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Article abstract

The paper reports on and discusses the authors' development of and experience with *Précis-writing, revision and editing*, a pilot module developed especially for the European Master in Translation (EMT). The background, aim and important characteristics of the EMT are briefly explained. Inspired by the IAMLADP report from 2001, the module development included an exploratory survey of the translation industry internationally and in Denmark, employing web-based questionnaires supplemented by a focus-group interview with translator-editors of the European Commission. Our findings generated knowledge about professional précis-writing, revision and editing, including relevant norms and concepts. It also provided useful input on perceived training needs in this respect within the translation profession. The module development also comprised selecting a suitable theoretical foundation and designing a manageable course structure. Students' written evaluations of a course taught in the spring of 2005 are summarized, and the paper concludes with the authors' recommendations for others involved in university-level translator training.

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Précis-writing, Revision and Editing: Piloting the European Master in Translation

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RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article, les auteurs rendent compte de leur expérience du module pilote *Précis-writing, revision and editing* (Contraction, révision et édition de textes), qui a été mis au point dans le cadre du European Master in Translation (EMT). Les origines, les objectifs et les caractéristiques du EMT sont brièvement passés en revue. La mise au point du module, inspiré par le rapport IAMLADP de 2001, comprenait une étude exploratoire de l'industrie de la traduction, tant sur le plan international que national. L'étude a été réalisée au moyen d'un questionnaire en ligne, et a été complétée par une entrevue focalisée de traducteurs-éditeurs de la Commission européenne. Les résultats obtenus ont fourni des informations détaillées sur la pratique de la contraction, la révision et l'édition des textes professionnels, et ont permis de dégager un ensemble de normes et de concepts pertinents. L'étude a en outre contribué à identifier les besoins de formation professionnelle dans les métiers de la traduction. La mise au point du module a impliqué la constitution d'une base théorique appropriée et la mise en place d'un cadre didactique et pédagogique. Les évaluations des étudiants sur un cours donné au printemps 2005 sont résumées, et l'article se conclut sur des recommandations utiles pour l'évolution de la formation universitaire des traducteurs.

ABSTRACT

The paper reports on and discusses the authors' development of and experience with *Précis-writing, revision and editing*, a pilot module developed especially for the European Master in Translation (EMT). The background, aim and important characteristics of the EMT are briefly explained. Inspired by the IAMLADP report from 2001, the module development included an exploratory survey of the translation industry internationally and in Denmark, employing web-based questionnaires supplemented by a focus-group interview with translator-editors of the European Commission. Our findings generated knowledge about professional précis-writing, revision and editing, including relevant norms and concepts. It also provided useful input on perceived training needs in this respect within the translation profession. The module development also comprised selecting a suitable theoretical foundation and designing a manageable course structure. Students' written evaluations of a course taught in the spring of 2005 are summarized, and the paper concludes with the authors' recommendations for others involved in university-level translator training.

MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS

European Master in Translation, précis-writing, revision, editing, perceived training needs

1. Introduction

The European Master in Translation (EMT) is a new master programme of advanced translator training that was developed by the Aarhus School of Business (ASB), Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh, Universidad Pontificia Comillas de Madrid and Université de Mons Hainaut in close collaboration with partners in the translation industry. With an academic but also practice-oriented approach, this European joint-degree was designed to cater to many training needs that are not met currently by national degrees or within available continuing education. The EMT was piloted in selected modules during the spring and autumn of 2005, and the full programme was to be launched in October 2006. However, due to an unfortunate lack of harmonisation in European legislation that proved an unexpected hindrance, the universities involved have been forced to put the EMT project on hold for the time being. Nevertheless, as the professional impact and the academic merits of the programme are unquestionable, we hope that it can come into action once responsible politicians have found ways to overcome legislative obstacles to European joint-degrees.

This paper reports on and discusses our experience with *Précis-writing, revision and editing*, a pilot module developed especially for the EMT. Section 2 briefly explains the background, aim and important characteristics of the EMT. Section 3 explains our process of developing the pilot module. Section 4 presents the survey that was carried out in order to gain specific knowledge about the skills and competences required by the translation industry within this area. In section 5, we shall discuss our choice of theory and definitions for the module, and section 6 will explain the aims and structure of the course that we taught in the spring of 2005 at the ASB. Section 7 summarizes student evaluations, and section 8 concludes this paper by offering a few recommendations and perspectives.

