2014)
- And Greece?

# ***Is market* a four-letter-word?**



- At least 70% of translators are women
- Two-thirds are free-lancers
- And one third are employed (not to be overlooked...)
- With strong differences between countries and specializations
- An example: audiovisual translation
- A very large diversity of statuses, income or organizational features
- Share of publishing: between 3 and 10%
- Yes, that is not much indeed...
- Translators holding a degree in translation in France: 60.44% in 2015, against 52.07% in 2008 (SFT 2015)

## **A few trends, as seen from France (and arguably Europe)**



- Some professions are suffering:
- Audiovisual translation...
- Some are on a plateau:
- Localization, technical translation...
- Some are growing:
- Project management, terminology, postedition, high-end/premium translation...
- Some are barely emerging:
- Transcreation, content curation...
- Others, yet, are triving for independence
- It's a complex ecosystem

# Few stones unturned

# Taking the broader view

- Trade is expanding
- Migration is increasing
- Hence, new needs, including in so far barely institutionalized sectors (public service interpretation and translation, sign language translation...)
- Translation and interpretation are slowly coming closer
- The world map of translation training programs is changing fast:
- PAMCIT (Pan African Masters Consortium in Interpretation and Translation)
- 253 new translation programs creating in China between 2009 and 2019!



- Disruptive innovations
- In translation proper, the rise of NMT (neural machine translation), since 2016
- In 2019, 51% of European LSPs (language service providers) reported using it (EUATC survey)
- As always, two ways to react
- Irrational exuberance (*Yippee!, no need for translators anymore...*)
- Unreasonable fears (*Horror!, no need for translators anymore...*)
- Wrong!
- But also, in interpretation, remote or distance interpreting, real-time terminology tools...
- In a lot of domains (including audiovisual translation), voice recognition, big data...
- Keep an eye on those trends (and others)!

# So what is currently new?



- No!
- In fact, the Uber model has been around for more than 20 years in translation: ProZ
- But there will be winners and losers
- The winners (training programs and individuals) will be those who know how to position themselves in this changing environment
- The winning recipe (IMHO):
- (1) a new compromise between human competence (« biotranslation ») and tools
- (2) lifelong learning
- (3) exploiting one's competitive advantage on a broad continuum, without fear or scorn for any facet of the professions
- Which entails a historical perspective (did calculating machines make maths redundant?)

# Is translation bound to be uberized?

- Generalization or one or a few vehicular languages (English, Chinese, Klingon, Dothraki...)?
- All-inclusive machine translation?
- (which often appears to come for free, but does not...)
- A variety of solutions, tailored for different needs, and using both human and computer skills (or « The Wedding of Analogic and Numeric Thoughts »)
- Why is the latter option to be preferred?
- Because it is better for the whole society (note: not better for translators only...)

# What could be expected?



# Hence an ethical dimension in training

- Endow future professionals with the skills that will make them future-proof
- Make them aware of broader stakes, including ethical ones
- Work on making society at large more aware of its needs in terms of translation and mediation
- Which entails updating and upgrading the image of translators and translation (including their self-image)
- In other word, professionalize:
- It is our job, as researchers and trainers



- Translation, in its economic sense, calls for ever finer competences
- Which supposes proper training and professionals
- This is not contradictory with a vision of translation as a global common good
- Because what is changing is the place of translation in society
- Among others as a mediation tool
- And this function, at this moment, is emerging from invisibility (Venuti)
- For the benefit of all

# Therefore

- Translation training: a recent phenomenon
- Three waves:
- 1940s-50s (ETI, ESIT, ISIT, ISTI...)
- 1990s (in France, Paris Diderot, Rennes, Grenoble)
- Since 2005 (Bologna process)
- The result: too many masters' in Europe (more than 300...)
- Too many, really?
- According to which criteria?

