

Technological Innovation and Translation. Training Translators in the EU for the 21st century¹

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Resumen

¿Están ligadas la formación necesaria para la integración en el mundo laboral y la formación recibida en la universidad? ¿Qué esperan las empresas de los nuevos traductores? El objetivo de este artículo es abordar este tema desde los resultados de la investigación llevada a cabo sobre la formación de los traductores en la Unión Europea y el mercado de la traducción, utilizando como marco el proyecto OPTIMALE, *Optimising Professional Translator Training in a Multilingual Europe*. En primer lugar presentaremos brevemente el proyecto; a continuación describiremos la metodología utilizada; y seguidamente mostraremos los resultados de los estudios y discusiones llevadas a cabo por los miembros del equipo sobre las competencias que las empresas requieren. Finalmente, a través del mapa interactivo producido por OPTIMALE sobre los programas de traducción en la UE, trataremos de dar respuesta a la pregunta de si las universidades están realmente tratando de unir las expectativas de las empresas con las competencias de traducción que los graduados adquieren en la universidad.

Palabras clave: OPTIMALE, formación de traductores, mercado laboral, proveedores de servicios de traducción, competencia traductora.

Abstract

Are young translation graduates still leaving university with a high level of translation skills, but lacking the specific, professional competence needed in the workplace, as has often been suggested? The aim of this paper is to approach this question through the results of research on advanced university translator education and training in the

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European Union, conducted under the framework of the OPTIMALE project (“*Optimising Professional Translator Training in a Multilingual Europe*”). The paper will briefly present the aims of the project, describe the methodology followed in an extensive survey of translation employer competence requirements and will outline the main results, describing how these were received and discussed in a series of regional joint workshops. Finally, the *OPTIMALE* map of European translation degree programmes will be used to ask whether universities are indeed trying to bridge the gap between employer expectations and translation graduate competences.

Key words: *OPTIMALE*, translator training, labour market, translation service providers, translation competence.

1. The OPTIMALE project: main aims and outcomes

OPTIMALE is an Erasmus academic network funded by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (October 2010 – September 2013), including 65 EU partners and 5 “Third country” (70 partners) from 32 different European countries. OPTIMALE has aimed to enhance the visibility and relevance of professional translator education and training in Europe at Master’s degree levelby:

- designing and implementing a comprehensive map of university level translator training in Europe;
- monitoring market and societal needs and professional requirements and standards relevant to translator education and training;
- reinforcing the economic and societal relevance of ongoing or future translator training programmes through the identification, description and dissemination of good practice in a number of key training areas;
- enhancing the quality of translator trainer training through a series of workshops on the implementation of best educational and training practice and a resource platform for future or practising teachers in the field of translation;

OPTIMALE has worked closely with language industry professionals at many levels, both in the European language services and in the commercial translation sector. The network has liaised with the DGT’s European Master’s in Translation team throughout the project, while the EUATC (European Union of Associations of Translation Companies) has been a major partner, and leading freelance professionals have regularly contributed to project meetings, round tables and conferences.

Further information on the project’s activities and outcomes can be found on the project

website: www.translator-training.eu.

2. The OPTIMALE employer survey and consultation: methodology and outcomes²

One of the objectives of the OPTIMALE Project was to gain a clearer view of the needs of the translation industry in terms of competences. This was achieved via two main actions:

1. A Europe-wide online survey of professional competence requirements among commercial translation service providers (TSPs). 2. Regional Employer-University workshops to identify major trends and discuss how to bridge the “gap” between academic education and industry requirements.

2.1. The employer survey

The survey took the form of a questionnaire to be completed on paper (in the initial stages of the survey) and online (from May 2011 onwards). Its main objectives of the survey were to:

- determine current and emerging competence requirements within the European translation industry, i.e. identify the competences that employers look for when seeking to employ new staff.
- provide input for further analysis and discussion during eight "regional" workshops bringing together academics involved in Master's degree translator training programmes and industry players from across Europe.
- produce a pan-European snapshot of specific competence requirements for graduates seeking employment in the industry and for programme directors seeking to improve the employability of their graduates in the translation professions.

Following an initial assessment of existing surveys and resources, it was decided that the OPTIMALE survey would focus more specifically on commercial TSP employers. Institutional translation service competence requirements have been extensively studied by Anne Lafeber, within the framework of a doctoral research project undertaken at Tarragona University under the supervision of Professor Anthony Pym, while freelance

²The information that follows is based on the Executive Summary and the Synthesis Report elaborated by Daniel Toudic, coordinator of the project OPTIMALE. Both reports are also based on the outcomes of the regional workshops and of the consultation survey (See the Employer-University workshops in the official project website).

translator competences have been the subject of international and national surveys conducted by professional associations. TSP employer surveys, on the other hand, whether at the national or international level, naturally tend to concentrate on market trends rather than on competence requirements. The survey did not, however, exclude respondents from translation departments within large organizations, institutional language services or freelance translators.

As for the respondents, no prior selection of respondents was conducted, though thanks to EUATC support, members of the EUATC's member organizations were given first notice of the initiative. The survey was primarily conducted through the OPTIMALE network and its partners in the translation industry. All of OPTIMALE's academic members were asked to contact their own network of employers and partners in the translation industry or to identify potential TSP employers who could be contacted by the project management, through local directories or via the published list of companies having undertaken subcontracting work for the Commission. The EUATC, for its part, was instrumental in disseminating the questionnaire and information about the survey and its online location to all its national members, who relayed the information to their own member companies. The survey was also promoted in a number of events organised by the EUATC (Rome conference), its member organisations (ATC conference, London) or OPTIMALE's academic partners (VI International Conference on Public Service Interpreting and Translation, April 2010 at the University of Alcalá, Madrid)

The questionnaire was designed to be completed in the shortest possible time, and therefore sought to elicit information that would be meaningful and useful both for the profession and for academics and students, while setting a limited number of questions.