2. The EMT

The development of the EMT was initiated in the autumn of 2002 at the ASB, when the overall structure of the project was developed. It was decided to establish an EMT secretariat at the ASB and to appoint associate professor Karen K. Zethsen as EMT programme coordinator. From the autumn of 2003, the programme development was financially supported by the EU's Leonardo da Vinci programme and the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation.

The main characteristic of the EMT is that it is to be offered as an international joint-degree by a group of European university partners in close collaboration with national and international partners in the translation industry. This means that students are to study in an international learning environment, ideally giving them ample opportunity to learn from and form contacts with a broad range of national and international professionals.

An important pillar of the programme is that all modules are to be both academically based and professionally oriented. On the one hand, this means that all modules have to live up to the academic requirements of a master's level programme and must, for instance, involve elements of analysis and reflection. On the other, it means that the intention is never to theorize for its own sake, as the focus should always be on how best to help students acquire necessary knowledge, skills and competences for them to live up to professional standards within the translation industry.

In addition, it is an important premise that students possess advanced linguistic skills prior to enrolment. Thus, as the EMT will not offer any language modules as such, all successful applicants must document, by formal qualifications or otherwise, sufficient linguistic skills. Specifically, students are required to document professional competence in their chosen working languages (A and B languages) as well as advanced all-round skills in English, if English is not one of their working languages, since the language of communication in all generic (non-language specific) parts of the programme is English.

Yet another strength is that all EMT modules are to be taught mainly by means of distance learning (see for instance Talbot 2003), a format well suited for advanced, flexible and diversified instruction of mature and independent students. In the EMT programme, all students must be able to take control of and responsibility for their own learning (see also Talbot 2003: 22), generally having to decide themselves when and where to study, how to study and what to study. Module instructors will lay out the framework, provide some of the material and offer feedback on work done by students for the purpose of the module, but it will be up to students themselves to make the most of what is offered and to draw up and follow their own plans and targets, and they are encouraged to focus on and acquire knowledge, skills and competences within their own professional interests (provided of course that this is relevant for the module in question).

3. Module development

It is only fair to say that we could not have developed the module without the help of others: on a specific level, once actual teaching began, we were pleased to find that students were happy to provide input on their specific needs and that they competently selected and made relevant use of their own professional material; on a general level, we were grateful for the input that we received from the translation industry in various ways.

Thus, the idea for the module was first discussed at an EMT all-partner meeting with partners in the translation industry. Our attention was then led to the *Interim Report of the IAMLADP Working Group on Training of Language Staff* (June 20th 2001).[1] Based on various questionnaire-based surveys, this report offers many interesting and relevant observations concerning the practice of professional translation. One specific observation was particularly interesting, namely that, while professional translators are increasingly required and expected to perform translation-related tasks such as précis-writing, revision and editing, very few are actually trained properly to do so, and there is consequently a great need for high-level training courses within this area.

We then decided to supplement this information with an exploratory survey of our own, aiming to gain an overview of the practice of and conditions for précis-writing, revision and editing carried out by professional translators in Denmark and internationally. In the process, we acquired useful data on the profession in general, current concepts and norms, perceived training needs, and even suitable teaching material. (See section 4, below.)

Subsequently, all this input was nicely supplemented by Lindsay Russell, Knowledge Architect at SAP AG, Germany, and Martin Gatehouse, Head of the

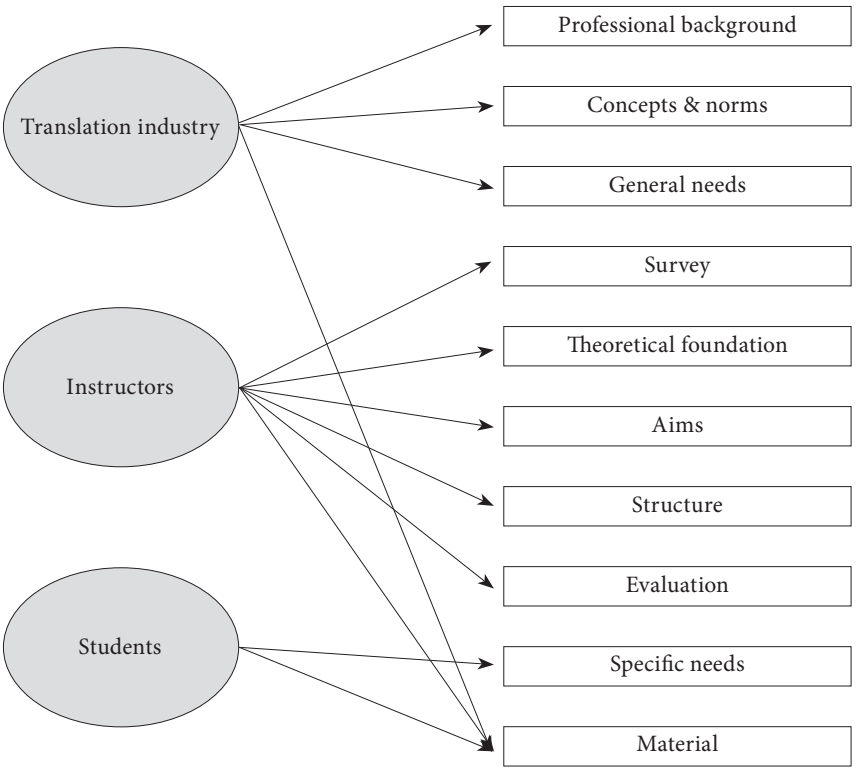
English Translation Section at the United Nations in Geneva, who kindly accepted to act as guest lecturers in the course that we taught in the spring of 2005 and also provided us with much suitable course material.

