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Integrating Mediation and Translanguaging into TI-Oriented Language Learning and Teaching (TILLT)

ABSTRACT

In recent years, multilingual practices like mediation and translanguaging have found their way into additional language pedagogy. This is due to the recognition that multilingual language users do not store or use their language in isolation, but rather build up a repertoire in which all languages are connected. Multilingual practices are particularly relevant for university programmes in translation and interpreting in which students are trained to work in multilingual environments in a mediating role. In this article, we will describe the professional demands that TI students have to meet and how multilingual practices can help them to develop towards these demands.

Keywords: translanguaging, mediation, TILLT, language teaching, TI training

1. Introduction

University training programmes in TI (Translation and Interpreting) are characterised by a strong orientation towards a rather well-defined set of future professions¹ that also serve as a reference point for course design, learning outcomes, and pedagogical activities. Students should develop competences according to a set of professional standards and develop a service-oriented mindset (see section 2). In this context, language learning plays a crucial role, especially in the early phases, as TI cannot occur without a sound knowledge of the languages involved in the TI process. In some cases, students build on already existing advanced or

¹ As we have been experiencing in the last years, due to social (e.g. migration) and technological (e.g. machine translation) developments, professional profiles are being expanded or modified, but the profile of the human translator and interpreter is still the most common benchmark for curricular design.

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intermediate language competence language competence, while in other cases, they start a new language from scratch. Either way, students' previous language learning experiences, which are usually constrained to high school, are frequently based on general communicative language teaching approaches and the use of language for personal or educational needs, interests and goals.

Language learning, especially in the case of children, adolescents and young adults, will rarely be seen as purely *instrumental* and targeted towards professional purposes, as learning a new language, especially at a younger age, also shapes the learner's self-perception and identity. Within TI training programmes, however, it is convenient and necessary to take into account the specific skills and competences required for professional practice and to design the target language courses accordingly (cf. Cerezo Herrero, Schmidhofer, & Koletnik, 2021). TILLT (Translation and Interpreting-oriented Language Learning and Teaching) must be conducive to the construction of a language service profession, hence the need not only to develop language as a tool for future professional use, but also to address how language learning contributes to the development of a multilingual and multicultural competence and what this means for identity and language use in Translation Studies.

On this basis, we will show how insights from multilingual practices can be integrated into TILLT. Insights from *translanguaging* can help to develop conscience of one's own multilingual identity and competence and how a multilingual language repertoire is used at both individual and societal levels; *mediation* practice can help to introduce students to the role and challenges of enabling communication between speakers from different languages and cultures.

2. Professional demands

Among the university degrees in the humanities, Translation Studies is probably one of those that best conforms to the demands of the Bologna Process to prepare students for the industry. In many TI degrees, practice-oriented courses in language proficiency, translation and interpreting are given much more space than are theory- or research-oriented courses. Learning outcomes and activities of many courses, especially at the MA level, are professionally targeted and are subject to changes in professional environments, as is observable currently with the ongoing debate surrounding the integration of machine translation and post-editing competence (cf. European Language Industry Surveys compiled by ELIS²). This orientation is reflected in many translation competence frameworks, most visibly in the European Master's in Translation (EMT) framework that "aims to consolidate and enhance the employability of graduates of Master's degrees in translation throughout Europe" (EMT, 2017, p. 3).

² <https://elis-survey.org/> (retrieved on June 3, 2022).

The translation industry seeks graduates who can provide language services that comply with the requirements of institutions and the free market. These include primarily cross-linguistic translation and interpreting services in different modalities, but also other language-related profiles such as subtitlers, technical writers, reviewers, and, more recently, post-editors. Moreover, many students perceive TI university degrees to be professional training and, consequently, demand that TI degrees be oriented towards high employability³ in order to have better job opportunities (e.g. LeBlanc, 2017). Thus, due to such expectations and increasing competition among educational institutions, curriculum designers are under pressure to comply with these requirements and define courses, learning outcomes and activities accordingly.