Respondents were asked to rate each competence as "Essential", "Important", "Not very important" and "Not required". No "indifferent" answer was included.

The first basic premise of the consultation was that TSP employers are interested not only in translation competence per se, but in the whole range of competences required within a language service providing company. Hence the sections devoted to project management, translation technology or client relation competences.

The second premise was that the survey should not seek to elicit the obvious. It was therefore assumed that for positions in translation, high-level language competence requirements, both in the native language and in the foreign working languages, were to be taken as a given which did not need to be reasserted within the scope of this survey (whether such skills are always available is another matter). Similarly, translation competences per se (i.e. source text and discourse analysis, cognitive skills, target message

formulation, reader and user focus, etc.) were excluded from the remit of this survey, as it was assumed that any employer seeking to employ a translator or his/her services, would require the translator to possess the primary skills of his/her profession. Still according to the same rationale, generic professional competences such as the ability to comply with specifications or deadlines, or to work under stress, were excluded from the questions.

What the questionnaire did not include was a question on whether employers did actually find the required competences in applicants for the LSP/TSP positions they advertised, and if not, which essential or important competences were found to be lacking. This was partly compensated for by the comments registered in the "free comment" sections of the survey and in the regional workshops and the Brussels conference where the survey results were discussed with members of the profession.

The survey was launched at the EUATC conference in Rome, on April 8 2011. It went online on April 6 2011 and was open until October 31 2011. Over 780 connections were registered on the online survey site. Discounting failed connections and respondents who did not complete any questions, 738 respondents provided at least information on their country of origin. Of these, 688 were from the EU and non-EU countries represented in the *OPTIMALE* consortium (including Norway and Turkey). A number (26) of the non-EU respondents were from the five so called "third countries" (Albania, Croatia, Macedonia, Russia, Ukraine} given associate status within the project. This means that a further 24 respondents connected to the online survey, from places as far apart as Luxemburg to Venezuela, and Afghanistan to the Fiji Islands. The latter results are not included in the following analysis.

Not surprisingly, the largest number of responses (82 and 74 respectively) came from France and Belgium, which both have strong TSP networks and well-established links with university translation programmes. However countries with large LSP sectors were clearly under-represented _ the UK, Germany and Spain only registering 29, 36 and 25 responses respectively³_ while others with far smaller populations (e.g. Austria or Portugal) recorded over 50 responses each, almost on a par with Italy. Conversely, Ireland, with its well- established localization industry, only supplied 7 responses.

The overwhelming majority of respondents (78%) were commercial sector TSPs, although a sizeable number of non-LSP companies (96) with translation departments or services were also represented. Few international organisations contributed responses, as these were not our primary target in this survey and their requirements have been surveyed in a

³ For specific information about Spain, see Valero Garcés (2012).

separate study, as mentioned above. It is therefore not surprising to find that 82% of respondents declared "translation services (including audio- visual)" as their main business activity, with localization only accounting for 7% of the answer.

In terms of size, a wide cross-section of the industry is represented among the survey respondents and the breakdown broadly reflects other business surveys such as those conducted by Common Sense Advisory. Not surprisingly, in an industry still dominated in many countries by small or very small companies, 53% of the 605 respondents who supplied information on staff numbers, said their company employed fewer than 5. This obviously includes a number of single person companies, especially in countries where the translation market is still in the process of developing into a fully-fledged translation industry. Another 19% employed between 5 and 10 full time staff. Taking these two categories together, our results show a higher proportion of respondents from small companies than those provided by the CSA 2009 survey of the European market, where 60% of the respondents employed 10 staff or fewer. At the other end of the spectrum, 14% of our respondents employed more than 30 staff, including some very large international operators employing several hundred in-house translators and project-managers

Respondents were naturally more reluctant to supply figures on their turnover. However, some 530 did so, showing that 50% registered annual sales of less than €200,000 and 76% less than €1million. Again, our random sample of European TSPs is weighted towards the smaller end of the market compared to the CSA survey, where less than 58% of the sample expected to generate comparable revenue in 2009. However, the gap narrows if one includes all companies earning less than €2 million_85% in the OPTIMALE survey and 75% in the CSA study.

Response rates varied from section to section or even within sections. Some respondents who completed the identification and activity part of the survey did not complete the competence questionnaire, or failed to complete certain sections, in some cases specifying that the questions in a particular section were not relevant to their situation (e.g. one-person companies that do not employ project managers or translation agencies that employ no in-house translators}. This why between 530 and 580 answers were registered according to the questions in this part of the questionnaire.