Since this was an entirely new module developed especially for a new, international master in its piloting stage, our work designing the course of 2005 was naturally rather extensive: the theoretical foundation had to be established, general and specific aims had to be defined, and the overall structure had to be created and adapted to what was practical in the circumstances. (See sections 5 and 6, below.) For teaching purposes, suitable course material, including an analytical toolkit, practical exercises and assignments, had to be selected or created and presented electronically. Finally, when the teaching of the module had finished, the process and outcome had to be evaluated (see section 7).

To sum up, the module on précis-writing, revision and editing may be said to have been developed by the instructors with important contributions from representatives of the translation industry and our students, as described above. Fig. 1 gives an overview of the contributors (the translation industry, instructors and students) and the elements that they provided.

Fig. 1

Module development



4. Survey

In this section, we shall explain the background, design and findings of a survey in which we asked the translation industry for input to our module. As already mentioned, our investigation was motivated by a desire to take action on and qualify the findings of the IAMLADP report. We found this part of their conclusion (IAMLADP report 2001: 5) particularly interesting and inspiring:

> The findings of the subgroups give cause for alarm […]. However, they also provide some clear ways forward towards turning the tide and offsetting the problems. It is those that the WGT [Working Group on Training] would like to explore further. The first course of action is for both IOs [international organizations] and, to a lesser extent, universities to make a frank and honest appraisal of the situation, to admit their failings and to undertake immediate action.

In specific terms, our own purpose was to obtain more information about the present practice with regard to précis-writing, revision and editing, based on these questions:

1. How much time do organizations spend editing/revising and carrying out précis-writing and who do it?
2. In what situations are these tasks employed and what do they involve?
3. What types of texts and languages are involved?
4. Is there a need for training?

The target group of the survey was the translation industry in general, practising translators as well as decision-makers. With the kind help of the Standing Committee of IAMLADP, in September and October 2004, a web-based online questionnaire was made available to a sample of practitioners and decision-makers within the translation profession. This sample included members of IAMLADP (among others, representatives of the EU and UN organizations), other large organizations, universities, the industry partners of the EMT, as well as international and Danish professional associations. We selected this approach because these institutions were readily available and directly interested in the results of our survey and because they are in close contact with potential students of our module. We received 18 responses: 10 from decision-makers, 7 from practitioners and 1 without indication of job function.[2] We shall now take a brief look at the main contents of these responses.

How much time do organizations spend editing/revising and carrying out précis-writing and who do it?

All respondents except one (i.e., 17 respondents) indicated that they work with editing/revision, whereas only 7 indicated that they work with précis-writing. The latter represent large international organisations or companies. Generally speaking, whereas revision/editing is performed on a daily basis, précis-writing is performed more rarely. The work (editing/revision and précis-writing) is primarily done by trained translators, but also by people with other educational backgrounds. Respondents mention various job descriptions that include editing/revision: professional editors, substantive experts, e.g. economic affairs officers. Some explain that editors carry out revision and editing, whereas translators do précis-writing.

In what situations are the tasks of editing/revision and précis-writing employed and what do they involve?

Editing/revision is described as a task that is used in many different situations, depending on the type of organisation/company. Our survey provided us with no clear answers as to why this is carried out. The main aims indicated by our respondents were:

- To ensure that the text is coherent and logically composed;
- To ensure that the text lives up to the standards of the organisation/company;
- To check that the text or translation is correct;
- To adapt the text to make it more suitable for its target group;
- To adapt the text linguistically (amelioration);
- To spar with, train or provide feedback to colleagues or freelancers (including translators).