Consequently, an important aspect of competence building in BA, and especially MA, degrees is students' enculturation into the translation profession through not only the development of instrumental competences including language, translation and interpreting skills, but also the development of a series of professional attitudes. These include considering languages to be a tool for their work and to adapt their learning accordingly (Schmidhofer & Ahmann, 2015), growing into the role of the mediator, i.e. a person who provides people with access to text or speech that they would otherwise not understand, and developing a self-concept as language and TI experts as well as service providers who are able to offer solutions that satisfy clients' demands, guarantee good service and quality, and take into account market realities and their own possibilities and expectations.⁴

The enculturation into the profession also includes the idea of developing expertise that is in demand and will constitute their "capital" in the labour market (cf. Norton, 2014, p. 105), help them to excel when compared to translators and interpreters without academic TI training (Kadrić & Kaindl, 2016, p. 21), and motivate them to adhere to certain behaviours, ethics and codes that can be found in mission statements of translator and interpreter associations (cf. CIUTI⁵ policy statement). This includes the development and maintenance of excellent skills in all languages, as well as L1, adherence to language conventions, and the idea that translation and interpreting, whenever possible, should be conducted from an additional language into L1.

3. Multilingual perspectives in language learning and teaching

In past years, the areas of language learning and teaching have been characterised by the *multilingual turn* (Conteh & Meier, 2014; May, 2014; Ortega, 2013) that

³ Employability can be understood as the integration in curricula of key qualifications that are relevant for the labour market in general or for specific professions, or the success of graduates in the labour market (cf. the different readings of the term in Hessler, 2013, p. 46).

⁴ Such topics are usually addressed in special courses like "translation project management" and "translation as a profession".

⁵ Conférence Internationale Permanente d'Instituts Universitaires de Traducteurs et Interprètes.

contends the value of competence in various languages at the individual level and also the coexistence of various languages at the societal level. Moreover, it adopts a critical approach towards longstanding assumptions in prevailing L2 language pedagogy. It thus returns to the question of what the goal of language learning and teaching should be, and challenges the view of monolingual native speaker competence as *the* goal of additional language learning. According to these ideas,

[r]ather than thinking of native-like speech as the central goal (an unattainable goal for many learners), the multi-competent L2 learner understands what it means to be an L2 user and is using the classroom to develop an understanding of who they are in our multilingual, multicultural world [brackets original] (Scott, 2016, p. 448).

Furthermore, it raises the question of cognitive processing supporting the view of “a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4), and describes the use of the linguistic repertoire as flexible and adaptable to communicative needs and interlocutors: “multilingual speakers navigate among languages and do not use each of their languages for the same purposes in all communicative situations, in the same domains, or with the same people” (Cenoz, 2013, p. 11).

4. The role of languages in TI programmes

Most European TI programmes offer several mandatory language courses as part of their curricula to provide students with the required and necessary linguistic knowledge prior to embarking on their subsequent translation and interpreting subjects (Schmidhofer, 2018). Indeed, given the prominence of additional languages for TI, it is reasonable to say that this training determines to a large extent students’ rate of success throughout their entire university education. However, some recently published research studies bring to the fore the fact that this training more often than not lacks TI focus (Carrasco & Navarro, 2019) and that it should be given its own distinctive place within foreign language teaching (Cerezo Herrero, 2019; Cerezo Herrero, Schmidhofer, & Koletnik, 2021; Clouet, 2021; Koletnik, 2021; Schmidhofer, Cerezo Herrero, & Koletnik, 2021).

