

The Quality in Translation and the Translator/Interpreting Training for New Market Demands in Slovakia

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Resumen

Esta ponencia versa sobre la traducción y la interpretación y sobre la importancia que tienen en el mundo globalizado actual. Asimismo, refleja que la necesidad de obtener una alta calidad en la traducción y en la interpretación tiene una gran influencia en el mercado eslovaco de la traducción así como en la formación de los traductores de textos técnicos y científicos y en la de los intérpretes. Describe, igualmente, las reformas llevadas a cabo en los planes de estudio de las instituciones académicas eslovacas y las nuevas formas de prolongar la educación del traductor en Eslovaquia (cursos especializados para traductores e intérpretes posgraduados, seminarios específicos y talleres). La formación de traductores e intérpretes está íntimamente relacionada con la cooperación de organizaciones profesionales eslovacas, tales como la Asociación Eslovaca de Traductores de Textos Técnicos y Científicos, la Unión de Traductores e Intérpretes, o la Unidad Central de Traducción del Gobierno eslovaco, que se encarga de la traducción de documentos de la UE. Esta cooperación parece estar ayudando a mejorar las aptitudes de los traductores e intérpretes y la calidad de sus traducciones para responder mejor a las necesidades del nuevo mercado.

1. The nature of quality in translation and interpreting

The nature of quality in translation and interpreting is a very broad topic having been discussed by many scholars who have come to different conclusions, depending on their theoretical views and the theoretical framework which they applied to assess translation quality. As the theoretical views on the nature of translation differ and are changeable with time, the opinions on translation quality are equal to the state of the theoretical knowledge in the area of translation studies. For example, Schäffner (1998:4) states that *... quality is not „objectively“ given, but depends on the text user and his/her assessment criteria*, the text users being the

recipient of the TT, representatives of the ST producer, clients or teachers. She poses the question whether intersubjective agreement is possible at all and her answer is „no“, arguing that there are different assessment scenarios, i.e. each assessor has a specific aim, depending on the factors of the assessment context and, consequently, applies different criteria.

Nevertheless, there are some approaches which are more successful than others. As regards the applicability and value in practice, i.e. in the everyday life of translation industry, it is the functionalist approach. In this approach, the most important criterion in any translation is the purpose of the TT and it has become a yardstick for assessing the quality of a translation. The translation and the TT user(s) are assigned a higher status and a more influential role than is the case in more traditional approaches to translation such as anecdotal and subjective, response-oriented, psycholinguistic, or linguistically-based ones. The notion of the purpose as the decisive criterion for the quality of a translation is linked to the linguistic correctness of the text, i.e. conformity to linguistic, text-typological, and communicative rules and conventions of the target language and culture.

The influence of the functional approach is also apparent in the most important translation quality standards of the European Union of Associations of Translation Companies (EUATC) which comes into line with the format of ISO 9001. The EUATC initiatives are highly welcome in unifying the quality criteria in the European and world market for the translation industry which is basically a fragmented industry (freelance translators, translation companies and agencies).

The translation companies obviously differentiate between two basic levels of quality. The most common is the standard quality offered by most translation companies and freelancers which covers translating documents for informational purposes. At this level the text must be translated and proofread accurately; it must be highly readable and clearly formatted. Stylistic variations are allowed. These translations serve appropriately for contracts,

specifications, and correspondence, etc. The second level of quality is the translation for publication purposes. It requires translation of a document for publication. This level includes books, journal articles, brochures, and advertising. The translation requires multiple proofreading to achieve impeccable expressions free of typographical or grammatical errors.

Overall, the purpose of the text is indeed the highest criterion of quality in any translation and the quality is expressed in stating two standards in translation company services (the degree of proofreading and formatting).

2. Translation industry in Slovakia

Compared to the period of the 1970s-1980s, the translation industry has increased worldwide. The number of translators working either as freelancers or for translation companies has grown. In Europe the requirements for translation and interpreting services have increased, especially from the 1990s onwards, due to the integration tendencies of EU countries as well as the countries entering the EU and the EU market. These are the facts that have become crucial in translation industry developments in Slovakia. To be able to compete in the international translating market, Slovak translation companies and agencies as well as freelancers have been forced to overestimate the sense of responsibility and, consequently, the quality of their services. Many translators and interpreters are encouraged to work for EU institutions both as internal and external workers. The requirements for the translators and interpreters are very high, and, unfortunately, there have not been many applicants yet who have been able to meet the strict requirements of EU institutions.

