

MANAGING WEB-BASED RESOURCES FOR TRANSLATOR TRAINING IN THE E-LEARNING CONTEXT

Roxana Ștefania Bîrsanu¹

ABSTRACT

During the last decades, translation studies have managed to impose the right consideration of translation not only as a process/product, but also as a profession in its own right, with all the consequences deriving from it. In this technical and information age, translators rely extensively on the resources and tools made available online, precisely due to their convenience translated into the time spent searching for data (the information is only a click away), a plethora of parallel texts which are readily available, interaction and feedback (translation blogs and forums where professionals share opinions and information), and reliability, although this is an issue which may give rise to debate. This paper aims to take a closer look at how these resources can be fully exploited in translator training, and at the twofold possible application of the internet in this field: one the one hand, as a very useful provider of translation instruments, and on the other hand, as a potentially inexhaustible source of information, both linguistic and/or cultural.

Keywords: translator training; web-based resources; translation skills; information sources.

1. APPROACHES TO TRANSLATOR TRAINING

One of the great scholars in the field of Translation Studies, Wills considers translator training “an open field which calls for experiment and innovation” [1]. Given the fact that Translation Studies as a discipline, and translator training have had a tradition of merely around thirty years, it goes without saying that the methodology and pedagogy in the field have been constantly refined and adjusted with the ultimate goal of preparing professionals who can successfully cope with an ever changing working environment. Therefore, the key words of translator training revolve around the concepts of flexibility and awareness of the job market demands, with great emphasis on the ability to manage and exploit the advantages of a fast changing world of electronic resources and tools.

Such sources and devices are the very core of e-learning, and before moving onto an overview of the various forms of translator training, it would be necessary to specify the approach to e-learning as adopted in this paper. We agree with Sangra et al. [2], who, after a thorough review of the literature on e-learning, have produced the following definition of the concept: “E-learning is an approach to teaching and learning [...] that is based on the use of electronic media and devices as tools for improving access to training, communication and interaction and that facilitates the adoption of new ways of understanding and developing learning”. Therefore, whenever references are made here to self-training or formal training of translators, they should be considered in the light of e-learning as the appropriation of knowledge and skills through the use of electronic

¹ Romanian-American University, 1B Expozitiei Bvd., Bucharest, Romania, roxanabirsanu25@yahoo.com

instruments and resources, regardless of whether trainees are assisted by an instructor within some form of collaborative learning or learning is individual and autonomous.

Translator training needs to be approached with the awareness that it comprises several types and layers of knowledge acquisition. On the one hand there is on the job training, which takes places in a working environment, through interaction with other professionals in the field, and feedback from collaborators and customers. This is particularly the case of self-training of experienced translators, who did not necessarily follow specialised programmes. Short-term courses could also be included in this category. They usually focus on distinct aspects of the job such as learning how to use new software, specialisation in a specific field of activity and the acquisition of the related terminology, or, in interpreters' case, the development of various communication abilities. In what concerns this type of courses, on-line training has gained momentum and seems to be favoured by younger generations of translators. This is mainly due to the fact that they are convenient in terms of time and allow virtual interaction with colleagues located in distinct places all around the globe, which adds cultural and specific insights to attendees' learning experience.

On the other hand, there is formal training which occurs at institutional level, in the case of long-term education. It is mostly the case of university studies, from BA to PhD programmes. The spectacular development of Translation Studies during the last thirty decades and the increasing interest it has raised in the academic environment, which turned it into a discipline in its own right, have significantly contributed to a change of perspective on the profession of translator. Therefore, within the formal education approach to Translation Studies, which, until recently, has mainly focused on theoretical aspects, translator training has gradually become one of the key elements of its applicative side. It is clear that consideration has to be given to a significant extent to training professionals who are knowledgeable about all the benefits brought about by the latest advances in communication and information technology.