Both editing and revision appear to involve the correction/improvement of other people's texts. Some respondents seem to make a distinction between editing and revision, reserving editing for the correction/improvement of original texts and revision for the correction/improvement of translations, but there seems to be no terminological consensus.[3]

As far as précis-writing is concerned, there is clear evidence that this task is primarily relevant in connection with meetings, conferences, negotiations and panel discussions. A précis is described as a condensed written version of an orally produced text, which tends to be used for documentation or in connection with policy-making. 5 respondents indicate that there are guidelines for précis-writing in their organisation, and 6 indicate that précis-writing may also involve an element of translation.

What types of texts and languages are involved?

According to our respondents, subject areas are numerous. The texts involved are described as: technical documentation/technical texts, legal texts (especially contracts), policy-making texts, commercial texts, annual reports, website texts, course descriptions, different kinds of reports and conference documents. Languages covered by our respondents are: English (17), French (11), Spanish (10), Danish (9), German (7) and other languages (11).

Is there a need for training?

Respondents draw attention to some basic training requirements. First of all, students/trainees should be given a clear definition of the role of the editor/reviser. As it is now, they "are more or less on their own," as one respondent puts it. It is specifically suggested, that editors/revisers should be taught not only to correct but also when **not** to correct, depending on time constraints, aims and target group. Editors/revisers must therefore "avoid trying to be too clever or too creative," as another respondent says. Secondly, people should be trained to adapt the text to the target group/target nation (e.g., in connection with marketing texts, website texts, and annual reports). Thirdly, respondents highlight a need for training within complex legal, economic and financial subject areas to enhance editors/revisers' understanding of such texts. It is also important for them to have a clear understanding of the purpose (and meaning) of the texts, and to know about specific target groups and

the style required. "Greater focus should be placed on the substantive aspects of the work of each body and reading the background material on every issue," as one respondent puts it. Another explains, "translation must be placed firmly in the context of an organization, relative importance of accuracy, speed and style according to situation." Fourthly, there is a need for "real-situation" practice (for instance, working with poor texts, under time constraints, etc.), which could teach students/trainees to be more pragmatic about the task. Finally, respondents highlight a need for training in note-taking techniques and in how to give and take critique.

The findings of our questionnaire survey were then supplemented by a focus-group interview with the (3) translator-editors of the English Language Editing Service of *Direction Générale de la Traduction*, the European Commission (Brussels and Luxembourg). We chose to focus on a service within the EU for this part of the investigation seeing that the EU exerts great influence on the development of the translation industry in Europe and that it may be a potential employer for EMT graduates. Our respondents were asked to tell us about the tasks of revision/editing and précis-writing within the EU.

The focus-group interview confirmed the findings of the questionnaire survey with regard to the contexts in which these tasks are used, what they involve, the types of texts and training requirements. However, though our interviewees emphasized that there was no need for précis-writing in an EU context (contrary especially to what happens within the UN system), they also said that this may only be true for précis-writing in a narrow sense (a written summary of the contents of a meeting, etc), as other official EU summaries (for instance of Directives) may soon be in demand, in various languages. Finally, supplementing what our other respondents have said about a growing number of challenges for the translation profession, our interviewees drew attention to specific problem areas that translator-editors are facing at the moment:

- Editors/revisers are taking on new roles, which need to be properly defined.
- Texts submitted for editing/revision are often written by non-natives, who have other and more complex needs than native authors.
- Consultation with a growing number of non-native authors is taking up more time.
- Time pressure is increasingly hindering quality.

To sum up, our own survey confirms the findings of the IAMLADP report and highlights the need for translators to be trained to carry out editing/revision and précis-writing, and it points out specific training needs of relevance for our potential students. Our work with definitions, theories and literature for the module and the resulting course design (see sections 5 and 6) reflect our interpretation of the results of the survey.

5. Theoretical foundation

In this section, we shall first describe our process of finding suitable definitions of the three concepts of the module. We shall then comment on our choice of theories and background literature.

As there is some confusion as to the exact meanings of précis-writing, revision and editing, and as revision and editing are often used interchangeably, we found it necessary to define explicitly how these terms would be used in our module.

Précis-writing is indirectly defined in the IAMLADP report (2001, Annex IV: 3):

> […] it could well be that the universities are not fully aware of what precisely the organizations mean by "précis-writing," which is a very specific activity (drafting of minutes and summary records for conferences and meetings) rather than simply summarizing skills.

