Research competences in translation studies

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Introduction

Although in recent years much attention has been paid to various general aspects of translation and interpreting competences (Ahmad Al-Rubai’i 2009; Galán-Mañas 2011; Göpferich & Jääskeläinen 2009; Krajcso 2011; Lafeber 2012; Mayor & Ivars 2007) and to terminological activities, in particular, as in, for instance, the 18th issue of The Journal of Specialized Translation, there is one aspect, i.e. that of research competences in relation to translation competences, that has not been given much regard yet. This is surprising in the light of the fact that any Master’s training in translation usually requires minimal research activity from its students to a quarter or sometimes a third of their programmes.

In what follows, the term “competences” will denote “the proven ability to use knowledge, competences and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development” (European Parliament and Council 2008, p. 4). In other words, a competence is the ability necessary to perform an activity, be it research or translation.¹

¹ Although this article focuses on research competences, perhaps some attention should also be paid to research attitudes, which constitute another type of essential research ingredient: if students are not curious, if they do not care about having the details correct, if they stop at problems rather than aim to solve them, if they do refuse to consult predecessors or authorities in the field or to consult dissertation guides (such as Booth et al. 1995 or Williams and Chesterman 2002 on research in translation studies), their research activity will not develop in the way it should. These attitudes are conditions of good translation and interpreting work, too. A translator who wishes to apply a particular translation strategy in the best possible way will also want to know precisely what the source text writers’ intentions were, will want to know whether there are small interpretation differences between two apparent equivalents from two different languages and cultures and will keep on looking for the best translation possible.
1. Translation competences

In those translation and interpreting institutions in which professional training had been the only aim until the Bologna Declaration, tensions have arisen in the face of two developments that have been taking place simultaneously: modernization of the training for a profession which has become more complex than ever and the so-called academization of the education of future translators and interpreters. If the latter had access to extra financial means, the most obvious way would be to prolong the training period by a year, for instance, from four to five years, so that the academic competences could be introduced into the translation and interpreting curricula gradually. However, translation and interpreting institutions are only given more means to produce more academic output and establish a firm link between research activity and education. No room for a longer curriculum has been provided, so with the same means and in the same period of time, students do not only have to acquire more complex professional competences, which is their prime objective, but also the academic competences, which they had not really asked for themselves.

Such a challenge demands from translation teaching institutions an investigation into the most efficient methods possible. One potential way is to explore relations between professional translation competences on the one hand and academic competences on the other. It is the main goal of this article to point out that there is indeed a high degree of potential for mutual support between the two types of competences: many research competences are closely related to many translation and interpreting competences. Support for the claim will be derived from defining the research competences within TS and comparing them with the translation and interpreting competences.

In order to identify translation competences, the following main sources of information were employed: Pym’s definition (Pym 2003), the EMT-competence framework (European Commission DG Translation 2008) and PACTE’s (PACTE-Group 2000, 2003, 2005, 2009) and Göpferich’s (Göpferich 2009; also quoted in Göpferich & Jääskeläinen 2009 p. 184) models of translation competence.

2. Research competences within TS

If translation competences and research competences have not yet been closely investigated in translation studies (TS), it does not that mean research competences constitute a novelty: ever since the beginning of TS in the middle of the twentieth century, scholars and dissertation students have explored the phenomena of translation and interpreting with as many methods as there are perspectives, which may
be as diverse as terminological research, contrastive linguistic inquiries, translation reception studies, or cognitive or neurolinguistic process investigations.

Since the Bologna Declaration of 1999, in which European countries committed themselves to striving towards a European Higher Education Area, many European institutions in general (González, Trevitt, & Carter 2011) and many institutions for translation and interpreting, in particular, have felt a need for more explicit thought about the research competences required for their own complex and interdisciplinary domain. Which academic competences training do translation and interpreting institutions need to provide to their future translators and interpreters over and above the competences that are already part of the curriculum? And in order to reach higher standards within TS itself, which research competences do young TS scholars need in order to find relevant and sophisticated answers to the questions that have occupied the field?

The notion of research competences\(^2\) is often referred to as information literacy, which the American Library Association defines as a “set of competences needed to find, retrieve, analyze and use information” (American Library Association 1989/2000). They are necessary to make research both efficient and effective (Garvin 2006/2009).