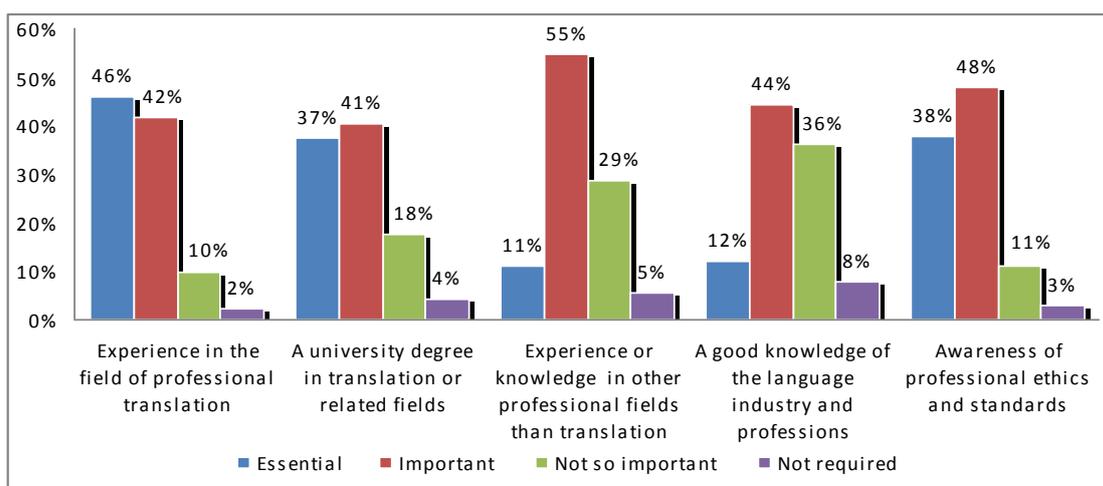
Let us now consider the main results, considering in turn how employers viewed the importance of different types of professional competence requirements. Please note that in each figure below, percentages refer to the percentage of respondents to each question who consider the competence as "essential", "important", "not very important" or "not required". Numbers of respondents may vary from one question to another, as indicated

below each figure.

Experience vs. knowledge

As regards applicants' qualifications and experience, employers stress the importance of both in almost equal proportions (42 and 41%). However, when the "essential" answers are added, professional experience is given priority over a university degree, with 88% considering experience in the profession as important or essential, against 78% who say the same about an academic qualification in translation. Conversely, academics can take comfort in the fact that only 22% of employers can see little or no use for a university degree in the field of translation or in a related field (not defined in the questionnaire).

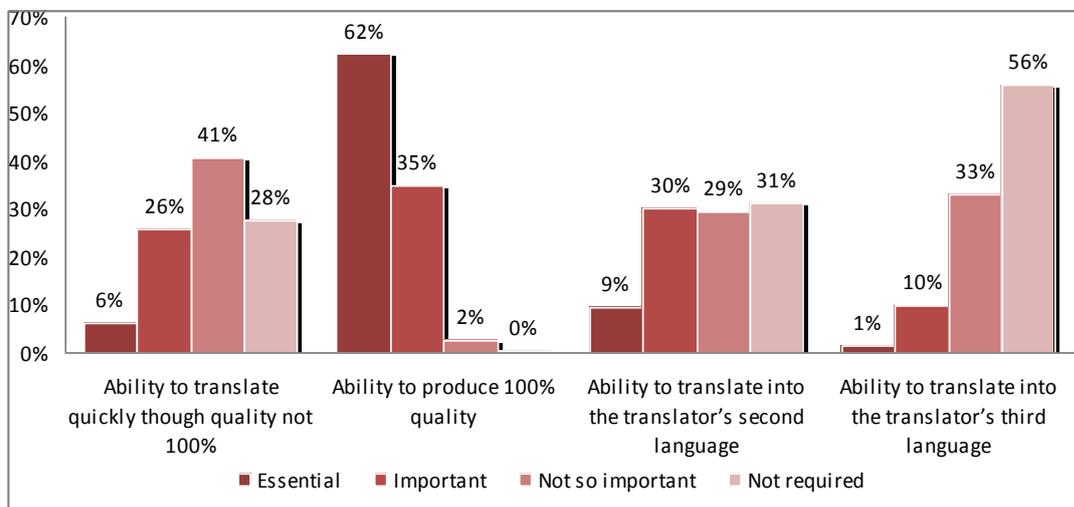
A good knowledge of the language industry and professions is considered to be an important or essential quality in applicants by just over 50% of respondents, while over a third consider it "not very important". By contrast, 86% of the 570 respondents who answered the question on professional ethics and standards gave it high priority, making it one of the most sought after competences in new applicants. The phrasing of the question did not allow respondents to distinguish between "ethics" or "standards". However, the workshop discussions that followed, made it clear that employers required applicants both to be aware of the profession's ethical code regarding confidentiality, language competence, translation capability, loyalty, etc. and professional standards with regard to quality, prompt delivery, customer relations, etc. This is probably why experience in professional fields other than translation is considered more "important" than experience in the industry itself, though not as "essential". Employers are first and foremost looking for people who know the basic rules and ethics of business and who can interact effectively both with other staff and with clients and suppliers.



(100% = 570-575 according to question). Figure 1. Experience vs. knowledge.

Translation-related competences

As explained above, the survey did not set out to question respondents on language or translation competence per se. It concentrated instead on translation as a process designed to produce a document in a given language for a client within a specific deadline. The questionnaire first somewhat naively asked employers to rate quality vs. speed. Not surprisingly producing "100% quality" was unanimously rated as "essential" or "important", with only 2% of respondents replying that it was "not very important". Speed, on the other hand, was only considered more important than "perfect" quality by 32% of respondents. Beyond these fairly predictable findings, the situation is less "black and white" than the survey appears to show. When asked to elaborate, most employers add that: 1° "100% quality" is an elusive goal when it comes to the translation industry, as quality can be defined against an ideal quality standard for a given type of translation, in a given domain and in a given language combination, or against the quality required by a given client for a given purpose (i.e. "fit for purpose"); 2° that the ideal translator or project manager should aim to combine both speed and quality, given that the end-product may have a limited "shelf-life" and cease to be of any use if delivered after the deadline. Hence, the 32% of respondents who rate speed _ and presumably productivity _ higher than "quality" per se.