Formal translator training has been faced with constant criticism from professionals already working as translators. The main fault they find with this form of education is that it is cut away from the reality of the market, and that trainees are not accurately equipped, both professionally and emotionally, for what is expecting them in the real world. They also insist on the fact that classroom practice in translation focuses all too often on material that is not echoed by the actual demands of customers, and that students are not faced with real situations (such as working with tight deadlines, having to negotiate fees, collaborating with colleagues on the same project, etc.).

Pym [3] suggests that steps have been made to narrow the gap between classroom practice and market demands. From among such measures he mentions "inviting professionals into the classroom, assessing students on the basis of portfolios of their completed translations, using real-world ('authentic') translation tasks with explicit instructions from a client and generally modelling competencies and skill sets in ways that can match up with market demands".

Consequently, there has been a much needed and expected shift in translator training and the methods used in the classroom. The advent of the Internet and the related advantages in terms of availability and readability of information have allowed to incorporate as much as

possible from the tools and resources available online in classroom teaching. Nevertheless, merely using them does not automatically define an efficient process of training and that is why they need to be included in a wider teaching framework.

One of the traditional forms of translator training, which is still most commonly used in the classroom, is the process-oriented approach. According to Gile [4], the reasons why this approach is much favoured by students and trainers alike are that at psychological level, it causes less stress than other approaches, and students show willingness to accept more easily the rules presented to them, since they follow a very logical and clear pattern. Moreover, it leads to a rapid and significant reduction of translation errors due to the faulty interpretation of the source text.

Nevertheless, modern training approaches have started to move away from the teacher- or learner-oriented strategies towards a focus on learning. Kiraly [5] proposes a social-constructivist model, which centres on the creation of a collaborative environment that teaches trainee translators how to become and behave like actual professionals. In this perspective, “the students have to construct their own knowledge of the profession and their own understanding of their responsibilities and rights as professionals through experience, by collaboratively participating in the authentic activities of professional translators”. Consequently, the trainer is no longer relegated the position of a ‘supreme’ holder of truth and knowledge, and acquires the role of a guide assisting trainees in their complete development through exploration of their own capabilities.

A question which is often asked when debating the aspects of translator training refers to the trainers themselves. There are opinions which state that the trainers should best be professionals with a vast knowledge in the field of translation, who may provide their students with very valuable inside information not only about the techniques and methods of translating (and the related tools and resources), but also information from the more practical aspect of the job such as how to handle difficult tasks, how to deal with the stress involved in the job or how to handle difficult customers. In the academic environment, this is hardly possible, since there are very clear requirements referring to the teaching staff. Professional translators may, however, participate in training programs as guests for workshops or discussions with the students, therefore as collaborators rather than constant trainers.

Regardless of the trainers’ status, in order to be able and accurately and efficiently fulfil this role of guides, trainers need to be aware of the instruments and resources that are available. Although it is a difficult task for trainers to keep the pace with the advances in all the fields which are connected to the profession of a translator, they have to keep themselves updated on the latest trends in the section they teach (whether it refers to technical support, searching methods or production aspects) and constantly remind their students of the huge potential the Internet presents as an instrument of aid in their activity.

A distinction has to be operated between tools and resources used in the translation process. The tools represent the equipment which assists translators in performing their job. It is the case of word processors that help them write down their translations, and all the software that supports them in organising and structuring a set of data. This category includes machine translation software or database management tools. On the other hand, resources

are, according to Alcina [6], “sets of data that are organised in a particular manner and which can be looked up or used in the course of some phase of processing. For example, dictionaries or corpora, available either online or on CD ROM, are sets of data that can be accessed in different ways. They normally constitute closed data sets that cannot be expanded by information from the user”.

In broad lines, the Internet makes available to translators and translators to be a wide range of services which can be classified into several categories [7]. One of them refers to the resources where they can search for linguistic information, including data on specific terminology (Larousse, Webster, databases such as Eurodicautom, etc.), or background information on a variety of topics which they have to work on. This category includes a large array of online publications, from newspapers to encyclopaedias in electronic format (Encyclopaedia Britannica) and even search engines.

