BUILDING SENSITIVENESS TO SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND SELF-CARE IN TRANSLATOR/INTERPRETER TRAINEES

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ABSTRACT

The present paper falls in the translation studies, yet it calls for interdisciplinary action – the co-operation between translation studies and social and behavioral studies. Translating/interpreting study programs require that students become competent in language usage in line with translation/interpreting strategies and techniques. Along with being a language expert, a translator/interpreter acts as a negotiator, a mediator, or a facilitator. New life situations make the translation industry impose new tasks on training. The recent months have evidenced that a translator/interpreter may as well serve as a psychologist, mentor, advisor, or counselor, if a need arises. The paper offers two case studies in which the interpreter's attention was diverted from well-prepared and planned interpreting-and-translation-related coping to immediate coping accompanied by providing psychological support and mental coaching. The present paper argues that unprecedented translation/interpreting tasks should also be attended to during the higher education preparation, which requires introducing the concepts of social responsibility and self-care into community translation/interpreting course.

Key words: Community translation/interpreting. Immediate coping. Planned coping. Self-care. Social responsibility. Translation studies. Translator/Interpreter trainee.

INTRODUCTION

Translating and interpreting may be regarded as language meta-competences encompassing a set of language and profession related knowledge, skills, and competences, and are achieved through specialized training and practice. University preparation for a career in translation and interpreting is designed in such a way that secures graduates' language competence, translation competence, and occupational competence. Language competence includes mastery of grammar, lexical choice, stylistic appropriateness, cohesion and coherence, or placement of text/speech into an appropriate context. Translation competence implies mastery in proper selection of translation strategies and techniques, proper dealing with loss in translation as well as compensating for it, or accounting for the target lingua-culture and audience.

Occupational competence is a prerequisite for functioning in the labor market, conforming to translation ethics (not interfering with or altering the text semantics), legal aspects of translator profession, all this communicated through a translation brief with a client.

During their studies, students gradually become competent not only in language usage but also in translation/interpreting strategies and techniques and within pre-service practice, they apply the acquired skills and competences in a variety of communication situations. Pre-service practice requires them to find a client, to manage the translation/interpreting brief, to cope with specialized terminology and other language and culture related tasks, to keep the deadline or negotiate the time frame. Typically, these tasks allow for timely preparation including the compilation of a glossary,

studying parallel texts, or consultation with a field expert. However, when the trainees enter the labor market, they can be exposed to tasks that the traditional design of courses in the translation/interpreting study program did not cater for as these are the outcome of the life dynamics and geopolitical circumstances. As a matter of fact, the last two years have made us ponder over the nature of a communication situation more intensively and reconsider the importance of preparation for immediate coping in socially and psychologically challenging situations.

The present paper is conceptual in nature. It aspires to raise awareness that unprecedented translator/interpreting tasks should also be covered and prepared for during the university training. It argues that a course on community translation/interpreting should expand the notion of immediate coping through the interlinkage with the concepts of social responsibility and self-care so that the translator/interpreter is mentally strong to provide psychological support and mental couching to the clients. The paper starts with the reporting on the current general trend in translation/interpreting training and provides a picture of a translation/interpreting graduate in terms of obtained competences. It is juxtaposed with the empirical observation that triggers a new perspective – two case studies showcase the newly emerged circumstances in which the general set of competences does not suffice. The third section identifies the necessary changes in pre-service training of translators/interpreters accounting for the interlinkage between language, translation, and socio-behavioral studies.

1 Current trends in studying translation and interpreting
1.1 Competences to be acquired in order to make qualified decisions

Translator/interpreter competences are not presented individually rather within models or taxonomies, which emphasizes their interrelationship, conditionality, and completeness (cf. Koželová 2018). These taxonomies have become the building blocks of uni-

versity study programs in translation and interpreting. One of the principal reference standards for translator/interpreter training throughout the European Union and beyond has been the European Master's in Translation framework and competence (EMT Competence Framework, p. 2); it was drafted in 2009, noticeably redrafted in 2017, and updated in 2022 in order to reflect on the AI research outcomes and advancement and availability of new technologies. EMT framework does not aspire to offer a comprehensive account of all the knowledge, skills, and competences required in translation/interpreting studies graduates – e.g. the theoretical knowledge or the basic research skills commonly integrated in translation and interpreting studies programs are not explicitly listed. Rather, the EMT framework outlines the general competences and skills that graduates are required to manifest (EMT Competence Framework, p. 2).