(100% =530-549 according to question). Figure 2. Translation-related competences.

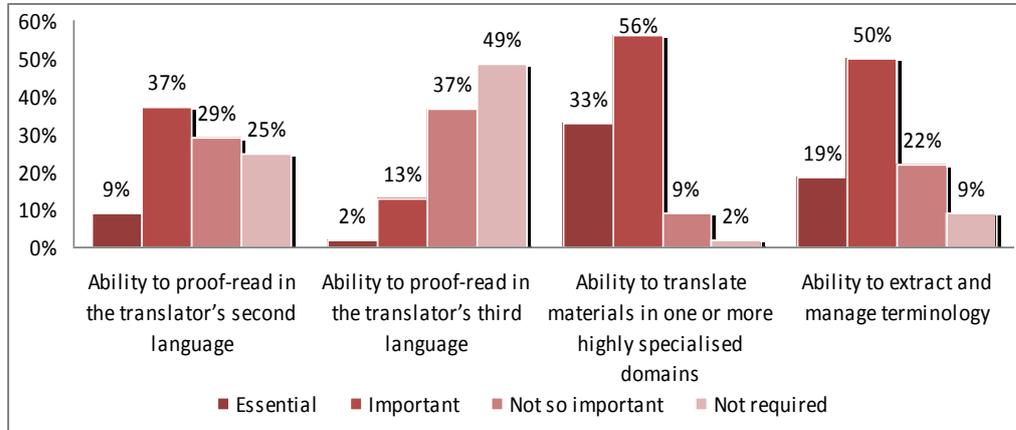
The questionnaire then went on to identify the importance of being able to translate and proofread in the operator's second or third language, given that this appears to be common practice in certain European markets. The overall results show that translation competence in the second language is important or essential for 39% of the 541

respondents, while 31% apply standard practice according to international quality standards, i.e. translators only translate into their native language. The figures are even higher when the question applies to proofreading, with 46% of respondents requiring this competence. Translating or proofreading in the operator's third language, on the other hand, is generally not required.

A geographical breakdown of the results shows a strong regional bias, with 44% of respondents in the "Vilnius" group of countries and 42% in the "Brasov" group saying that translation into a foreign language is "important" or "essential", against 25 and 14% respectively in the "Ghent" and "Surrey" groups

Specialisation

Domain specialisation is almost unanimously required by employers, with almost 90% giving it priority status. The questionnaire did not ask respondents to specify the fields most in demand, although workshop discussions showed that technical translation in the widest sense and in some markets, legal translation, are still the dominant market segments. A logical extension of this requirement is the importance afforded to terminology extraction and management: 69% of respondents consider this one of the basic skills required of applicants for positions in translation



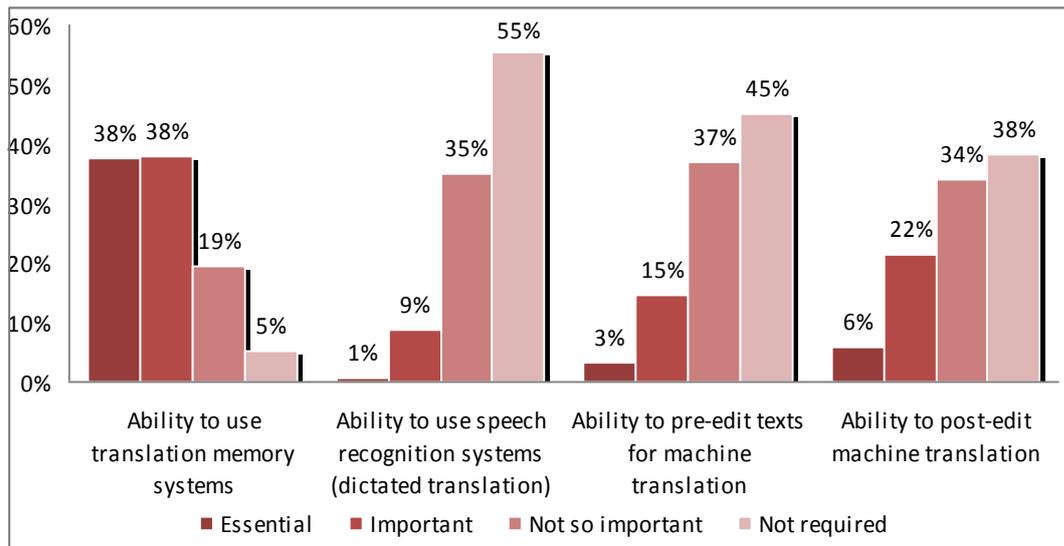
(100% = 539-546 according to question). Figure 3. Specialization.

Use of tools and technologies

In an industry which has undergone rapid technological changes, it seemed important to assess the degree to which employers require new applicants to have the relevant skills.