**OK, but how?**



- Professional integration
- Proportion of professionals in the last year of training
- Institutional integration:
- The EMT (European Master's in Translation) network
- Or CIUTI (International Conference of T&I Training Institutions)
- Ties with professional associations
- Ties with the industry (LSPs, internships)
- Ties with research (yes, it does matter...)

**Which quality criteria, as seen from outside?**

- More generally
- From talent to competence: a paradigm change

# A few good practice examples

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- A holistic view on training, focused on professional integration
- With courses or conferences on each aspect
- « Various statuses for translators »
- « Negotiating rates »
- « Handling job interviews »
- « Quoting and invoicing in the translation professions »
- « Ethics (personal and professional) »
- « The translator toolbox »
- « Handling social networks in a professional way »
- Ties with alumni associations
- ...

## **Some training components**

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- « French-to-English website translation »
- Interaction between a biotranslation course (French-to-English)
- And a course focused on tools (SystranLinks)
- Capitalizing on an outside assignment (from our Earth-Science department)
- Using teamwork, organized according to specializations (terminology, project management, translation, revision...)
- With input from and coordination with the « client »
- Ending in publication mentioning our master's

# **A practical example, blending two courses**



- Junior enterprises (a well-established model)
- Tradutec project (launched in Rennes, 1990s): one-week, 50,000 words, a collective project (imitated throughout Europe)
- Translation marathons (Strasbourg)
- Creation of a translation bureau inside the university (Brest)
- A virtual translation agency within the training program (Aix en Provence)...
- Translating for NGOs on a voluntary basis
- With an ethical limit (of course):
- Never take assignments that professionals could and should take

## **Other examples, in other French masters**

- At the very least: mandatory internships (with real input from the company)
- From 6 weeks to 6 months, depending on the programs
- My own master's example: a work-study regime (« *alternance* »)
- M2 students work inside a company every other week from September to June, then full-time in July and August
- That is 31 weeks (including 5 weeks of paid holiday)
- With an employee status (with income)
- And follow-up on our part (visits, three assessments, at least two general meetings during the year)
- Amounts to one-third of the M2 grade (20 ECTSs)
- A basic principle:
- To each his or her own domain of competence
- And a dialogue among equals

**Direct links with the professional  
world**

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- With associations (professional or otherwise)
- With other (good) translation programs
- In France: AFFUMT (*Association française des formations universitaires aux métiers de la traduction*)
- In Europe : the EMT (European Master's in Translation) network
- Why?
- Guaranteeing quality (to the outside world)
- Best practice exchange
- Possibility to lobby vendors
- Example: making Studio free for our students AFFUMT, then EMT...
- More leverage towards government
- Example, in France: creation of a mention (official training category) labelled « Translation and interpretation » in 2018, thanks to AFFUMT

# Networking

- Why the hell?!
- For a better awareness of the stakes at hand (Meschonnic)
- To gain a broader picture of a fast-changing field
- An example (again):
- *Field-grown translation studies (Traductologie de plein champ)*
- A basic principle: putting together scholars, translation trainers, translation professionals and students to debate on common topics of interest
- Eight installments since 2007:
- « From localization to delocalization », « The desire to translate and translators' legitimacy », « Translating for the larger public », « Translation and translation studies: is this the end of history? »
- Since 2013: a three-cities international conference (Paris, Brussels, Geneva)
- With translator associations always...

# And also with research



- Be selective (of both students and teachers)
- Avoid easy options
- Competence comes through tackling difficulty
- ... And so does money
- Opt for lifelong learning

**And a few more general  
principles**

- A complex and rapidly-changing biotope
- A lot of false ideas to be corrected
- An (in fact) emerging profession
- With tough challenges (NMT...)
- A growing role and visibility in society at large
- Finding the right compromise between biotranslation and automation
- The magic triangle:
- Training, professional life, research
- But what is your opinion on this?

**To make a long story short**

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**And do not read  
this book under  
any  
circumstances!**

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Nicolas Froeliger

Les noces de l'analogique  
et du numérique

*De la traduction pragmatique*



Traductologiques  
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