Abstract

Since the turn of the century, translation scholars and translator trainers are plodding away at devising a translation competence model that would allow for a good handle on what professional translators do when they translate texts or when they provide translation services tout court. Scholars wish to piece together a fuller understanding of the phenomena of translating and translation, and trainers, whose explicit aim it is to bring translator training in line with professional practices, are interested in identifying the specific set of competences that are required to execute translation tasks. This development has prompted an uninterrupted flurry of academic publications on translation/translator competence and competence acquisition (Lowe 1987; Nord 1991; Bell 1991; Hewson and Martin 1991; Campbell 1991; Pym 1991, 2003; Kiraly 1995; Presas 1996; Hurtado Albir 1996; Hatim en Mason 1997; Hansen 1997; Risku 1998; Schäffner 2000; Sim 2000; Neubert 2000; Kelly 2002; PACTE 2002, 2003; Gonçalves 2003, 2005; Göpferich 2009; EMT Expert Group 2009, 2017), and it has had an electrifying effect on inquiries into teaching methods, assessment and other didactical and pedagogical issues. Although most of the research done in translation didactics has obvious merits, some serious concerns can be raised against the dominant approach to translation competence. Despite the widely-entertained aspiration to build empirically sound data-driven competence models - the epitomai of data-driven models being the models of PACTE and Göpferich -, most research on translation competence has involved a great deal of armchair theorizing or, what Kearns (2012) fairly recently called, "academic rationalism". This is to say that existing competence models tend to state the "what" of translation competence, but, unfortunately, they seem to shun or downplay the "how" of translation and translation service provision. When trying to bridge the gap between the translation competence(s), descriptors, indicators and, ultimately, concrete translator behaviour, one seems destined to run into unsurmountable problems. In this roundtable discussion, translation competence will be observed from a somewhat unusual angle: instead of opting for the traditional top-down approach to translation competence (acquisition), the speakers will propose a bottom-up approach that has been adopted in a recent research project.

Following two pilot projects (Van Egdom et al., forthcoming; Pauwels, 2017), researchers of KU Leuven, University of Antwerp, ITV University of Applied Sciences for Interpreting and Translation and Zuyd University of Applied Sciences have banded together to initiate a binational project in which the correlation between product quality and translation processes ("translation styles") is to be scrutinized. Its objectives are manifold: in this project, the participants hope to find out 1) whether there are similarities in the translation style of (aspiring) translators of positively evaluated target texts; 2) whether the same can be said for the translation style of (aspiring) translators of negatively evaluated texts; 3)

whether the average quality of student translations truly improves in the course of their studies; 4) whether quality differences are reflected in observed translation styles. It is hoped that the results of this research project will throw new light on the teaching, acquisition and assessment of translation competences, that it will help gain fuller understanding of student progress as well as provide a tool to monitor progress in a manner that is both reliable and valid, and, thus, that it will pave the way for a bottom-up approach to curricular design.

After a brief outline of the project, each participating institution will be asked to present a specific aspect of the project. These aspects, all of which are described below, are believed to not only take centre stage in our research project, they form the obstacles one encounters in translator training on a day-to-day basis. Although the planning hardly augurs well for a complete and unabridged presentation of the results of this research project, it is expected that, in addition to an outlook on the hurdles that have been taken in the course of the project, this roundtable discussion will also provide a platform for the presentation of preliminary findings.