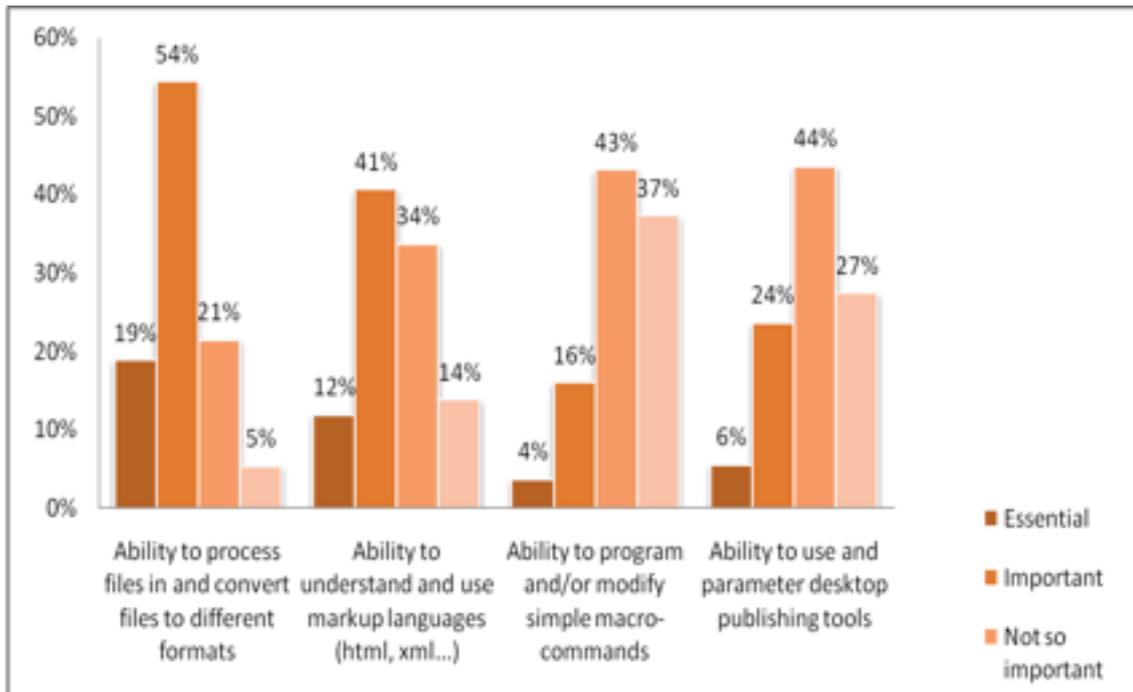
As can be seen in the survey results below, there is a clear contrast between the need for what are now "standard" CAT tool or IT-related competences and the call for newer or more advanced technological skills. Whereas the former (i.e. the ability to use TM systems

or to process and convert files) are considered essential or important by over or around three quarters of the respondents, the use of speech recognition applications or the ability to pre-edit or post-edit machine translation are still by no means mainstream requirements. It is, however, interesting to note that while speech recognition technology (i.e. dictated) translation} is only required by 1 in 10 respondents, a significant 28% of respondents require MT post- editing skills, reflecting the growing interest in the integration of MT in the translation process.



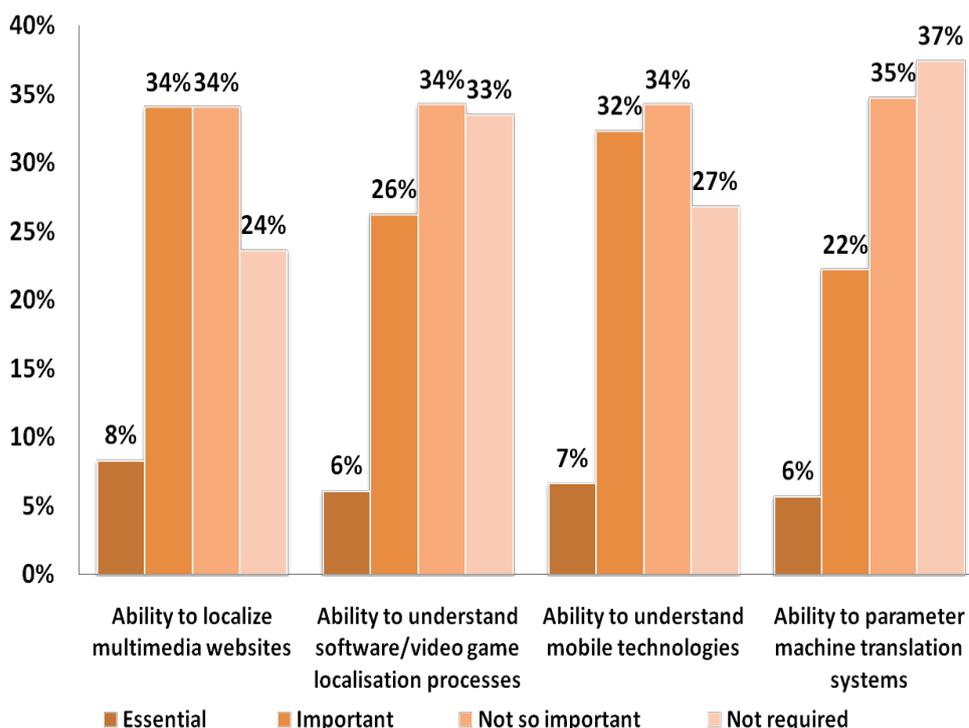
(100% = 538-542 according to question). Figure 4. Use of tools and technology.

As regards the more advanced IT skills, a similar contrast can be seen between the ability to understand and use mark-up languages, which is required by a (small} majority of respondents, reflecting the importance of web-based source materials, and the ability to programme macro-commands or to use and configure desktop publishing tools, where the figures are significantly lower.



(100% = 526-531 according to question). Figure 5. Use of advanced IT skills.