Moving onto the employment-related aspect, the Internet has lately proven to be one of the most efficient, if not the most efficient, means to look for a job (Proz is a good example) and advertise for your services, due to the opportunity of creating your own web site and making your offer visible on similar web pages. Last, but not least, the Internet is the provider of the so much needed communication tools, such as emailing and messaging services, file transfer and electronic discussion opportunities like forums or blogs.

A relevant issue is the fact that translator trainers are increasingly using electronic devices as a means to communicate among themselves. This enables a very fruitful and useful exchange of expertise and communication, and allows the flow of ideas across different training programmes, approaches and trends, all to the ultimate benefit of trainees. A very good example is the online symposium organised in January 2000 by the Intercultural Studies Group at the Universitat Rovira I Virgili on the topic of innovation and e-learning. The main purpose of the symposium was to initiate debates on innovative training techniques very much needed in order to complement traditional processes and strategies, which are no longer sufficient given the ever changing demands of the labour market.

Unfortunately, there are very few online conferences in the field of Translation Studies. But when they are organised, such online events are highly appreciated particularly due to the fact that they explore one of the basic functions and advantages provided by the virtual environment, namely a wide base of attendees from all around the globe, capable to communicate in a timely and efficient manner. The innovations proposed by the attending trainers were among the outcomes of the symposium. Some of the innovations refer to distance learning, suggestions for the increasing use of tools available online, self-training courses via de internet assisted by trainers, or courses using voice-recognition technology.

E-learning has become a must in translator training and, besides the obvious argument that it would be impossible to imagine the activity of translation and the related processes outside the electronic universe, there are some very concrete reasons why this form of education should be included in translator training. One refers to tandem learning, which, although seems to be best fitted for language learning processes, could very well benefit training in translation as well, due to the interaction between natives of different languages. Each of the two international students involved in the process brings to this learning arrangement his/her own linguistic/cultural knowledge and shares it with his/her peer so as

to create a successful working tandem, in which the partners complete each other effectively.

Another reason may refer to demands coming from students. E-learning is mostly favoured by more mature translators, who need to improve their skills or acquire new ones. Since, for personal or professional reasons it is more difficult for them to move from one place to another than it is the case of undergraduates, distance online courses seem to meet their requirements in terms of time and place convenience. Without having to invest time and extremely high financial resources, they have the opportunity to communicate and study in an intercultural environment from their home countries, with all the benefits included.

Yet another compelling argument for the inclusion of e-learning in translator training is the necessary acquisition of communication skills. They range from merely exchanging ideas in an intercultural context to the use of electronic tools aimed at improving cross-cultural communication. All these involve the constant use of electronic media, in the absence of which any translator activity is, at any rate, unthinkable.

Distance learning is another axis of translator training which makes extensive use of all the tools made available by the Internet. It may be a viable alternative to on-campus courses, providing almost all of the advantages of traditional learning. But in this particular case, there is a special requirement that for some may be an obstacle, namely good command of computer-related abilities, since learners need to manage various online learning software or tools. For motivated trainees with beginner-level tech skills but who are willing to perfect this aspect, it is a challenge that may turn into an advantage on the long run, since they acquire thus new abilities that will most definitely prove useful in their future professional life.

Online courses in translator training in particular are sometimes necessary as an extension of formal academic education. Using advanced technology and the latest discoveries in terms of translation software, simulation programmes etc. currently is, and most likely will continue to be, a desideratum, since specialised departments need a significant budget to be able and purchase the best there is on the market. Moreover, even if this were the case, they could not keep up with the pace of discoveries and innovations in the field, so students have to use and work on the same tools for several years on end. That is why, if they are interested in being competitive on the labour market, and keeping updated with any new software in their field, whether we talk of translation or interpreting, they have to enrol in online courses in order to improve their technical skills or even acquire new ones.