To state an example, the requirements of the European Central Bank searching for a Slovak translator for a position in the Translation Division are as follows:

- A perfect command of Slovak, excellent English and a very good command of at least one other (current or prospective)

official Community language. Knowledge of other (current or prospective) official Community language would be an asset.

- An advanced university degree (or equivalent qualification in a relevant subject, preferably in Slovak philology), or proven ability to perform the tasks commensurate with such a formal academic qualification.
- A postgraduate diploma in translation would be an advantage.
- At least 2 years' professional experience as a Slovak translator, preferably in the economic and financial field.
- Sound background knowledge of economics and finance.
- Familiarity with the ECB, Národná banka Slovenska and/or the banking sector would be an advantage.
- Strong interpersonal skills: in particular, good communication skills and the ability to work as part of a team in a multicultural environment are very important, as are self-motivation and flexibility.
- Excellent PC skills and a very good knowledge of standard MS Office applications are essential.
- Familiarity with a terminology management package such as TRADOS MultiTerm and translation memory software such as TRADOS Translator's Workbench would be an advantage.

Realistically speaking, there have been very few experts in Slovakia, if any, to fulfil these requirements. Our higher-education system has not been flexible enough to prepare experts of the above-mentioned qualifications and qualities. In spite of the fact that the higher education system in Slovakia has changed rapidly and seems to be more flexible than some years ago (e.g. in addition to the master degree, universities are allowed to offer also a bachelor degree, they have introduced the European Credit Transfer System - ECTS, introduced new study programmes aimed at the needs of the current market). Especially when introducing new study programmes, the launch of more practical disciplines compared to theoretical ones is too slow and rigid. Even the new study programme standards for Translation and Interpreting that

are to be a yardstick for the accreditation of new translation and interpreting study programmes, which should be effective as soon as 2005 according to the new Law for the Higher-Education Institutions, are too theory-based and not flexible enough. That is why it is so difficult to find well educated and trained translators able to succeed in the EU marketplace.

3. Contribution to the translation and interpreting training of Slovak professional organizations

The Slovak translation community (translation associations, university teachers training translators and interpreters, the government of the Slovak Republic, unfortunately, and to a lesser extent, Slovak translation companies) is aware of the fact that Slovak university graduates are not prepared enough to compete in the international translation market and try to bridge the gap in the translator and interpreter training by using different „remedy“ activities, many of them supported by EU assistance programmes, international educational projects and also activities of the Slovak Association of Translators of Technical and Scientific Literature. The following programmes can be considered the most important ones: .

The two-year postgraduate innovative programme in training translators of non-literary texts

This programme has been run since 1999 at four Slovak universities (Bratislava, Nitra, Banská Bystrica and Prešov). It has been designed in collaboration with Marc Bloch University in Strasbourg to train specialists for present and future translation markets. It covers extremely important subject areas – economics, banking and finance, government administration and law, technology and science, and European institutions with a special emphasis on Slovak language – the mother tongue. The aim of the postgraduate course is to prepare high-quality translators who are qualified to succeed in a competitive international marketplace.

One-year course in high-quality interpreting for competitive

international markets (especially for EU institutions)

This course started in the winter term of 2003 at Comenius University in Bratislava with the financial and personal support of EU institutions. Its aim is to prepare highly qualified interpreters, so far in English and German, that could succeed in the competitions for the positions of internal interpreters held by EU institutions.

Activities of the Slovak Association of Translators of Technical and Scientific Literature and other professional institutions

The Slovak Association of Translators of Technical and Scientific Literature gives, at least twice a year, specialized seminars for practicing translators to improve their knowledge of the subject area within the scope of the seminar, especially in the latest terminology (banking, approximation of Slovak law, technology and science, medicine, computer-assisted translation, TRADOS skills). Some of the seminars have been organized together with the Union of Translators and Interpreters or the Central Translation Unit at the Government Office, which is responsible for the translation of EU *acquis communautaire* into Slovak.

4. Conclusion

The Slovak translation community both at the level of universities and professional organizations, is aware of the needs of the current translation market in Slovakia and tries to bridge the gap in the education of translators and interpreters to help them to succeed in a very competitive international translation marketplace. Still they are also aware of the fact that they could do even more, especially in the area of translation ethics and responsibility. The basic problem of translation as a profession is that it has not been recognized as a profession in its own right (except for legal translators and interpreters) in Slovakia - and probably not only in Slovakia. In order to become visible, to achieve the status of a recognized profession it still needs considerable effort from professional organizations, translator trainers and the translators

themselves.

References

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