In order to identify the TS research competences, the following four different types of sources of information have been consulted: one source from the profession of translation (the European norm for translation services), one legal source (the decree on the restructuring of higher education in Flanders), one source from the field of TS itself (the results from the 2006 EST Colloquium on Research competences in Ljubljana), and one source from a translation and interpreting institution (the set of goals as formulated in its academic competences course and its student TS dissertation guide).

2.1. European Standard

The European Standard EN 15038, approved by the European Committee for Standardization in 2006, establishes and defines “the requirements for the provision of quality services by translation service providers” (European Committee for Standardization 2006: 4). It also stipulates five professional competences of translators, one of which, remarkably, is their “research competence, information acquisition and processing”. In particular, they have to be able:

\(\text{2. A definition of the phrase “research competence” or “research competenc(i)es” cannot be found in the OED, Merriam Webster’s or the American Heritage Dictionary.}\)
a. to gain additional linguistic and specialized knowledge which is fundamental for understanding the source text and producing the target text
b. to use research tools
c. to develop appropriate strategies to use available sources of information efficiently. (EN 15038: 2006 (E) p. 7)

2.2. Flemish Higher Education Restructuring Decree

The Flemish decree on the restructuring of higher education in Flanders, which also regulates the organization of Flemish translation and interpreting schools, was written with a view to implement the agreement expressed in the Bologna Declaration. One of its aims is to embed teaching into research in such a way that the teaching is based on the latest research findings. Support and teaching staff are required to participate in research activities. The decree holds provisions that make explicit which general research competencies are required from students. To obtain the degree of Bachelor, students need

a. to adopt an enquiring attitude
b. to know research methods and techniques and to know how to apply them
c. to collect relevant data that can direct opinion making about social, scientific and ethical problems
d. to appreciate the uncertainty, the ambiguities and the borderlines of knowledge
e. to be able to initiate problem-based research. (4 April 2003 — Decreet betreffende de herstructurering van het hoger onderwijs in Vlaanderen Art. 58. § 1)

At Master level, there are two possibilities. Either the students need to master the general and specific professional competences in order to apply academic, scientific or artistic knowledge at the level of a beginning professional independently or they need to master the competences that are necessary for independent research or practising of the arts at the level of a beginning researcher or artist (4 April 2003 — Decreet betreffende de herstructurering van het hoger onderwijs in Vlaanderen Art. 58. § 1). In the latter case, they are required to possess general research competences at an advanced level in one or more parts of the research domain. These competences are:

a. to design research
b. to apply research methods and techniques
c. to analyse
d. to diagnose
e. to apply scientific or arts paradigms
f. to indicate the limits of the paradigms
g. to follow and interpret theory-building
h. to show originality and creativity in view of continued knowledge growth
i. to work in a team in a multidisciplinary environment.

2.3. Translation studies

The 2006 European Society for Translation Studies Colloquium on Research Competences in Ljubljana devoted all its attention to basic research competences in TS. EST motivated its choice by referring to the fact that “weaknesses regularly observed and reported in studies conducted by TS scholars seem to reflect lacunae in basic rather than advanced competences and methods” (Gile & Hansen 2004). It is, in other words, the researchers themselves who reflect on their own work and try to define the research competences they want to see developed among their young researchers.

The colloquium organization made a clear distinction between Gile’s so-called two central TS paradigms: the Liberal Arts Paradigm (LAP) and the Empirical Science Paradigm (ESP) (Gile 2005). Whether this two-fold distinction can be upheld in view of the continuum along which the role of empirical findings and theories may vary in investigations was a question of debate. It was claimed, for instance, that both approaches are gradually growing into a similar kind of investigation that is based on induction. Striking examples are many recent instances of descriptive TS, which may be situated within LAP but also support the empirical method simultaneously. It is clear that findings from both LAP and ESP may lead to new questions and new findings in each other’s domains. While the former may perhaps focus on translations of diverse forms of art, the latter will often be applied in studies of the other types of translation. Between the two extreme variants of both approaches, there are a few clear differences.