Despite all the above-mentioned advantages of e-learning in the field of translator training, there are still problems connected with this area. A potential issue with online courses in the field of translator training, as in any other field of study, as a matter of fact, is their status when compared to formal academic education. Although they may be organised by universities or training institutes, and despite the fact that the trainers may be well-known professionals in the field, there is still the problem of their recognition by professional associations, companies, etc., all of them potential employers.

One of the obvious concerns referring to e-learning in the field of translator training is the issue of gains and losses generated by this form of education. In broad lines, given the fact

that almost anything can be taught remotely, there are general and specific things that apply to each field of study. In translator training in particular, one of the most frequently praised advantages of e-learning is the fact that trainees come from different cultural backgrounds and bring their input into the virtual class. Another advantage is the feedback from participants in asynchronous teaching courses. Since they do not have to interact directly with their teacher all the time and they communicate much of the time with their peers, they are less intimidated and more encouraged to actively participate in the classroom.

Another drawback may be the high rate of student drop-out. In the case of e-learning, the drop-out rate seems to be somewhat higher than in the case of on-campus courses, and the following can be counted among the main reasons: technological problems, lack of student motivation, shortage of time dedicated to study, or insufficient experience of trainers. The lively and timely interaction – one question is asked, which is replied immediately, without having it necessary to have an extended exchange of emails – is an advantage not to be neglected. Sometimes, face to face communication is less time consuming, since the trainer does not have to spend time writing down his comments, but just delivers them as he assesses the job.

As Pym points out, the rich intercultural weave of an online classroom, considered one of the main advantages of e-learning in the context of translator training paradoxically gives rise to another problem, i.e. the heterogeneous nature of participating students. While on the one hand this intercultural structure of the class brings together various perspectives on life in general and on learning in particular which may enrich the other students' perspective, on the other hand this may also generate difficulties in approaching tasks and communicating effectively with teachers and peers. And there is more than just intercultural homogeneity, since an electronic course may very well gather students which belong to different age groups, and who possess different linguistic and technological skills. These gaps between the course attendees could be, and sometimes really are, an obstacle to the creation of a harmonious work environment and may even lead to clashes of opinion between the colleagues. Most likely, the more students originating from different cultural backgrounds, the more teachers should expect such divergence of opinions and be prepared to mitigate them effectively.

Finally, there is a more administrative issue, which pertains more to the organizing institution rather than to student-related aspects. This refers to the use of resources in the context of online courses. In this case, resources range from the equipment provided to students to the time invested by students and the teaching staff alike. On the students' side, an online course may be a challenge because they need to have at least some basic knowledge of how to handle the electronic media and tools necessary to participate in class debates, handle assignments and communicate with their peers. On the teachers' side, they need to put in a considerable amount of time and effort in order to design an online course, with all its particular requirements.

All of the problems mentioned above may vary with the context of each e-learning situation, which involves the culture in which the course is organized, the teaching approach used, interactive styles, etc. That is why there are no standard methods of solving such problems.

However, it is also Pym who provides a number of tips for trying to bridge the gap between the objectives of online courses and what may actually happen in reality.

Thus, he suggests that in e-learning situations, everything needs to be made very explicit, from providing assignment instructions to how they need to be handled to the teachers. This also involves encouraging students to clearly state the problems they may encounter, whether they refer to the technology used or the tasks themselves. High level of interactivity is also a good strategy to make a virtual class function properly. This is closely connected to the concept of asynchrony, one of the features of e-learning, which means that every student may work at the pace of his/her choice. Although this in itself is convenient especially for students who need to attend to various other professional or personal things, it may tend to isolate those who fall behind. That is why controlled asynchrony is recommended, since it “enable teamwork and chat-based discussion following completion of the tasks. Controlled asynchrony is an important prerequisite for the formation of an interactive social space” (4).