The subgroup that worked specifically with précis-writing concludes that many organizations do not employ précis-writers, but that, for those who do (for instance UNOG, UNHQ, IAEA, WHO, ITU), précis-writing appears to be an important activity (Annex IV: 1). Furthermore, it is pointed out that the major proportion of précis-writing is done in English. In view of these findings and taking into consideration the fact that our focus-group interview did not indicate any apparent use of or need for précis-writing in the EU, we found that précis-writing in the narrow sense, as used in the IAMLADP report, might not be too relevant for potential EMT students. However, based on our other findings – that summarizing tasks (within the same language or between languages) are performed in trade and industry in general and that EU summaries may be on demand in the future – we were quite certain that précis-writing in a broader sense would be more relevant for our students. For the purposes of our module, we therefore adopted this definition of précis-writing:

> The summarizing of information contained in e.g., scientific papers, technical reports, surveys, proposals, questionnaires, articles, etc. as well as the drafting of minutes and summary records of conferences and meetings held by some larger companies and organizations – within the same language or between languages (i.e., summarizing translation).

This definition was inspired by Russel (1988). While she herself is concerned with précis-writing in a specialized sense ("a written text, of a prescribed length, that accurately summarizes a longer passage"), Russel (1988: 3) also mentions that précis-writing may be used in a broader sense:

> [..] a summary of the contents of a document or series of documents, a summary of a series of events, or a summary of the proceedings of a meeting or conference.

According to the IAMLADP (2001, Annex I: 5) report, translators in some organizations may be required to edit texts either as part of their daily functions or to balance workflow. Thus, for instance, it is mentioned that the UN entrance exam for language staff includes editing as one of various language-related tasks that applicants will have to perform, in order to promote versatility and career prospects of language staff. It is also mentioned that, in one organization, translators' functions include language reviews of originals, i.e. non-translation functions.

These findings are confirmed by Mossop (2001: iii), who points out that employers now often seek out translator-editors to perform both translation, revision and editing tasks, adding that these may also be asked to carry out other language-related tasks. Mossop (2001: iv) explains this development by the fact that translation is becoming more and more integrated into the general text-production process and that translation departments have to consider quality criteria relating not only to the target text as a translation (for example accuracy and language quality), but also to the target text as a text in its own right (including for example content and appearance).

The work of editors is described in the IAMLADP report (2001, Annex V: 1) like this:

> In general, the term "editor" is reserved for professionals who review texts submitted for printing (or Web posting) and who can, often in agreement with the originator, delete sentences or paragraphs which are redundant, irrelevant, unsuitable or contrary to the stated policy of the Organization. An editor can also condense a text or modify its overall style in function of the targeted audience.

This description of editing goes well with Mossop's (2001: 166) definition of the term:

> Editing: The process of checking a non-translational text for error and making appropriate amendments, with special attention to making the text suitable for its readers and intended use.

However, though the IAMLADP report includes some discussion of the task of revision, the concept is neither distinguished from editing nor defined. We therefore decided to adopt Mossop's (2001: 169) definition of revision too:

> Revising: The process of checking a draft translation for errors and making appropriate amendments.

As we see it, Mossop's editing/revision distinction is both logical, readily understandable and in correspondence with what we have learned about practice: though there is no terminological consensus, according to the IAMLADP report and our own information (section 4), practitioners tend to distinguish conceptually between these two activities.

To be able to perform editing, revision and précis-writing, translators must be familiar with concepts and methods taken from a broad range of theories, especially text linguistics, genre theory, translation studies and communication theory. In the following, we shall first focus on theories and literature of specific interest to each of our three elements (editing, revision and précis-writing). Then we shall mention literature that we find relate to all elements.

As mentioned earlier (section 4), our survey found in particular that translators who carry out editing/revision need more instruction in when to correct and, in particular, when not to correct. To this end, Mossop (2001) proved extremely helpful. Describing the work of an editor, Mossop operates with four levels of editing: copy-editing, stylistic editing, structural editing and content editing. He also describes the work of a reviser and discusses the revision function as well as numerous influential factors, such as the difficult balance between the interests of authors, clients, readers and translators and between necessary time constraints and quality requirements. Similarly, easily applicable revision parameters, degrees of revision and actual revision procedures are discussed. Mossop also deals usefully with self-revision and offers valuable advice on how to give (and take) critique.