The following list of competences was compiled on the basis of Stolze’s discussion of LAP research (2006), which is characterized by inter-subjectivity:

a. to question the findings or argumentation presented by a translation scholar critically
b. to be able to define the crucial concepts
c. to relate one’s point of view to the previous research
d. to collect and analyse data following a particular theoretical model
e. to formulate conclusions from the analysis results which will promote the international debate in order to contribute to the progression of translation scholarship.
ESP-research includes the above competences – be it to a lesser degree, but, in addition, it requires competences, which can be more readily classified under objectivity (Chiaro 2006):

a. to be able to recognize empirical research factors  
b. to be able to determine the feasibility of the investigation  
c. to be able to collect relevant data and select among them  
d. to be able to select a methodology among the traditional and new ones  
e. to be able to apply the method selected systematically  
f. to be able to draw conclusions from the findings  
g. to show capable of rational logical thought  
h. to be able to avoid personal opinion  
i. to apply statistical knowledge (a competence not be considered an obligatory requirement).

Both approaches were mentioned in Chesterman and Williams (Andrew Chesterman & Williams 2002) and in Shlesinger’s presentation of competences necessary for interdisciplinary research (Shlesinger 2006).³

2.4. Academic competences in a translation and interpreting institution

The final source of information about research competences comes from a place where they are supposed to be taught, an institution of higher education, in particular a TS college or university. Though schools may have different sets of goals in their academic courses, there is a core set of competences that they all aim to develop. They are present in many translation training institution courses and will be exemplified by means of the third year Bachelor’s course goals ‘Academische vaardigheden’ [‘Academic competences’] at the Faculty of Applied Language, University College Ghent. Students are taught how

a. to grasp TS problems  
b. to design an investigation appropriately  
c. to collect, select, process and present (non-)digital information in an academic context.

At the same school, the student master’s dissertation guide stimulates the students to reflect about translation procedures, interpreting techniques and multilingual communication and related problems applying an appropriate research method

³ Some of the competences necessary for interdisciplinary research turned out to lie at a higher level than the usual beginning researcher’s (e.g. stimulate researchers from other disciplines to be motivated in translation or interpreting research).
and specialized literature. This general goal is then translated into the following component competences:

a. to formulate an original academic research question
b. to link the question to the latest developments of the discipline
c. having the necessary knowledge, to determine the best method to find an answer to the question and apply it
d. to collect the relevant data in the most optimal manner
e. to adopt a critical attitude towards the data and select the data that are relevant to the research question
f. to observe objectively
g. to order, analyse, synthesize and diagnose a large amount of (one variety of) data
h. to reflect on the data and arrive at balanced answers
i. to link the new data to the state of the art of the research area and draw conclusions
j. to assess one’s own work critically
k. to design and write an academic text adequately in a foreign language.

Both the course and the dissertation activities are aimed at students who will become translators, interpreters and multilingual communicators. In some ways, this source of information is broader than the EST data (§3) and the European Standard (§2), but it is still more specific than the Flemish decree (§1), since it refers to language research only.

3. A TS research competences taxonomy

On the basis of the sets of competences presented in section 3, it is now possible to compile a taxonomy of research competences for TS. Whether these competences differ from those in other domains of study is still a matter to be explored. A search conducted in the Database ISI Web of Knowledge surprisingly teaches us that very little attention has been devoted to general research competences, while we do find recommendations about the development of research competences among graduates in various fields of medicine, nursing, dietetics, veterinary studies, chemistry, biology, physics, teaching, government studies, psychology, engineering, behavioural and social sciences, law and English. Communication and/or translation research seem to lack such investigations. Yet, various doctoral programmes are being set up, witness, for instance, the two TS Doc conferences in the autumn of 2008 (http://public.univie.ac.at/index.php?id=26021).

What will follow is therefore a proposal for a taxonomy presenting the general research competences in TS. Any taxonomy can, however, be designed according
to different criteria: a research competence taxonomy could show types of competences (e.g. recognizing cognitive, emotional, social and sensori-motor competences), types of competence area (e.g. distinguishing between the different fields of activity the research activity takes place: translation, interpreting, teaching, training, terminology management, etc.), types of application area (e.g. conference versus liaison interpreting, localization world, translation for the administration, etc.), and others.