Finally, in order to enhance the homogeneous nature of the class, students should be encouraged to interact as much as possible not only for proposed assignments, but also for off-topic interactions via e-mail or a chat service. This form of informal interaction, although it does not add to the study experience in itself, helps students coagulate as a group and form a sense of community. At the same time with this informal interaction, students are also invited, within the limit of their own financial/time availability, to join face-to-face sessions in order to have at least one personal contact with their peers.

Folaron [8], who has a vast experience in providing online courses, suggests a number of activities which can be applied in class by using electronic tools and resources. Such activities refer to the use of standard file formats (e.g. PDF, Adobe, Word), working with HTML, practice in machine translation by using free trial versions, managing glossaries in Excel, or working with functions such as the evaluative track changes, or managing files in terms of downloading and uploading. As for the use of the Internet, she suggests various internet searches, the assessment of web pages and the draw up of a selection according to the relevance criterion, the compilation of electronic resources that could assist students in creating their own translation library, the use of electronic services to hand over assignments and interact with their peers.

The above-mentioned activities could be successfully used in traditional training as well, provided there is the necessary equipment. An observation, however, is in place: given the limited timeframe of on-campus sessions, they are mostly recommended as assignments, since, at least some of them, they require a significant amount of time.

Translator training, especially in the field of e-learning, but not only limited to it, is incomplete in the absence of the technical tools necessary to carry out the job. The ones which are most frequently commented upon and used during translation training courses are machine translation (MT) and computer assisted translation (CAT). An article called “Computer translation: the status today” [9], the author mentions the difference between the two types of software used in the translation activity. Machine translation refers to “the calculation speed of a computer in order to analyse the structure of each term of phrase within the text to be translated (source text). It then breaks this structure down into elements

that can be easily translated, and recomposes a term of the same structure in the target language”.

MT emerged in the eighties and was considered a grand breakthrough in the field of translation. However, the main disadvantage of MT is that the text to be translated needs to be as clear to the computer as possible, which means that the text must be free of any ambiguity and must contain words which are found in the computer's existing dictionary. It is thus obvious that it would be quite difficult to use it on other documents than technical texts.

Because of its drawbacks, MT was later dethroned by CAT, which is preferred to MT because it consists of a series of tools which have the ultimate goal of assisting the translator in aspects such as consistency and working speed. The greatest advantage of CAT is that, as the same article mentions, “beyond managing terminology and translation memories, CAT tools offer various methods of managing translation projects and statistical analysis functions in order to determine, for example, the repetition rate within a text or carry out searches for terms in their various contexts, etc.”. Nowadays, with the constant use of electronic resources and tools, CAT tools have been more and more appreciated, and information technology companies are now competing in order to develop the best solutions to provide to translators and translation companies.

Another issue worth mentioning when discussing translator training is the one related to the market for which translator specialise. Although most of the time translators have as customers entities or natural persons from the own country, with the extraordinary progress of the Internet, there are increasingly more jobs on the international market as well. This does not necessarily mean an increase of translators' mobility, but simply the fact that they should be prepared to cope with the potential challenges brought about by the fact that they have to work in international teams. That is why students should also become familiar with teletranslation, which basically means remote translation. Certainly, teletranslation requires very good knowledge of how to use the Internet and the technology made available by the progress in the electronic field.

This entails awareness of distinct working methods and approaches across different cultures to which they need to adjust if they want to repeat the working experience within the same team or with the same part time employer. At the same time, they also have to be aware that international employers may have completely distinct profiles from the ones in their own culture in terms of expectations (referring to the quality of the final work, compliance with set deadlines, the ability to work under stressful conditions imposed by very tight deadlines, knowledge of cultural conventions and rules, etc.) and price negotiation styles.

Punctually, within the same virtual conference on translator training, professor Daniel Gouadec [10] mentions that the markets translators should be trained for are the multilingual publishing market, the translation companies and the market for freelance translators. As he puts it, “these three markets form a collection of niches, organized by domain (e.g. computing, telecommunications, mobile phones), by type of translation (i.e. localization), by type of documents (e.g. contracts) and even, by type of technical aids (e.g. translation memory management systems)”.