Précis-writers must master methods and strategies of both semantic and linguistic text condensation. The model by Kintsch and van Dijk (1978) on macro- and microstrategies gives valuable insights into the semantic structuring of a text and presents methods of semantic text condensation (deletion, generalisation and construction). We chose to draw on this model and supplemented it by recent literature on text condensation in a professional and more practical context. Here we found

Björk and Räisänen (2003) on academic writing and Gerson and Gerson (2000) on technical writing particularly helpful. We also drew on practical guidelines by international organizations and companies introduced and provided by representatives of the translation industry (see section 3).

When translating, revising and editing, professionals must be familiar with genre analysis to be able to identify and analyse the communicative purpose of a given text, the situational context, the conventions of the text as part of a genre, and the interaction between these elements. In a translation context, genre analyses should ideally be made of both source and target texts to uncover any cultural differences. Genre analysis helps the translator or editor/reviser to choose appropriate strategies when working between languages or transforming one genre into another. For genre analysis, we chose to draw mainly on the model developed by Swales (1990), further elaborated and applied to a professional context by Bhatia. See for instance Bhatia (1993), which we found nicely operational.

Placing a text (including a translation and a précis) firmly within the context of an organization, deciding on the importance of accuracy, speed and style, and knowing whether to adapt the text to a new target group/target nation or not, the translator, editor/reviser or précis-writer may find help in a broad range of theories on organizational communication, organizational culture and intercultural communication. With regard to formal theories of organizational communication and organizational culture we decided to draw on Schein (2004) and on Cheney, Christensen, Zorn and Ganesh (2004), who propose that we look at organizations as texts that can be read or interpreted. The purpose of the intercultural communication element was, on the one hand, to propose a procedure for analyzing/identifying the communicative content of a message and, on the other hand, to propose a procedure for understanding the target group and produce a message. Cheney, Christensen, Zorn and Ganesh (2004: 446) put it like this:

> […] a deeper analysis of organizational communication takes one beyond the literal content of messages to consider their context, their relationship to other messages, and certain criteria such as effectiveness, ethics, etc.

In our search for an analytical model of cultural signals in text and image and of how to communicate culture through text and image, we used a theoretical framework of semiotic theories proposed by Johansen (2000).

Finally, to help students carry out a functional analysis of a translation task (in our case, revision and summarizing translation), we introduced them to the basics of Vermeer's (1989/2000) skopos theory, drawing in particular on Nord's (1997) framework, as summarized in Schjoldager (2003).

6. Design

In this section, we shall offer some details about the general design, i.e., aims and structure, of the course taught in the spring of 2005.

The general aim of the module was of course to help students develop their professional skills as précis-writers and revisers/editors. While also gaining an insight into relevant concepts, methods and theories (see section 5, above) students were to learn to work systematically and adequately with précis-writing, revision and editing at the highest professional level.

After the course, students were to be able to:

- demonstrate mastery of the skills of précis-writing, revision and editing at the highest professional level;
- relate theory to practice while summarizing oral and written texts and revising/editing other people's texts/translations;
- demonstrate a critical awareness of appropriate professional techniques and procedures involved in précis-writing, revision and editing;
- develop analytical skills using theoretical concepts and apply these to practical problems in connection with précis-writing, revision and editing;
- communicate with colleagues and clients about issues related to their professional work as précis-writers, revisers and editors;
- utilise and access necessary information from library, internet, database and other relevant sources.

We shall now offer some details about the structure of the course, which was naturally heavily influenced by general EMT principles (explained in section 2, above).

We decided that we ourselves would do part of the teaching, but colleagues would have to be called in to act as instructors and supervisors in languages and fields of expertise other than our own.[4]

Ten students signed up for the module. Seven of these had Danish as their A language, two had English and one had German. B languages were Danish (two), French (one) and German (one). Table 1 shows students' language combinations.

Table 1

Students' working languages

No.	*A language*	*B language*	*No.*	*A language*	*B language*
1.	Danish	English	6.	Danish	German
2.	Danish	English	7.	Danish	French
3.	Danish	English	8.	English	Danish
4.	Danish	English	9.	English	French
5.	Danish	English	10.	German	Danish

The module started with an intensive introductory one-week kick-off seminar at the ASB. The seminar included lectures, exercises (individually, in pairs and in groups) and workshops with student presentations. It also offered an introduction to CampusNet, the web-based platform of the ASB, which was essential to the e-learning session (see below), and it included an introduction to library and other electronic resources.