EMT encompasses knowledge, skills, and competences in line with European qualifications framework (online). Knowledge, i.e. the body of facts, principles, theories and practices related to a field of work or study, refers to "the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning"; a skill refers to "a person's ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems"; a competence refers to "a person's proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological skills in work or study situations and in professional and personal development" (EMT Competence Framework, p. 3). The definition of competences draws on viewing 'translation' as "a process the goal of which is to meet an individual, societal or institutional need and recognizing translator/interpreter as a multi-faceted profession that covers the many areas of competence and skills required to convey meaning (in a written or spoken medium) from at least one natural language to another, and the many different tasks performed by those who provide a translation service" (EMT Competence Framework, p. 4). It delineates five main areas of competence: language and culture, translation, technology, personal and interpersonal

competence, and service provision (EMT Competence Framework, p. 5).

Language and culture competence (language-specific linguistic, sociolinguistic, cultural and transcultural knowledge and skills) is the key competence encompassing the ability to recognize the purpose of language variations and accordingly opt for the suitable grammatical, lexical and idiomatic structures. It also refers to the ability to spot elements of culture (including presuppositions, allusions and stereotypes), CSIs and values in the written or oral text and the ability to abide by the cultural, genre and rhetorical conventions and standards of the target language (EMT Competence Framework, p. 6). Translation competence (in its broadest sense) encompasses the translation process in its entirety, i.e. not merely the stage of meaning transfer between two languages (interlingual transfer) or within the same language (intralingual transfer) but also all the other stages preceding and following it. Specifically, it includes all the competences related to source text analysis, contemplation and selection of translation solutions, to final quality control measures (EMT Competence Framework, p. 7). Technology competence refers to all the knowledge and skills inevitable for coping with current (machine translation, cat tools) and future translation/interpreting technologies (EMT Competence Framework, p. 9).

Personal and interpersonal competence refers to "soft skills", such as time management, workload, cognitive load and stress management, ability to work autonomously, ability to work in virtual, multicultural and multilingual settings, ability to use social media for communication, ability to self-evaluate, and ability to update and develop competences and skills and engage in life-long learning (EMT Competence Framework, p. 10). Service provision includes all the skills related to the language services in a professional setting, specifically the ability to successfully communicate with the clients and commissioners and ability to negotiate through project management as well as awareness of qu-

ality assurance (EMT Competence Framework, p. 11). The two competences may be interpreted as an occupational competence.

1.2 Field roles taken in pursuing a career in translation and interpreting

In both pre-service and in-service practice, a commissioned task requires that the translator/interpreter perform certain roles. Based on the empirical evidence and long-term translation and interpreting practice, we suggest that the diploma in translation and interpreting empower the graduate to be a language expert, facilitator, mediator, and negotiator. Each role is enacted by means of a particular competence – language and culture, translation and technology, occupational (personal, interpersonal, and service provision). The following table (Table 1) explicates the claimed roles.

Table 1: Field roles empowered by EMT Competence Framework

competence	language expert	mediator	facilitator	negotiator
language & culture	• provides expert information, ideas • obeys grammar rules • offers appropriate lexical choice • demonstrates functional adequacy, situational/stylistic appropriateness, and norms of use	• provides for precise localization • accounts for local linguaculture, conceptualization and conventions	--	--
translation & technology	• demonstrates proper usage of CAT tools and appropriate amount of post-editing	--	--	--
occupational (personal, interpersonal, and service provision)	--	--	provides the client with access to information	negotiates information related to linguacultural, etc. differences

Source: the authors' data

2 New challenges: Two Case Studies
2.1 Methodology

In order to justify our argument of expanding competences by social responsibility and self-care in community interpreting, we opt for qualitative descriptive research, namely illustrative case studies. The reason is that "[t]hese are primarily descriptive studies. They typically utilize one or two instances of an event to show what a situation is like. Illustrative case studies serve primarily to make the unfamiliar familiar and to give readers a common language about the topic in question" (Case studies, online). The geopolitical and social circumstances made

available two specific situations that we considered worth further exploration: the war conflict in Ukraine and Dutch social work trainees' visit in Slovakia.

The two situations served as illustrative case studies for which we employed a multi-modal method: interview and participant observation. Participants were translation and interpreting trainees pursuing pre-service practice, students aged 18 – 23. They were selected on a voluntary basis. The reason for its being a volunteer-based activity was the emotionally challenging communication situations. The students were allowed to decide on the frequency and duration of participation according to their mental state and ability to establish rational-emotional balance. After completing the task, they reported their observation and underwent the interview with the authors of the present paper.