A very important aspect he touches upon, and which is usually neglected when discussing the future of graduates of such training courses, is that some of them run the risk of becoming professionals on a non-market, which actually means “the jungle of small jobs, with an infinite variety of subjects, and a daily struggle for life”. If this is not the case with translators working full time with translation companies, publishing houses or multinationals with a special department of translation and interpreting, this situation does apply to most freelance translators, especially at the beginning of their career. This is precisely why it is recommended for them to enrol in on-line courses to perfect their skills and/or acquire new ones, which would increase their chances of improving their professional status and, with it, their living standards.

The increasing use of on-line resources by translators leads to the creation of professionals with more than just one specialization. As professor Mayoral claims [11], “It is useful for a translator to be highly specialized in a particular field, although training in the general techniques of specialized translation can help people work on texts in fields such as science, technology, law or economics. The professional of the future must be open to all possibilities. We increasingly find ‘multi-professional’ translators: people are no longer just translators in one of the traditional fields, since they usually carry put at least one additional activity (text production, administration, sales, quality control, audiovisual production, web-page production, editing, etc.)”.

The professional of the future, as Mayoral calls him/her, needs to be constantly connected to the latest discoveries in the field that concern him/her which has gone beyond the mere philological barriers. Translators of the future must be knowledgeable about and acquire skills which leave the confines of translation proper, if they want to improve their chances of being productive and competitive on an increasingly challenging work market. In order to assist them in acquiring such skills, translator training courses have to provide a richer curriculum or the opportunity to take optional courses in as varied fields as computer literacy, marketing, economics, etc. In this light, they also need to interact and work side by side with professionals in these fields of activity, in order to gain a more in-depth insight into basic aspects of the professions concerned.

Given all the resources and tools now available to translators to be, it would be most easily to fall into the trap of self-sufficiency. One could easily consider that with all this information easily available, no formal training is necessary. However, the academic environment is the best place where one could begin one’s training, due to guidance from teachers which covers both the theory and practice involved in their future profession. We agree with Razmjou [12], who states that “translation needs to be practiced in an academic environment, in which trainees work on both practical tasks under the supervision of their teachers and theoretical aspects to enhance their knowledge. In an academic environment recently published articles, journals and books on translation are available to the trainees, who thus become familiar with good translators and their work by reading them and then comparing them with the original texts”.

2. IMPROVING TRANSLATION SKILLS WITH THE HELP OF WEB-BASED RESOURCES

The ultimate aim of translator training is that of creating translation competence. With the latest advances in information technology, the rapidly changing working environment and the internationalisation of professions and experiences brought about by the globalisation age, it appears obvious that the perspective on translator skills has undergone a considerable shift of focus. In the 21st century, it is unthinkable to imagine a translator at work without being assisted by his most reliable instruments, and his 'arsenal' has come to include an omnipresent computer with a high-speed internet connection.

Following the above-mentioned e-learning definition, this chapter looks into the acquisition, mostly through individual study, of translation skills through the use of electronic resources and instruments which provide "access to training, communication and interaction", as indicated in the already specified definition. Consequently, this part of the paper approaches e-learning from the perspective of autonomous accessing of electronic tools and sources.

It goes without saying that the acquisition of skills that were once a prerequisite for anyone aiming to become a translator is still a must in this profession. For instance, sound language mastery is compulsory especially when writing and reading skills are taken into account. Because, basically, translation is rewriting of the source material, to use Lefevere's concept [13], and what a translator does is rewrite the source text so as to suit the expectations and conventions of the target readership. Obviously, the development of language skills does not halt with the completion of formal education, since language is a living organism, and any language specialist needs to come into constant contact with the multi-faceted and diverse occurrences of his working languages.