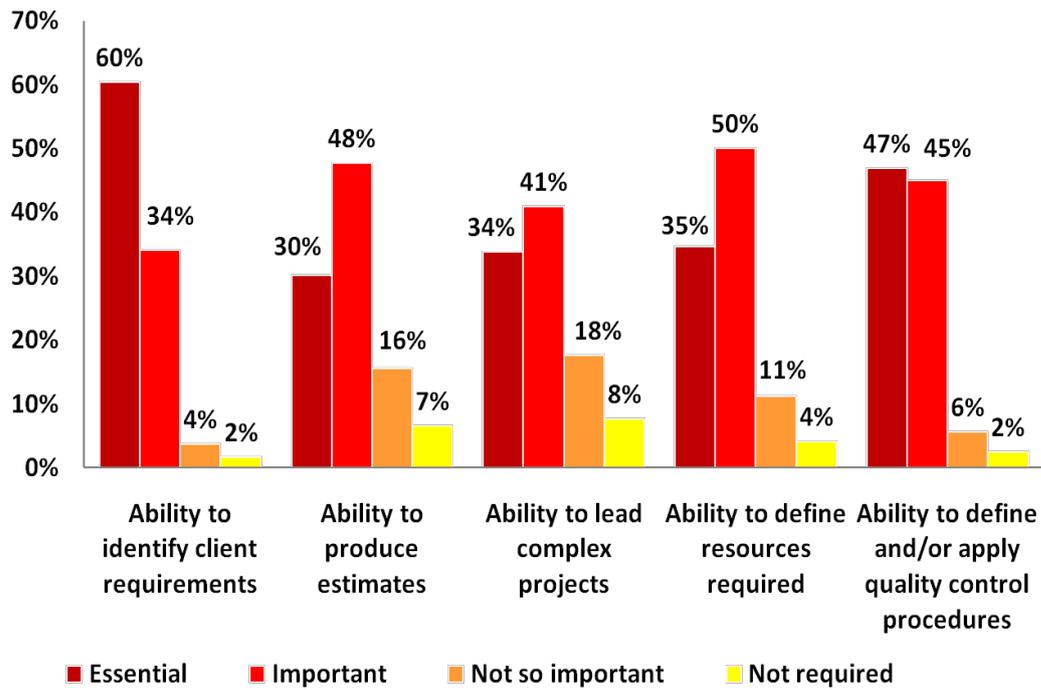
However, although variations can be observed, all the technological competences listed in the survey were considered important or essential by at least 20% of the respondents, reflecting the growth of "technology- oriented" companies seeking productivity gains or looking towards higher-added value segments of the market. This is also obvious in the following set of technology-related competences, each of which attracted between 42 and 28% of positive responses. Again, it is important to note that over one in four respondents would require new applicants to possess MT parameter setting skills. Translator education and training cannot afford to ignore the message conveyed by these results.



(100%=526-529 according to question). Figure 6. Importance of technological tools.

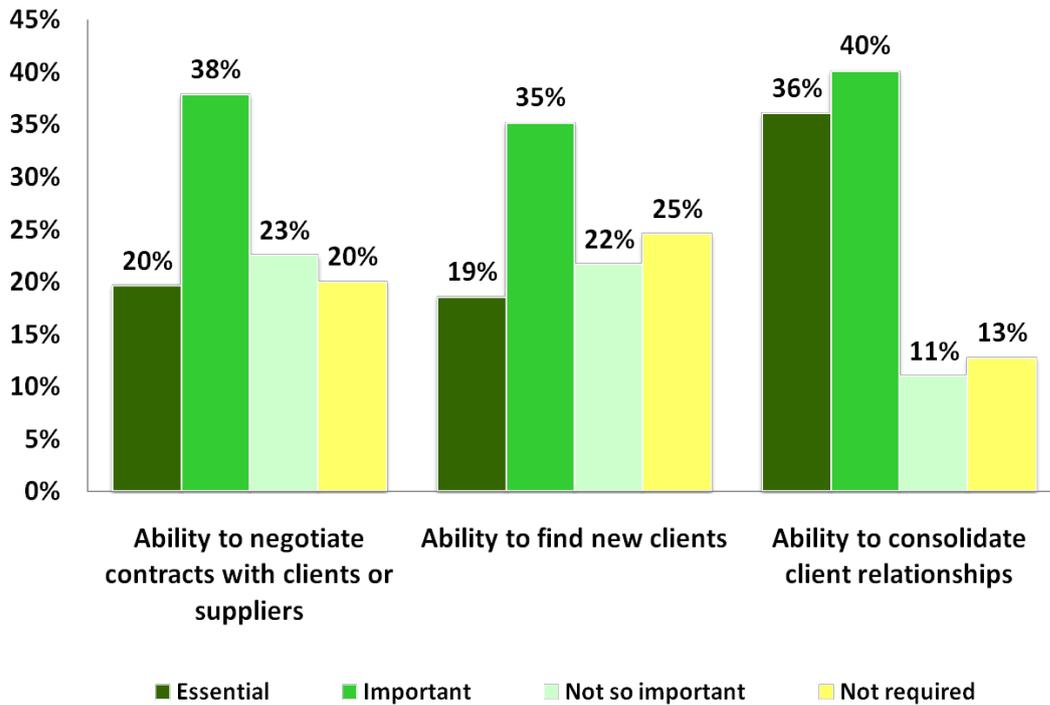
Project management and customer relations

Another clear message sent by the survey results is the need for project management and client relations competences. The ability to identify client requirements, to draw up estimates and to define the resources required for a given translation project all come out among the top ten competence requirements listed by TSP respondents, with a massive 60% of respondents stating that client awareness is an essential competence. Specific project management skills are also highly rated, with the ability to lead complex projects being considered important or essential by three-quarters of the respondents. Also very high up in the list is the ability to define and/or apply quality control procedures, with over 90% of respondents feeling this is essential or important. This is of course to be seen alongside the almost unanimous call for 100% quality in the production process. The slightly lower number of respondents answering these questions reflects the position of the respondent, i.e. in companies where the production and project management functions are clearly separate, the respondent may not be involved in the project management side of the process.