As a rule, language courses in TI training adopt a generalist approach (Carrasco & Navarro, 2019; Fois, 2021) and mainly focus on the enhancement of communicative competence. Yet, this type of training is insufficient, as it fails to take into account the interlinguistic mediation role that a translator and/or interpreter plays (Schmidhofer, 2018). In the words of Pietrzak (2013, p. 236), “such a path of language development seems hardly relevant to future translators’ needs”. The task of a translator or interpreter is to put their linguistic knowledge at the service of other interlocutors who do not share the same linguistic code and to

facilitate communication between them. This entails the need to know their working languages, including foreign languages, at the highest level, as it is essential that a translator and/or interpreter use foreign languages with complete accuracy (Schmidhofer & Ahmann, 2015). The communicative approach, however, usually prioritises fluency over accuracy, with correction mechanisms being reserved for cases of interference that hinder comprehension in L2.

Thus, there is a need for a TI-oriented language approach. Linguistic training for translation must be undertaken whilst bearing in mind the ultimate goal of Translation Studies, i.e. the development of the translation (and interpreting) competence (Carrasco Flores, 2021; Clouet, 2021). For such a purpose, the appropriate pedagogical conditions must be met so that this maxim can be complied with (Schmidhofer & Ahmann, 2015). The teaching process should be geared towards targeting the differences between L1 and L2, for which the use of a contrastive approach both at the textual level, especially the structure and the common linguistic resources of a specific textual typology, as well as the agents involved in the communicative process (sender and receiver), and at the linguistic situation and linguistic levels (coherence and cohesion mechanisms, appropriateness, pragmatic aspects, etc.) is in place. This contrastive principle should preferably be materialised through a structural–functional approach (Ruzicka Kenfel, 2003). While the structural model allows detecting differences and similarities between the language pair, thus avoiding undesired negative transfers, the functional model gives communicative value to these structures (Ruzicka Kenfel, 2003).

On this basis, it can be argued that this linguistic contrastive principle cannot occur at the sentence or grammatical level, but rather at the discursive level. This is the reason as to why it is essential to include the textual component as the core element of the training. Translation is a textual operation (Hurtado, 2011), so the binomial *communication* and *text* are inseparable (Roiss, 2015). This specific teaching principle precludes the use of published textbooks for not conforming to the teaching tenets that govern this training (Clouet, 2021; Fois, 2021) and disregarding the contrastive aspect previously alluded to (Fois, 2021). Rather, the use of authentic materials must be prioritised in order to simulate tasks reflective of real professional practice in the classroom through different genres and textual typologies (Adams & Cruz-García, 2017; Carrasco & Navarro, 2019; Clouet, 2021). Given the dearth of readily available materials (Cruz García, 2017), language lecturers are compelled to design their own teaching materials so that they can meet the real needs of students (Cerezo Herrero, 2019).

In keeping with the aforementioned contrastive principle, teaching materials should feature exercises that help to connect L1 and additional languages. In this regard, cross-linguistic mediation and translanguaging constitute two pedagogical processes that can greatly help to target this aim, as both of them involve the use of the mother tongue and the additional language. Given that a translator and/or

interpreter must straddle the divide between both languages in contact, they constitute valuable assets for this kind of training.

4.1. Mediation

Mediation refers to enabling communication that otherwise would be difficult or impossible. The most common form is cross-linguistic mediation,⁶ i.e. oral mediation between speakers of two different languages or the translation of a text for a reader who cannot understand the original text. Mediation combines oral and written, receptive and productive skills in different ways and, though sometimes called the fifth skill, is rather a *transversal* competence (Reimann, 2016, pp. 12–13). Despite or maybe due to the undeniable similarities with professional translation and interpreting, there have been attempts to delimit both activities. Criteria that have been used are the focus of mediation on communication and contents, while translation also takes into account form (Schöpp, 2013, p. 6), as well as the mediator's liberty to select "what might interest the target audience or might be relevant to the new context of situation" (Stathopoulou, 2015, p. 31) or the mediator being party to the conversation in oral mediation. As cross-linguistic mediation involves the use of different languages, it has also been considered a form of translanguaging (Stathopoulou, 2015).