The resources available online considerably assist this self-training process, since the translator has at his disposal a plethora of materials. There are online grammar textbooks and practice tests, mono- and bilingual dictionaries and thesauruses in electronic format from renowned publishers which have acquired a canonical position (the online versions of resources generated by Webster, Longman, Grand Larousse or DEX, to name but a few). In order to enhance their reading skills and improve their vocabulary basis, not only trainee translators, but also experienced ones have to expose themselves constantly to texts focusing on as various topics as possible written by experts in the source language(s).

In this respect they have access to all sorts of documents with a minimum financial investment, if at all (it is their decision if they subscribe to any non-free publication; at any rate, paying for a subscription is sometimes a great option, considering that otherwise, in most cases, it would have been impossible for them to access such publications). From research journals and scientific bulletins to general newspapers – everything is just a click away. There is hardly any serial form of publication that does not have an online version, which is an invaluable resource to any contemporary translator.

Besides these absolutely necessary skills, there are others which are just as essential given the current working conditions, which force translators to seek and develop abilities that are mandatory if they want to be successful. Thus, the existence or lack of good interpersonal communication abilities can make a difference between a professional who can effectively work in an international project team and one who prefers only local

interactions. Of course, the difference is also felt in terms of financial reward and professional rating.

Translators who work in a multi-cultural team on a global project mainly communicate among themselves and with the other experts involved in the project via electronic means, which include e-mail services, chat, Skype or a forum. Therefore, they need to be aware of online communication conventions if they want to avoid misunderstandings and failures in communication which may have significant adverse effects on the development and final completion date of the project and, inevitably, on their future employment.

A translator's technical skills are nowadays pivotal for the job. The mere use of the word processor is no longer sufficient. Knowledge of translation programmes, translation memories and machine translation can ease a translator's work and even provide him with better chances of attracting clients. Moreover, software and phone translation and localisation impose still further technical requirements on the translator. Enrolment in online courses is a viable method to become familiar or keep updated with the latest trends in translation tools.

Last, but not least, intercultural competence is one of the critical elements that completes the portrait of a good translator. Whether they specialise in translating literary works, journalistic, medical or technical texts or websites, translators must be thoroughly aware of cultural differences, standards and conventions operating in the target system. Since it is impossible to be knowledgeable about all the possible rules applying to the diverse fields of human activity specific to one culture or another, translators resort to any resources at hand to fill in any potential cultural gap.

Without even leaving their desk, they travel the world and transfer a wealth of cultural experience into the target language assisted by genuine information on the source. They may access sources like Wikipedia, with the observation that, given the crowdsourcing nature of the service, they should double-check the information in order to avoid misunderstandings or erroneous information. They can also visit official web pages of ministries, embassies or travel agencies, not to mention any available electronic versions of books of interest, newspaper articles, or ask for opinions and counselling from the natives on forums and blogs.

This is a general overview of the skills a translator cannot do without and which can be achieved or enhanced with the effective use of the Internet and everything it offers. Approaches to translation skills are almost as many as there are training schools and curricula and just as diverse, since the theoretical literature in the field does not provide a clear categorisation and classification.

3. CONCLUSIONS

To a significant extent, the job of a translator requires the ability of always adjusting to the standards, needs and expectations of customers, which vary with the general social and economic context. That is why translator education, whether it refers to self-training or formal education, has to be constantly mindful of the realities and demands of the job market and incorporate, as much as possible, any tools and resources that ease the

translation/interpretation process. Training curricula should probably best focus on what AlQuimali calls a “hybrid methodology, an eclectic approach that would provide the translator with a multicomponent competence involving linguistic, social, cultural, cognitive and professional skills with the ultimate objective of meeting market demand” [14].

In all the aspects of the job, from the formation of skills and competences to the search for employment opportunities, of particular relevance are the benefits provided by the virtual environment. From the most commonly used forms of e-learning such as online courses and distance learning to web-based resources, translator training has started to exploit the advantages brought about by the information revolution, thus integrating the specialisations from the field of translation and interpretation into the large spectrum of professions which can hardly be conceived in the absence of electronic support.

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