Assessing interpersonal skills in translator training: the cases of INSTB

INSTB

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Overview

- General context: translator training
- INSTB
- Research aims and rationale
- Research design
- Some results
- Conclusion and next steps
**General context:** Present-day translator training

- More than theorizing about translation
- More than "let's translate"
- Focus on integration of beginning professionals in the labour market ("employability")
- Especially since the introduction of the EMT (2009)
# General context: Present-day translator training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill descriptor</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Plan and manage time, stress, work and budget</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Comply with deadlines and adhere to instructions, specifications, style guides, standards etc.</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Work in a team, including, where appropriate, in virtual, multicultural and multilingual environments, using current communication technologies</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Use social media responsibly for professional purposes</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Take account of and adapt the physical ergonomics of the working environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Continuously self-evaluate, update and develop competences and skills through personal strategies and collaborative learning</td>
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</table>
**General context:** Present-day translator training

### Skill descriptor

- **27** Monitor and take account of new societal and language industry demands, new market requirements and emerging job profiles
- **28** Approach existing clients and find new clients through prospecting and marketing strategies
- **29** Clarify the requirements, objectives and purposes of the client, recipients of the language service and other stakeholders and offer the appropriate services to meet those requirements
- **30** Negotiate with the client (to define deadlines, rates/invoicing, working conditions, access to information, contracts, rights, responsibilities, language service specifications, tender specifications etc.)
- **31** Organise and manage translation projects involving multiple translators and/or other service providers
- **32** Understand and implement the standards applicable to the provision of a language service
- **33** Apply the quality management and quality assurance procedures required to meet pre-defined quality standards
- **34** Comply with professional ethical codes and standards (confidentiality, fair competition etc.) and network with other translators and language providers via social media and professional associations
- **35** Analyse and question language services and policies and suggest improvement strategies
General context (see INSTB, forthcoming)

- Authentic source texts
- Realistic translation brief
- Lectures with information on the translation market
- Information mining courses & introductions to CAT, MT, corpora, etc.
- Traineeships
- Simulated translation bureaus / skills labs
General context

- Initiatives at various individual universities

- Co-ordinated initiatives:
  - **OPTIMALE (2010-2014)** funded
    (Optimising Professional Translator Training in a Multilingual Europe)
    → Erasmus Academic Network
    → 70 partners from 32 different European countries
    → promoting market-oriented translator training.

  - **OTCT / Tradutech (2014-2016)** funded
    7 partner universities
    organized five-day sessions during which students set up fictitious translation companies + carried out multilingual translation projects according to the specifications and deadlines set by their “clients”.

  - **INSTB (Official launch in 2015)** not funded
INSTB (http://www.instb.eu)

- International Network of Simulated Translation Bures (since 2015)
- Share good practice in organizing/implementing skills labs
- Collaborate on projects (e.g. translation → revision)

What?
Teams of students work on an authentic task for a real or fictitious client under mock-realistic circumstances

Advantages?
- Combines all the required skills
- “Learning by doing”
- ...
INSTB ([http://www.instb.eu](http://www.instb.eu))
Research aims and rationale

- **Research aims:**
  - To develop and test a *survey instrument* for measuring student self-assessments in two competence areas:
    - EMT competences
    - Soft skills / transferrable skills / entrepreneurial competence
  - To develop *research designs* for studies on the impact of simulated translation bureau pedagogy:
    - Pre-post comparisons of student self-assessments within a university course.
    - Pre-post comparisons between courses at different universities.
  - To formulate and test specific *hypotheses*: e.g. soft skills, and more specifically interpersonal skills, are cultivated through authentic experiential learning?

- **Rationale:**
  - Importance of transversal or soft skills in competency framework (EMT)
  - Towards a self-evaluation tool for INSTB courses
    - Identification of local (self-evaluated) initial competence levels in various areas: soft skills, work skills...
    - Identification of specific strengths in local initial competence levels and especially in local simulated translation bureau setups
Research design

- **Dependent variables:**
  - Answers to 100 survey questions on a Likert scale (1–4), 0 as the value for *I don't know*, measured at the ordinal level.

- **Independent variables:** background questions measured at the nominal level, except for age (measured at the continuous level).

- **Categories**
  - CREATIVITY SKILLS
  - INTERPERSONAL SKILLS
  - TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS
  - TEAM WORK SKILLS
  - WORK/INTERPERSONAL
  - WORK/MANAGEMENT
  - WORK/PRODUCTION
  - WORK/SERVICE PROVISION
  - WORK/SUPPORT
  - WORK/TECHNOLOGY
Research design

- Population (n= 254 for both pre- and post-tests)
  - Between-groups comparisons: comparisons of average pre-test and post-test scores and distributions between universities
  - Within-groups comparisons: comparisons of average pre-test and post-test scores and distributions within each university
Some results, before and after the STB

- KU / Leuven / Campus Antwerp, N= 10; 11
- University of Lille, N= 40; 39
- University of Turku, N= 18; 19
- Zuyd Hogeschool, N= 30; 26
- Additional data from Universiteit Gent (N=40), University of Exeter (N=4) and Vrije Universiteit Brussel (N=26)
ALL INSTB DATA IN PRE-POST COMPARISON

- Time management
- Team work skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Creativity
- Work skills

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<th>Creativity</th>
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88 WOR/SERVICEPROV: I can analyse any type of (translation-related) project.

34 WOR/SUPPORT: I am able to work as IT support in a translation project.

93 WOR/SERVICEPROV: I know how to calculate the gross margin of a project.

26 WOR/MANAGE: I am able to assess the workload of a translation project and to schedule the project.

75 TMS: I set myself specific and clearly defined goals.
TOP 5 'SOFT SKILLS' IN PRE-POST DIFFERENCE OF MEANS

75 TMS: I set myself specific and clearly defined goals. 0.27

10 IC: I collaborate with others to solve problems using a variety of problem solving tools and techniques. 0.26

13 IC: I pay attention to other people's body language. 0.19

66 TWS: I am more concerned with major issues than with details. 0.18

62 TWS: I support and praise other team members. 0.17
Conclusion and next steps

Conclusion

Overall: skills honed through AEL (especially service provision skills and generic managerial skills)

Minor observation: results of Zuyd case places emphasis on coaching (striking a balance)

Limitation: ‘in/through the eyes of students’ (self-assessment)

Next steps

- Reducing the number of variables (questions) in order to make the survey a handy self-evaluation tool for simulated translation courses
- Grouping survey questions into principal components based on their correlations
- Expected result: an improved self-assessment survey with 40–50 questions, or a set of surveys for different purposes, divided into soft skills, work skills... on the basis of correlations in the pilot study.
Thank you!

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