The inclusion of mediation in language curricula brings about should be was caused by changes in different areas. On a societal level, the past decades have brought increased mobility and, thus, more multilingual environments in private, social and professional contexts (Nord, 2010, p. 126). On a political level, multilingualism has been recognised as a valuable trait for individuals and communities (Council of Europe, 2001), and in Second Language Acquisition, the *multilingual turn* has led to heightened interests in cognitive, social and psychological aspects of multilingualism. In short, these changes call for "the need for a revision of pedagogical approaches and practices related to language learning for linguistically prepared citizens, preferably with good mediation skills" (González Davies, 2017, p. 126). Following this demand, it needs to be discussed what competences or attitudes are necessary for cross-linguistic mediation (Kolb, 2016) and how these can be developed in language classes. The claim implicit in the new CEFR descriptors that mediation activities can be performed by learners without additional mediation training has not escaped criticism and has been called into question by translation scholars (Stachl-Peier, 2020).

⁶ However, the CEFR defines mediation in a much wider sense, including "different languages, varieties of the same language, registers of the same variety, modalities of the same language or variety, or any combination of the above. However, they may also be identical" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 93).

Within TILLT literature, mediation has hardly been discussed. Thus, it is difficult to say whether mediation is common practice in TILLT classrooms. However, thanks to the striking similarities to professional translation and interpreting, its use in classrooms can be beneficial in many ways to take the first steps towards developing TI competence. Cross-linguistic mediation can be used to practise different language skills in motivating and realistic activities (though this is not unique to mediation and could also be achieved via more traditional activities). What mediation can doubtlessly do for TI students is acquaint them with their future role as a mediator between speakers of different languages and from different linguistic backgrounds. In this way, students start to use their linguistic repertoire to express the communicative needs of others (Schmidhofer & Ahmann, 2015). Nowadays, various resource books are available for different language combinations (Katelhön & Nied Curcio, 2012; Stathopoulou, 2015), but mediation activities can easily be designed by language teachers with a variety of authentic materials taken from everyday contexts.

4.2. Translanguaging

Translanguaging is possibly the most visible (and frequently disputed) contemporary theoretical and increasingly practical concept closely associated with multilingualism. Arising from an opposition to the monolingual approach in L2 teaching and the emerging “separate bilingualism” (Baynham & King Lee, 2019, p. 3) that it fostered, translanguaging refers to complex and fluid practices of language users who draw on all available (linguistic, cognitive, semiotic, etc.) resources to make meaning. In this process, they transcend the boundaries between national/named languages and their varieties and between languages and other semiotic systems (García & Lin, 2017). Translanguaging also ties in with the latest cognitive research on bilingualism, with a growing number of studies providing evidence that both languages become activated even when bilinguals intend to use only one of them. The ensuing relations or dynamics between both languages are thus different from those of monolingual speakers (Kroll, Bice, Botezatu, & Zirnstein, 2022).

In pedagogy, translanguaging refers to approaches aimed at leveraging such fluid meaning-making practices to support learning. Pedagogical translanguaging “can refer to the use of different languages for input and output or to other planned strategies based on the use of students’ resources from the whole linguistic repertoire” (Cenoz, 2017, p. 194). Considering that all intrinsic resources are deployed in flexible and creative ways, pedagogical translanguaging necessarily entails (inter)acting at the intersection of all students’ languages. A distinction should perhaps be mentioned, as highlighted by Cenoz and Gorter (2021, p. 18), between pedagogical and spontaneous translanguaging, which is frequently encountered in multilingual classrooms. However, they are not exclusive and can be interwoven to produce pedagogical added value.

The core characteristics of pedagogical translanguaging, as identified by Cenoz and Gorter (2021, p. 18), connect with the main attributes of TILLT: according to the *type of programme*, pedagogical translanguaging takes place in programmes that focus on activating the multilingual repertoire; according to the *type of student*, it is aimed at multilinguals or emerging multilinguals; its *aim* is linguistic and academic development; in terms of *organisation*, it is planned; and the *approach* is multilingual/heteroglossic.