We started our inquiry with the basic premise that the most frequently reported difficulties will include fatigue from lengthy exposure to interpreting and appropriateness of vocabulary used but during data analysis new facts emerged and prompted new questions. In the present survey, we firstly provide the background, secondly comment on the interview and participant observation data, thirdly offer findings that will direct further action.

2.2 The background of the case studies
1 The war conflict in Ukraine

The initial months of the war witnessed the influx of Ukrainian refugees and our students helped to make their transition to a safer environment as smooth as possible. Being the university geographically located close to the borders, we have decided to offer help. Our students, translation and interpreting trainees, had a chance to volunteer as interpreters to those seeking shelter in a war-free zone. The student interpreters commuted daily to the Ukrainian border between March 9 and May 31, 2022, including weekends and bank holidays. Altogether 53 students participated, out of which 8 students were Slovaks, 45 students were Ukrainians. For all of them it was full day interpreting every time

they participated. The language pairs included Ukrainian–Slovak, Ukrainian–Russian, Ukrainian–English, Russian–Slovak, and Russian–English.

2 Dutch social work trainees' visit in Slovakia
In October 2022, a group of Dutch teenagers came to Slovakia within an internship program. They visited local institutions, such as nursing homes and institutions for people with all types and degrees of disabilities (intellectual, mental, sensory and physical). Altogether 15 Slovak and Ukrainian 2nd-year bachelor cycle students volunteered as interpreters for these young social work trainees. It was their first experience with community interpreting. The original task was interpreting for the Dutch teenagers during their two-week visit in the social care institutions. However, the Dutch social work trainees were teenagers, spending their first time abroad, they were homesick and, at the same time, faced with a different culture, thus experiencing culture shock. The Ukrainian interpreting trainees were aware that in addition to meaning transfer they might alleviate the Dutch social work trainees' anxiety, and thus spontaneously adopted a buddy approach recalling their personal experience with their first weeks in a new country – Slovakia. The language pair was Slovak–English.

2.3 Interview and participant observation data
1 The war conflict in Ukraine
When interpreting for Ukrainian refugees, interpreting trainees had to pay attention to correct language structures, appropriate usage of language fulfilling particular function – all this while dealing with moving and emotionally difficult situations. The interpreting scene involved crying, helpless, mistrustful Ukrainians, adults accompanied with scared children. The Red Cross and police officers helping out with the chaos and panic. Since mostly Ukrainian students volunteered to take part, they perceived the situation very intensely, as they are helping the natives.

One of the students reported the following:
It was quite demanding both physically and mentally. I was there at the very beginning, so it was all quite chaotic. We decided to work overtime, so we did not sleep much. We were tired but calm and composed. The Ukrainians were very frustrated, did not trust anyone, were scared of the police officers, and sometimes they even took it out on volunteers, out of hopelessness. You need to protect yourself against such situations.

2 Dutch social work trainees' visit in Slovakia
Social service institutions are not among common internship providers for translation and interpreting trainees, so this was a new source of mental experience for an interpreter trainee. They needed to manage correct and appropriate language usage while being exposed to communication with frail elderly people, people with disabilities. They realized that they need to take a detached approach while interpreting for Slovak social workers and Dutch social work trainees. Student interpreters reported on facing stressful work conditions which, on the one hand, meant encounters with frail elderly people and people with all kinds of disabilities and, on the other increased their awareness of psychological and physical impact when caring for these people/clients.

2.4 Summary of the findings
After analyzing the interviews, we arrived at the following conclusions. There was less need for formality or high-skilled industry experience (as e.g. in conference interpreting). The trainees relied on the competences generally needed for other types of interpreting and acquired in the compulsory courses. These competences provided them substantial theoretical background and with practical tips on how to prepare for interpreting sessions (especially with regard to terminology), how to choose the appropriate techniques of interpreting, how to handle the cognitive load, and how to work with short-term and long-term memory.

However, the trainees also had to cope with ethical principles, and had to be able to process their emotions and experiences after the sessions (Štefková – Šveda 2022). The interpreting trainees also reported a need for manifesting a professional stance, i.e. taking a detached approach and focusing on their primary goal, i.e. to assist Ukrainian refugees, Slovak caregivers on the borders, Slovak social workers and Dutch social work trainees in their interaction so that all the parties involved might benefit from the situation and eliminate stressful moments while communicating their message.