This seminar was then followed by three months of e-learning (web-based distance learning), when students worked in their own time, at their own pace and in their own ways on three specific assignments, one for each element of the module. Throughout the e-learning component, students were to seek and get electronic advice and feedback from their designated supervisors and fellow students. For each assignment, students were encouraged to work with their own professional material within a given framework. Many seemed pleased to do so, either for most of or all of their written coursework. All coursework papers comprised a practical part (précis-writing, revision or editing, respectively), a textual analysis and a brief argumentative essay.

The course was finished off by a three-hour written set exam in computer rooms at the ASB and – by kind permission – the Copenhagen Business School. Students were allowed full Internet access, including access to CampusNet. In the exam assignment, students were asked to revise a translation from their B language (best foreign language) into their A language (mother-tongue level), and they were asked to write a brief textual analysis as well as a short essay on one or more points of interest in relation to the practical task (revision). The assignment was handed out to the students on paper and was also made available electronically, in order for students to be able to make their revisions directly in the target text. All students handed in their exam papers electronically. Students' final marks for the whole module combined an assessment of their coursework (one third of the mark) as well as the results of the set exam (two thirds of the mark). Table 2 sums up the general framework of the course that we taught in 2005.

Table 2

General framework

Components	*Elements*
Kick-off seminar	Lectures Exercises Workshops CampusNet introduction Library introduction
E-learning session	Assignment 1 (editing) Assignment 2 (revision) Assignment 3 (précis-writing)
Exam	Set exam (revision from B into A)

7. Students' feedback

In the following, we shall summarize student evaluations. On a general note, there was much satisfaction with the whole setup of the course, including the fact that English was used as the language of communication for the generic parts of the module, as determined by the EMT format. For the language-specific parts, when communication could take place in any language, students reported that they were happy to communicate with supervisors and fellow students in the languages that suited them.

We shall now summarize evaluations concerning each of the three components of the course, namely the kick-off seminar, e-learning session and exam.

Of the 10 students who signed up for the module, 9 attended the kick-off seminar. (One student could not make it to the seminar, but followed the rest of the course.) All students participating in the kick-off seminar seem to have enjoyed it very much. Many students praise in particular that the seminar was interesting, well organized, intensive and highly relevant for their professional work. They also liked that both professional and academic instructors were actively involved. The fact that instructors and students spent some time together outside the classroom (lunch breaks and for dinner in town) is also mentioned as very positive.

Many students mention that a one-week seminar may be too long and too difficult to fit into their busy working schedules. The course material was appropriate,

but could be less extensive, more focused and more explicitly linked to lectures, classes, exercises (during the seminar) and assignments (during the e-learning session). Some students say that they would have liked to know more about each other and each other's professional backgrounds both before and during the seminar. Thus, the idea of asking students to bring and present their own work for discussion with their fellow students could be used more extensively than was the case. One student mentions that she would have liked more language-specific exercises during the kick-off seminar (pair or group work) and that she would also have liked to work more closely with her supervisor and other students with the same working languages. This idea of including in the generic seminar more language-specific work (for instance in groups) is well worth working on.

Eight students were able to attend the e-learning session actively. On the whole, they were very happy about this part of the module. Many students mention that they enjoyed and benefited from their correspondence with supervisors, though it took them a little while to get used to the format. Some mention in particular that they enjoyed pursuing their own interests by, for instance, working with their professional material within an academic framework. The duration, organization and nature of assignments seem to have pleased most students, and there is general satisfaction with supervisors' feedback and assessments. Some students mention that the potential of CampusNet could be explored more fully, in particular with regard to using it more as an interactive forum for all participants.

All students who attended the e-learning session actively sat and passed the final exam and thereby finished the module successfully. Whereas students tend to be highly satisfied with the kick-off seminar and the e-learning session, most students are only moderately happy with the exam format. Thus, the exam format was criticized for its anachronistic nature (a written set exam) and unrealistic working conditions. We have to say that we find this criticism justified. Since the e-learning session encountered no serious problems and since those involved seem quite pleased with the format, we can see no reason why an on-line test should not work just as well. Such a test would definitely offer more realistic working conditions and would be more in line with work done during the e-learning session. It could still be a set exam with a strict deadline, but students, who in principle could reside all over Europe, should be allowed to work at a place of their own choice.[5]

8. Recommendations

Based on our experience with the module on précis-writing, revision and editing, developed especially for the EMT, this final section comprises a few recommendations, which may be helpful for others involved in university-level translator training.