The criterion adopted for the present taxonomy is yet another one. To investigate a topic academically is similar to carrying out component tasks in a research design, the stages of which have been distinguished in many academic articles. Each stage represents a typical research activity—with its own specific competences—and together, the stages characterize the research activity as a whole. In TS, the stages can be recognized both in descriptive TS within LAP and ESP in TS. It is, therefore, most relevant to take that division into various research stages as a starting-point for a taxonomy of research component competences. At the same time, however, the stages or activities cannot be kept separate at any time of the investigation, nor is their order of application strict. At one moment, a researcher may engage in activities that belong to different stages. Stages also overlap and loop, and the order in which they occur in the research is often different from the order as it is presented here. The stages recognized in the taxonomy are:

1. Formulation of the research question
2. Motivation of the research
3. Methodology
4. Data collection
5. Data processing
6. Discussion
7. Conclusion

3.1. Formulation of the research question

The first research activity is the formulation of what exactly it is the researcher will investigate, or in other words, the research question. In order to find original re-

4. Starting the investigation with a research question excludes forms of translation criticism and some forms of translation theory such as the purely deductive ones. This exclusion is not an expression of their insignificance, but it represents a pragmatic attitude to the training of translation and interpreting students. First, translation criticism is a normative activity carried out by professional translators or literary critics: their work definitely requires research, but their final aim is broader than that of academic research. Secondly, deductive theories present abstract worlds, the characteristics of which are intriguing to doctoral students, but to most of our Mas-
search questions, students need to know what has already been investigated. The easiest examples of studies are those in which the aim is to find out whether a particular concept or method suggested by another scholar can be applied to a certain set of data; studies requiring a somewhat higher degree of critical thinking are those that inquire into whether a particular claim put forward by a scholar is really valid in all situations; testing a new hypothesis or asking a completely new research is even more cognitively demanding. When it becomes clear to student and adviser what exactly needs to be done and which methods will be most appropriate, the feasibility of the research can be judged (Chiaro 2006). The competence required at this stage involves knowledge of the topic and critical thinking.

3.2. Motivation of the research

While formulating the research question, its relevance to TS is considered: why is it necessary or relevant to investigate this problem? To this question, usually, two types of answers are expected: the research question preferably has a link with a social or ethical problem and the research question is related to the latest state of the art of the research area. The latter requires knowledge about TS and library competences: which academic databases (e.g. bibliographical databases such as TSA, TSB, BITRA, EST website, and other) are there and how can they be used? Students need the competences necessary to order their bibliographical findings, judge their relevance, find and read academic texts, analyse quotations, summarize and compare. Students also need to interpret the existing theories and paradigms and relate them to the conceptualization of their own problem. At the same time, they need to be critical in various ways. They need to establish to what extent the same terms used by different scholars really denote the same concepts. They also need to recognize other possibilities/views/solutions than those put forward by preceding researchers and they need to build their own view or hypothesis (LAP) or ask a new relevant research question (ESP). In other words, rather than interpret these texts empathically as translators or interpreters, they need to read them critically, so that they can mentally construct their own texts.

3.3. Methodology

The third step for a researcher is to decide on the methodology: how will the research be conducted? In training programmes that do not make students acquainted with TS methodologies, this is the point at which students need most guidance.
It is then the supervisor’s task to introduce them to various methods. Very often, this task is not so self-evident: there is very little time to go into detail about the use of inductive or deductive approaches, bottom-up or top-down approaches, or a pilot experiment. Nevertheless, an informed choice is made among methods and research tools such as interviews, focus groups and observation studies by means of recordings, experimentation and surveys, and a decision is made regarding qualitative and/or quantitative approaches. To judge the value of the different methods is an activity that can only be carried out if both advantages and disadvantages of traditional and technological methods are known: only then can the most relevant method or a combination of different methods be selected. The basic competences necessary to complete these tasks successfully are assessment competences: gathering information and evaluating it.

3.4. Data collection

Once the research question and the data to be investigated are clear to the student researcher, once the background literature has been explored and the methodology decided upon, search strategies for primary data can be developed.

Which type of variable data will be collected: can they be ordered or not, are they of a continuous nature or not, etc? How many factors should remain stable and cannot be allowed to vary? When exactly is the amount of information gathered sufficient: does one need 300 or 500 examples of translated metaphors of one translator or more? Are 30 translators sufficient for a survey or is a multiple more appropriate? Who exactly will be members of subject and control groups? Importantly, the student also needs to decide which statistical tests are required, if any, taking into account the variable characteristics, the sort of corpus and the distribution of data. While compiling the database, consistent notation of sources (whether this is empirical material or information from previous studies or the references of a particular source) is another basic competence.