(100%=519-533accordingtoquestion). Figure 7. Project management and customer requirements.

The latter comment also applies to the "marketing" competences included in the survey, with some respondents specifying that they have no involvement with the sales side of the business. However, between 517 and 520 respondents did answer the questions below, and over 50% of them rated "pure" sales skills (i.e. finding new clients and negotiating contracts) as important or essential. An even higher figure (over 75%) see "consolidating" client relations as being important or essential (in almost equal proportions), which can be viewed as a logical follow-on to the question on identifying client requirements.



(100%=517-520accordingtoquestion). Figure 8. Marketing.

Overall ranking

When ranked according the percentage of respondents considering each competence as “essential” or “important”, the following hierarchy emerges:



Figure 9. The top ten competences for TSP employers.

This ranking shows that the TSP employers surveyed value first and foremost the ability of

translators to produce quality in their work, in particular by being aware of and being able to implement quality control procedures. As specialisation and experience are both conducive to producing quality in professional translation, these requirements are _ not surprisingly _ ranked respectively 4th and 5th by order of importance, but a degree level university education (in translation or other related fields) is also considered to be essential or important in aspiring translation professionals. The ability to identify client requirements and to consolidate client relationships also figure prominently: these qualities are of course just as important for TSPs as they are for freelance translators, although in the first instance they are more likely to be sought in sales and project management positions. The ability to define the resources needed and to produce estimates are other clearly project management-related competences in a company context, although again, they can be essential requirements for freelance professionals.

2.2. The employer consultation workshops

The initial results of the OPTIMALE survey were used to fuel discussion in a series of eight workshops organised at universities across Europe, in Brasov (Romania), Vilnius (Lithuania), Paris (France), Alcala de Henares (Spain), Ghent (Belgium), Guildford (UK), Trieste (Italy) and Vienna (Austria), which brought together practising professionals from the translation industry and academics and other stakeholders involved in the running of Master's degree-level translation programmes. The workshops were organised on a regional basis to allow the participation of academics and professionals from clusters of neighbouring countries. Their remit was to identify important trends and issues relating to current translation markets and practises, to discuss the findings of the OPTIMALE employer survey relevant to the countries concerned, and to determine what existing or new professional competence profiles might be relevant in determining the learning outcomes for current and future academic degree programmes.

The workshop participants themselves illustrated the diversity of the language industry, with participants representing many facets of the industry, from independent freelance operators to major LSPs employing over 100 permanent staff, from very small TSP's whose bread and butter is mainly low volume, local "legal" translation contracts for individual clients, in single language or limited language combinations, to large multinational, multilingual operators specialising in high volume localisation work, from literary translation to highly specialised technical translation for high-tech industries.

Workshop participants were asked to respond both to the methodology of the survey and to the results available at the time of the workshop. Criticism of the survey centred mainly

on the absence of questions relating to generic professional competences, which were specifically excluded from the questionnaire as explained above. Among the questions that several of the professional participants would have liked to find in the survey, were questions on native language competence (the lack of which is deplored by many European employers), the ability to work in teams (and to be aware of the role of the translator in the overall translation process), flexibility (i.e. the ability to demonstrate a range of competences within the company), proactiveness in identifying client needs or in adapting to new technologies, awareness of the primary importance of deadlines and the knowledge of standard professional practices.

Despite these reservations, most of the professional participants concurred with the overall findings.

“Quality” was definitely the key word, both in the survey results, and among the professionals taking part in the workshops. Quality is now seen as the n°1 selling point in the translation and localisation markets, but cannot simply be seen in either/or terms in relation to speed, as could be suggested in the survey questions. In Brasov, Cristina Coblis, President of the Romanian Translators’ Association and other participants pointed out that clients now require both quality and speed... at the lowest possible cost compatible with both those qualities, a point which was made over and over again in other workshops. Quality translations still primarily depend on the quality of the translators: this point was highlighted by both academic and professional participants. Whether this should be achieved by academic translator training programmes, by experience and training within TSPs, by continuing professional development or by a combination of all three, was a moot point discussed in a number of workshops. In the Guildford workshop and in Paris in particular, a clear distinction appeared between those who defended the capacity of advanced degree programmes based on recognised competence frameworks to produce professionally relevant graduates, and those who put the emphasis on professional experience and domain specialisation rather than on academic training for the translation professions. Domain specialisation per se was an issue discussed by a number of workshops (Brasov, Trieste, Vilnius), particularly in the fields of finance and economics or in the area of legal and judicial translation.

Many professionals spoke of the extent to which the achievement of high quality is now heavily dependent on both the quality of the source materials supplied by the client, the reliability of the terminology resources and reference materials available to the translator, the professional qualities of the translators involved in the translation or localisation process, and of the revisers and quality controllers who ensure that the final product is up

to standard. Discussions therefore naturally often led to the diversity and importance of all the players in the translation process, which cannot be restricted to the actual translation phase. Many professional participants stressed the need for universities and translation students to recognize that project management, resource management, proofreading and reviewing and quality management skills were now essential competences in the translation “chain” which should therefore be taught and learned at some point in all translation programmes. Companies were now seeking either graduates with specific skills in project management or quality management or “all-rounders” capable of “multi-tasking” within a small TSP company.