The two case studies have evidenced that a/n translator/interpreter may need to act as a psychologist, advisor, mentor, or counselor, someone who helps others manage mental challenges. If one is to handle the client's mental health challenges, they need to master the strategies of immediate coping in emotionally difficult situations. The translator's agency (Eteläpelto – Vähäsantanen – Hökkä – Paloniemi 2013) implies lifelong learning and career development pertaining to the emerging requirements of the translation industry. This allows us to establish and promote the concepts of social responsibility and self-care as concepts directly related to immediate coping, thus, necessary to be included in the interpreter training.

3 The implications of the findings – setting the trend
Both case studies confirm what Drugan (2017, p. 126) claims: interpreters collaborate with social workers, psychologists, the armed forces, and doctors in equally sensitive settings, yet lack access to an ethical infrastructure that would equip them for handling sensitive situations. Ethics infrastructure refers to ethics committees, formal supervision, nominated mentors or professional associations (Drugan ibid), all of which is inaccessible to translation/interpreting students as of now. The two case studies inevitably lead us to expanding the existing taxonomy of competences on one hand by the concept of social responsibility as a kind of ethical commitment to the community and society; on the other hand, by the concept of self-care as a set of practices aimed at promoting a professional's physical, mental, and social well-being.

In community interpreting, the interpreter is understood as an active participant rather than (as summarized by Drugan 2017) as a 'medium' (Berk-Seligson 1990), or even as an activist (Tymoczko 2000), stakeholder (Boéri 2008), co-participant co-constructing social interaction (Pöchhacker 2006). As the case studies reveal, community interpreters may be involved in sensitive situations that might negatively impact their emotional well-being. Drugan (2017, p. 128) defines translators' and interpreters' social responsibility as "responsibility to the broader social context beyond the immediate translated encounter". In our understanding, the concept of social responsibility in community interpreting means the responsibility of a community interpreter as an active participant and stakeholder of a specific community and situation involving legal and ethical dimensions for the way they co-construct social interaction and for the impact their actions have.

As Crezee, Atkinson, Pask, Au, and Wong (2014) claim, "[i]nterpreter educators should look at preparing their students for possible stressors so that students can engage in self-care practices which may help them handle the impact of possibly traumatizing experiences". Thus, we appreciate Hlavac's (2017) discussion on self-care in mental health settings, which points to the cumulative effect of professions in mental health settings. Community interpreters, like social workers, are exposed to stressful situations daily due to the nature of their work. The cumulative effect of their day-to-day assignments may negatively impact their physical and mental health and well-being. Reviewing general definitions of self-care (cf. Lee – Miller 2013) and their particularization in health-care and social work settings (Hlavac 2017), we understand the concept of self-care in the community interpreting as life-long engagement in practices inside and outside the interpreting encounter in order to optimize the community interpreter' physical, mental and social well-being, support the quality of community interpreting, and exercise community interpreters' social responsibility.

We agree with Crezee et al (2013) that interpreters working in emotionally challenging settings may be adversely impacted by the traumatic nature of certain assignments, experiencing direct trauma, vicarious traumatization, or traumatization when interpreters' traumatic memories are reactivated. Drawing on the peculiarities of a community interpreter's role and the ethical dimensions and consequences of their work, the concept of social responsibility in community interpreting should be introduced in university training and developed by a properly set curriculum. Teaching self-care techniques during interpreting, e.g. using 's/he' instead of 'I' can help prevent from subconscious identification with the client's trauma as one's own.

CONCLUSION

To ensure that the university training of future translators and interpreters reflects industry and labor market needs, it must update its approach and incorporate into its curriculum concepts emerging from the geopolitical circumstances and the needs of the wider community. We suggest that in translation/interpreting study programs language competence, translation competence, and occupational competence be complemented with training on self-care competence and social responsibility competence. Given the expansion of the two concepts in other regulated professions, the best way to establish and develop them also in the interpreting profession is to design an elective course on social responsibility and self-care in community interpreting in collaboration with psychologists, social workers, and ethicists.

The events reported in the two case studies brought the authors' attention to the concepts of social responsibility and self-care in translator/interpreter profession. We realize that these concepts may as well provide this profession with a mandate to participate in public service and public life. In emotion-laden situations, it is vital that clients feel comfortable communicating with the other party, thus can rely on their native language or language of their first choice. The

interpreter provides for this convenience while at the same time has to distance oneself from the communicated message and context through self-care strategies employed before, during and after the interpreting encounter. Thus, we suggest their incorporating into the course on community translation/interpreting, which requires more intensive collaboration between the fields of translation/interpreting and social work.

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