3.5. Data processing

The next research stage is that of data processing: its main activity is the consistent application of the research method(s). While processing the data, the student and supervisor need to be vigilant about whether the data will yield the type of result that was sought. If that does not turn out to be the case, students need the time to take a distance from their results, come to the conclusion that they were not focussing on their main topic, and need to start all over again. Or they have to admit that their research question needs to be reformulated and their data re-interpreted in the new light. The competences involved at this stage are mainly the analytical
ones necessary to process the data and the ability to reflect on the outcome compared to the initial purpose.

3.6. Discussion

When all (qualitative or quantitative) data have been analysed, findings will be summarized bringing to light the results of the study. This is the time when students will mostly need their critical thinking competences and their synthetic competences. They need to see which data are comparable: situations, actions, any specific linguistic or literary features? They need to decide which data can be generalized in order to formulate statements about a population. In quantitative research, they will have to apply statistical skills since they need to determine whether the data appear with a normal distribution. Which correlations can be established between data and certain factors or variables? Are there any relations between the size of the corpus and the findings? What are the results of the statistical tests that had been decided upon at the outset of the investigation? Which data will need further investigation?

3.7. Conclusion

Finally, students will take a position vis-à-vis existing models or theories: their results will constitute the main argument for confirming or rejecting old knowledge and formulating new knowledge. Basing themselves on the data, students will think logically, step by step, rather than speculate or get themselves stuck in the woods. Their argumentation will be consistent and structured logically. In other words, they will decide whether to accept or reject the initial hypothesis or provide an answer to the main research question.

Students also need to be able to appreciate the uncertainty, the ambiguity, the limitations of present knowledge: while they need to be able to defend their own positions, they also need to recognize their shortcomings. Perhaps the investigation contains a certain degree of subjectivity, or there may be clear counterarguments or perhaps their data could also support opposite statements, and such self-criticism is what students need to be able to formulate. In some cases, students may suggest new theoretical thoughts.

At this final creative stage of the investigation, the students will take a step back, summarize the investigation, assess the whole study and put it in its place among the existing research findings. The conclusion will estimate its true value and suggest potential future investigations that can solve the problems that were raised by it. These activities will mainly rely on students’ synthetic, critical thinking and creative assessment competences.
3.8. Report and revision

In addition to these basically consecutive -- yet overlapping and looping -- activities, there is one type of activity that runs simultaneous with all the others: that of reporting all facts, findings and arguments at all stages of the investigation, which will result in a good quality and reader-friendly academic text, usually in a foreign language. Do students build logical and coherent reports and argumentations on the basis of new insights that are yielded by the newly investigated materials “without moving from the general to the particular and zig-zag around in bottom-up confusion” (Chiaro 2006)? Do they avoid repetition of thoughts and wordings? Do they avoid any emotional expressions? Does the text show all important formal and content characteristics typical of the academic register? Has a clear distinction been made between their own ideas and those of previous researchers? Do students possess the competences of referring and quoting? Can they set up a bibliography which conforms to the norms? Do they keep a log in which they record their data, concepts, facts, statements, and conclusions meticulously, and check them? Do they make explicit all the methods used, simultaneous activities or processes, the arguments, and the positions? Especially within the ESP-paradigm, students need to follow the fairly strict rules as they are formulated by Chiaro, for instance:

The empirical genre requires that a dissertation or essay begins with the presentation of aims and objectives of the research, followed by a detailed and description of tools and methods. Next follow the results and a critical discussion of these results followed by a conclusion. As in the liberal arts paradigm, a review of the literature is also necessary, plus references to all previous similar surveys and/or experiments (Chiaro 2006).

Do students choose precise titles and subtitles distancing themselves from the attention-drawers that we find in newspapers and popular magazines? In the end, students need to take up responsibility for their own texts, and a final stage of complete revision cannot be escaped, a step in the whole research undertaking that only good time management competences can provide.

4. Similarities between TS research competences and translation competences

Now that we have established a TS research competence taxonomy, we can compare TS research competences with translation competences. The latter have been the subject of many a TS article and since the moment when Kiraly claimed that translation constituted “a teaching field that lacks empirical data and elaborated theories about the nature of the competences to be taught and approaches for teaching them” (1995), translation studies has provided different views of trans-
translation competence. So far, most TS scholars have restricted themselves to the use of the singular term ‘competence’, but all recognize the complexity of translation competence.