The learning environment should be international

The EMT is of course an international degree, developed and offered by a group of European partners. The main advantage of this is that students are given an international learning environment and will, for instance, be able to form contacts with a broad range of national and international professionals. In view of the nature of the profession, the international environment ought to be particularly recommendable for people who wish to boost their careers as professional translators.

The focus should be practical

As already noted, the module was developed and taught with an academic but also practice-oriented focus. Thus, for instance, it was important for us to obtain input from various partners in the translation industry, to persuade representatives of the translation profession to contribute as guest lecturers, and to encourage students to make use of their own professional material in their coursework. We cannot recommend this approach enough. On the one hand, it helped us to zoom in on some specific skills and competences that our students would need in their professional careers, and, on the other, it facilitated a beneficial and necessary dialogue between theory and practice, which our students also seemed to enjoy.

The approach to theory should be application-oriented

Linked with the practical focus explained above is the fact that theory was always discussed with a particular view to application. Thus, for instance, we prepared for our students a kind of analytical toolkit in the form of syntheses, models and checklists, which we could use as a shared frame of reference throughout the module. Naturally, such a toolkit should not hinder students' own search for knowledge, but, as it turned out, ours proved rather helpful as a starting point for theoretical discussions and the analytical parts of students' papers. Though the idea still needs developing, it is certainly worth experimenting with.

The setup should be flexible

An important advantage of the setup of our module was the flexibility that it offered as far as time, place and contents were concerned: to a very large extent, it was left to our students themselves to decide when and where they would study, and they had much opportunity to pursue personal interests and even combine their professional work with coursework. As we see it, this flexible approach is a key to the success of our module.

Communication should be interactive

Throughout the module, but especially during the e-learning session, it was essential that students took charge of their own learning. We therefore tried to keep traditional one-way communication at a minimum and attempted to make our module as interactive as possible, focussing on making students think and react rather than on conveying to them knowledge that they might as well acquire by reading the relevant literature for themselves. We also tried to organize a few student-controlled activities. In future, we may develop this idea further for instance by asking students to bring examples of their own work to the kick-off seminar so that we can prepare workshops in which they have to apply a particular theory or model to the analysis of their own texts and problems. To be able to do this, students will probably need some instruction and a little coaching, but they will not need a series of traditional lectures. Anyway, it is probably fair to say that the interactive nature of our module is another key to its success.

Personal contacts are a must

Though we may tend to underestimate their value, personal contacts in the student group and with instructors are essential to successful learning: if students and instructors do not feel comfortable about the whole situation and if they do not strike up some kind of rapport and basic trust, communication between them risks breaking down, and this makes learning difficult. A module based primarily on e-learning, where students and instructors do *not* meet in person on a regular basis, must naturally take this risk into account. As we see it, a kick-off seminar with a considerable amount of interactive communication and some social activities will in some ways make up for the lack of personal contacts during the e-learning session: When they know each other on a more personal level, both students and instructors will probably be much more at ease sending and receiving frank and to-the-point feedback during the e-learning session. We therefore strongly recommend that e-learning is always preceded by at least one intensive seminar, organized not only to cater to the academic and professional side of the module but also to create a friendly learning environment based on personal contacts.

NOTES

1. IAMLADP stands for Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications. According to the IAMLADP website <http://www.wipo.int/iamladp/en/ >, its overall objective is to enhance "the efficiency, quality and cost-effectiveness of conference, language and publishing services in international organizations" (accessed on August 30th 2006). IAMLADP participants include United Nations managers of conference services, representatives of European institutions, other intergovernmental organizations and some academic institutions involved in the training of translators and interpreters.
2. It may be worth emphasizing that the value of our investigation lies in the quality of the responses rather than in their quantity. We are well aware that no statistical significance can be deducted from our data. A similar method was employed in the IAMLADP survey.
3. This was later confirmed by Lindsay Russell of SAP AG, one of our guest lecturers, who informed us that in her organization the terms were copy editing (original texts) and translation editing (translations). (See also section 5, below.)
4. As already mentioned (section 3), we were very grateful for the excellent and practice-oriented lectures given by Lindsay Russell of SAP AG, Germany, and Martin Gatehouse of the UN. We also take this opportunity to express our appreciation of great work done by Birger Andersen, Martin Nielsen, and Nick Wrigley, who willingly accepted to help us as course instructors and supervisors.
5. Indeed, in the autumn of 2005, the ASB offered another EMT pilot module, Medical translation 1, in which students were given an on-line exam. This seemed to work well.

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