Another strand which ran through nearly all the workshops was the importance of client-related interpersonal competences. These were definitely given very high priority by the professional participants in the workshops, particularly those skills centring on the identification of client needs and the maintaining of good client relations through customer awareness. As speed is now of the essence for many clients, the importance of deadlines and delivery were often central in the presentations and points made by translation professionals. However, speed should not be achieved by resorting to online machine translation, but by implementing imaginative cooperation arrangements, pooling non automated CAT tools, sharing translation memories and terminology resources, etc.

The comments section of the questionnaire provides further valuable insight into the qualities and competences that employers believe are often lacking in new graduates. These include many of the needs listed above, and emphasize the need for advanced language skills, particularly in the native language, to be acquired before attempting to embark on a career in translation.

3. Bridging the gap between employer expectations and translation graduate competences

Throughout the OPTIMALE project, a number of issues were addressed that are central to equipping students and future graduates with the skills required in the translation workplace. These issues were discussed both in the regional consultation workshops (2011), in the workshops on good teaching and learning practice (2012) and in the training of trainers workshops (2013).

Three of the key issues identified were the following:

1. Professional awareness

The importance of students and graduates being aware of actual real-life conditions in the translation industry, including knowledge of professional ethics and standards, was

constantly stressed by the translation professionals. Unrealistic expectations on the part of students as to what the translation professions entail, and what kind of positions they can expect in a TSP company, as well as a general lack of awareness among translation graduates of the simple economic facts about running a translation service business was underlined on many occasions. In particular, students should be made aware of costs and pricing structures and of the importance of maintaining good client relations.

The OPTIMALE workshops on the identification of good practise were however able to show that significant progress has been made on this front in many universities. More and more Master's degree translation programmes bring in practising professionals (subject to local legislation and regulations), either on a regular basis or for occasional seminars, to teach specific modules (on professional translation practise and ethics, project management, quality management, CAT tools, etc.), or simply to share their professional experience. On another level, partnerships have in some cases been set up with local TSP companies to further a better understanding of the workings of a TSP company through regular visits. More ambitious initiatives range from allowing students to undertake simulated full-scale translation projects as part of their curriculum, to setting up "junior enterprises" taking on real-life projects for actual clients (with all the deontological problems this can raise in a highly competitive environment).

2. Internships

The ultimate test of a student's ability to perform successfully in a professional environment is a sufficiently long spell as an intern within a TSP or official language service. The subject was frequently discussed in the joint workshops and conferences organised during the OPTIMALE project. Many employers believed that where they exist, internships were often too short (3-4 weeks at the most) or placed too early in the curriculum. Many obstacles were identified, both on the academic side (organisational and financial constraints), on the employers' side (lack of time and resources) and in the ability of translation graduates to be brought up to speed and standard in a sufficiently short time.

Yet both the workshops and the programme mapping and identification exercise undertaken in the course of the OPTIMALE project⁴ have shown that internships are a well established practise in a number of countries, and are widely recognised as part of the training process. Over 74% of French TSPs hosted interns in 2010, for instance, for durations of up to six months, subject to a strict legal framework. An analysis of the

⁴The OPTIMALE map of Bachelor and Master's degree in translation (www.translator-training.eu/map) currently displays some 180 programmes (end of September 2013).

curricula on offer shows that out of 171 Bachelor's or Master's degree programmes present on the map, 100 (58.4%) include an internship experience, which is mandatory in almost half of the programmes. Moreover, several EU-funded projects (AGORA, European Graduate Placement Scheme, etc.) are currently working on facilitating international internships through university-company partnerships and memoranda of understanding with professional organisations.

3. Programme objectives and content

Through its programme mapping initiative and workshops on the identification and exchange of good practise, the OPTIMALE project has clearly shown that more and more academic programmes, particularly at Master's level, are taking on board the skills and competences required for professional practise within the translation industry. Of the 171 programmes already mentioned, over 75% include some kind of specialised translation, and over half, courses in specialist subjects (law, economics, etc.). Over 40% of the programmes state that they provide modules devoted to professional practise in the workplace. Although only a minority include actual IT competence within the curriculum, an overwhelming majority (over 80%) give students the opportunity to learn CAT tool skills. Finally, over 67% state that they maintain links with the translation industry and professionals.

These figures, which would require further analysis for a finer breakdown by country or region, do clearly show that a significant number of university translation programmes are now acutely aware of the need for greater professional awareness and are actively implementing measures to equip students with more professionally relevant skills and competences.

4. Conclusions

Of course, many of the issues discussed above raise the wider issue of the respective responsibilities of universities and employers in training professionals for a rapidly changing social, economic and technological environment.

Many academics would rightly say that universities are not in the business of slavishly following market trends and employer requirements. Theirs is a wider remit, equipping students with a range of skills and competences suitable for the global market and present-day societies and producing research findings that can open minds and lead to innovative thought, products and services. Those who offer graduate translation degrees do however feel that they have a growing responsibility to ensure that students who do intend to work in the translation industry are aware of the current and future

requirements of potential employers, and that they are given the opportunity to acquire the wide range of competences, from advanced linguistic skills, translation skills and IT skills to project management and quality assurance, which will enable them to occupy various positions within the industry.

One approach is to consider that these skills and competences can only be acquired on the job, via extensive internships, and comprehensive in-house inception programmes for new TSP or translation department recruits, or via continuous professional development. Another approach is to consider that translator education and training is the shared responsibility of universities and employers, and that in a highly competitive market, graduates need to be equipped during their course of studies with the basic competences listed above (by a combination of academic education and training and internships) before they finally enter the labour market, where they will then acquire the further experience and advanced knowledge and competences they need to become fully- operational translation industry professionals. This is the approach on which the OPTIMALE project was founded.

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