Central to TILLT are also main pedagogical translanguaging practices that Cenoz and Gorter mention: *enhancing metalinguistic awareness*, e.g. by analysing and reflecting on languages cross-linguistically and comparing them at various levels; *using the whole linguistic repertoire*, e.g. by working with two or more languages in parallel, changing language for input and output, and finding sources in different languages; *horizontally integrating curricula* of different language (and translation, we add) classes so that the syllabi reinforce one another; and *translanguaging shifts*, unplanned linguistic decisions that respond to communicative needs in classrooms and involve the use of different languages.⁷

5. Practical considerations and conclusions

In TI programmes, students' training and professional and personal development take place in two areas. On the one hand, they advance their multilingual skills; on the other hand, they enhance their professional competences and attitudes in consonance with professional standards. The inclusion of activities that acknowledge, build on and expand their multilingual competence is particularly relevant to TI students. By allowing for and giving space to all of their languages, utilising and leveraging all of their resources, and thus contributing to their academic and linguistic development, the concept and pedagogy of translanguaging seems to be perfectly suited for use in TI programmes. However, it need not be forgotten that language teachers are possibly the most important source of L2 input for their students; thus, multilingual activities should be carefully considered and well thought out. Consequently, judicious use of mediation and translanguaging activities is advised.

Nevertheless, both mediation and translanguaging can greatly contribute to enculturating TI students into their role as expert multilinguals. On the one hand, mediation exercises, especially those of a cross-linguistic nature, promote certain aspects that greatly favour language learning for TI. Exercises can be approached from a textual perspective, e.g. rewriting paragraphs or short texts from L1 to L2, thus fulfilling this translation maxim. Having to transfer textual content from one language to another necessarily requires a deep understanding of the message. To this end, it is essential to go beyond the superficial structure of the text and access

⁷ For more multilingual hands-on activities that can be used in language classes of TI programmes, see, for example, Cenoz (2022).

its deep structure. Mediation exercises can also be geared towards connecting ideas or information in L2, which involves paying heed to and using discursive devices. This cross-linguistic textual approach can also be very useful to work register, e.g. transforming an informal text into a more formal one, and vice versa, and for introducing different textual genres into classrooms. This will also help to notice both linguistic and textual differences between the language pair and, therefore, to separate both languages in contact. Oral mediation can be tried out in a protected environment in which interlocutors from different backgrounds, who might have converging or conflicting goals, interact and communicate with the help of a mediator. Moreover, it can be developed by sensitising students to the relevance of cultural beliefs, values and norms for cross-linguistic communication, e.g. by watching videos of mediated conversations and discussing culture-related aspects and the behaviour of mediators. In this way, interculturality can also be targeted through the use of mediation exercises, which is fundamental for a translation and interpreting professional.

On the other hand, translanguaging can also be used to control and monitor both (all) languages in contact. This can be achieved by enhancing metalinguistic awareness so that multilingual speakers benefit from their own multilingualism, e.g. by working with authentic texts, dictionaries, and preparing glossaries in several languages so that terminology management skills can be promoted, boosting, at the same time, the multilingual expert profile of students.

As expounded throughout this paper, TI trainees not only become expert multilinguals, but also are socialised into a professional culture of language service provision and develop their linguistic and professional competences between these two poles. Given the nature of translation and interpreting, both mediation and translanguaging constitute excellent pedagogical resources with which to approach language learning from this two-pronged perspective. Thanks to expanding their language competence in different languages and building a multilingual competence, they become multilingual individuals who can use their language repertoire in a variety of contexts. By using translation-related resources, students become more enculturated into the profession(s). In order for foreign language courses to serve as truly preparatory courses for their subsequent translation and interpreting subjects, they must serve both purposes, as language needs to necessarily be linked to TI.

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