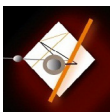


SHOULD THE MARKET DICTATE THE CONTENT OF SPECIALIZED TRANSLATION CURRICULA?

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When translation educators discuss specialized translation, they seem to have trouble agreeing on what constitutes specialized translation and, more fundamentally, what is a *special language* (Scarpa, 2010). For some, it refers to the translation *process*; in other words, specialized translation is synonymous with professional translation. For others, the translation of any text that refers to a specialized subject is *ipso facto* specialized. Those tend to oppose specialized translation and general translation. Still others feel that only the translation of texts aimed at specialists should be considered specialized, opposing the translation of texts by and for specialists to texts *by* specialists *for* non-specialists. While this variety of opinions fuels academic debate, it also brings into focus the fact that specialized translation instructors often lack a



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clear mandate. This lack of clarity is sometimes the target of criticism, especially outside academic circles.

In this position paper, translation is specialized when it deals with content and format bearing characteristics that can be attributed to an area of specialized knowledge. These characteristics may be lexical or syntactical in nature. For example, a text referring to a medical procedure, whether aimed at specialists or at the general population, is specialized due to its terminological content, and its translation is therefore specialized. Another characteristic is that, while these specialized texts may be written *by* specialists *for* non-specialists, they may also be written for specialists in the field, increasing the risk of implication, hence the need for specialized translators to have as thorough as possible a theoretical knowledge of the field in which they translate. This makes training specialized translators a challenge.

In 1999, the Canadian Translation Industry Sectoral Committee (CTISC, 1999) tabled a report containing a number of recommendations to help strengthen the Canadian translation industry. Some of the recommendations were related directly to the training of future translators. Specifically, the Committee lamented the fact that recent translation graduates seem to lack knowledge of general culture and specialized training (CTISC, 1999, p. 89). This means that the ideal student would have more general knowledge and more specialized training while, paradoxically, having less general training and specialized—theoretical—knowledge. Such recommendations were puzzling at best. Nevertheless, many universities changed their curricula to include more practical courses and fewer theoretical courses, in part be-

cause it was what the translation industry wanted (Fiola & Cormier, 2011).

No one will deny that future translators should be well prepared to meet the expectations of their future employers. However, employers seem to believe that knowledge acquisition ends with graduation, and that translation curricula should train fully operational translators with specialized translation competence.

If this were to be used as the guiding principle behind translation curriculum design, which area(s) of specialization should become the focus of translation curricula? Presumably the ones that are currently most in demand should be the obvious choices. Nonetheless, even if universities were to shape their curricula around these highly volatile areas of specialization, it would still take a few years for translation students to complete the curricula, and by that time the demands of the market might have changed. Ten years ago, the word “localization” sent translation schools scrambling to develop new programs. These days, that same word is conspicuously absent from curricula; localization programs appear to be a thing of the past, at least in Canada. That does not mean that localization is absent from the translation classroom; it is no longer the subject of dedicated programs, but is, rather, integrated in translation curricula (Université de Montréal, 2012). This change is also due to a lack of interest in those potential students for whom these programs were designed (Fiola & Cormier, 2011).

Translator educators should never forget that their role is not to train specialized translators for today’s employers, but translation specialists for today, for tomorrow and potentially for the next 40 years.

Therefore, universities cannot afford to base their translation curricula solely on the immediate needs of a fickle labor market; there are certain fundamental translation skills that will never change, including research, critical text analysis, language transfer and cultural intelligence. Translation curricula should also empower future translators to become agents of change in the translation industry, for the benefit of translation as a profession.

Universities and large corporations are now using interdisciplinary approaches to achieve efficiencies and promote innovation, and when translation students are given the tools to become active participants in creative or executive processes, they can improve industry standards and practices. Translators are, after all, the true translation specialists, and they should be given the opportunity to share their expertise, just like translator trainers are specialists in their own fields and should be the ones designing translation curricula, in the industry's best interests. ■

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Dr. Fiola's expertise is in translation didactics. He has published several articles on curriculum design. He is co-authoring the 3rd edition of *La traduction raisonnée* (2013), with Jean Delisle, and has translated and adapted into French *La traduzione specializzata*, by Federica Scarpa (2010), both with University of Ottawa Press.

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