A recent survey of diverse approaches to translation competence was presented by Lesznyák (2007), showing how some models focus on component competences, while others defend a holistic approach. While many of the component competences required for translation are obviously shared with other communicators, there is one competence that is typical of translation, i.e. that of transfer, a competence which Presas defines in very general terms as the system of underlying kinds of knowledge, whether declarative or operative, which are needed for translation (Presas 2000, pp. 27–30). Seeing translation as a complex activity which involves very different tasks that make specific demands on the cognitive system of the translator, which cannot all be achieved to the same high degree, Neubert considers complexity, heterogeneity, approximation, open-endedness, creativity, situationality and historicity as typical general features of translation competence (Neubert 2000, pp. 3–10). Neubert recognizes four other competences: language competence (both source and target languages), textual competence, subject competence and cultural competence. Vienne’s view of translation competence is even broader and includes professional characteristics: the first basic element of translation competence is the ability to analyse a variety of translation situations (Vienne 2000, p. 92). This means that the desires of the translation commissioner will lead to appropriate conclusions regarding the translation product and a translation strategy appropriate to the translation situation. The professional translator needs to be able to check their own competence in terms of these conclusions as well as to be able to search, evaluate and exploit the resources necessary to carry out the assignment received (Vienne 2000, p. 113). Fraser similarly stresses the translators’ competences of asking questions, thinking through what briefing and background information is necessary to produce a good translation, being assertive in requesting it and expecting to receive it (Fraser 2000, pp. 55–56). Besides that, translators also need to be able to consult resources controlled by themselves (dictionaries, glossaries, other reference works) and those controlled by the client or by the translation agency/company. In 2005, the PACTE-group presents the results from an experimental pilot study with 3 professional translators (PACTE-Group 2005, p. 45). In the absence of empirically validated models, their model describes translation competence as an expert, procedural knowledge system, consisting of five different components, the strategic sub-competence component playing a central role interrelating with bilingual sub-competence, extra-linguistic sub-competence, instrumental sub-competence and knowledge about translation sub-competence; in addition, they recognize cognitive, behavioural and psychomotor mechanisms as psycho-physiological components.
With the exception of the PACTE Group’s reference to the underlying psycho-physiological component and the strategic competence sub-component, the translators’ skills profile by the European in its European Master’s of Translation Programme (European Commission DG Translation 2008), makes reference to similar components: it stresses language and translation skills, thematic knowledge, communication and technical skills.

Although the complexity of translation competence is not explicitly mentioned in the following definition by Pym, it is included implicitly in its dual approach to translation competence as basically two components, i.e. the generation of texts and the selection of one viable text:

The ability to generate a series of more than one viable target text (TT₁, TT₂, . . . TTₙ) for a pertinent source text (ST);

The ability to select only one viable TT from this series, quickly and with justified confidence (Pym 2003: 489).

Its simplicity also makes it appropriate as a basis for comparison with research competences. It is in terms of this definition that the next question of this study will be formulated: which of the above research competences do translation/interpreting students already possess or practise because they are (very) similar to the competences that are usually required from them? In other words, which research competences are similar to the specific competences required for the ability to generate several target text and those required for the translator to be able to select one TT among all the others? The answers to these questions will be formulated in terms of the same stages presented in §4. Each time, competences required to solve translation problems will be linked to research competences.

4.1. Formulation of the research question

The translation process of mentally generating target texts that are viable for a pertinent source text implies splitting up target texts into smaller translation units. Similarly, students will need to formulate a research question as precisely as possible, recognizing its complexity and splitting it up into smaller ones. Secondly, the competence of defining the concepts of a research question explicitly has already been practised by translation students: they very often look for words that represent the source text concepts as closely as possible. In other words, consciously or not, conceptual thought is one of the main activities in translation, albeit not always explicit or complete. Terminological competence, too, may be applied appropriately in research: knowledge of terms and concepts, broader and narrower terms, synonyms, etc. will help students to manage their topic.
4.2. Motivation of the research

Translation students are used to reading texts, interpreting them, comparing them with one another and summarizing them. These activities must facilitate the literature review of a study: when doing their initial state of the art investigation, students will carry out similar activities. They will have to understand and present different opinions and approaches, and compare concepts and ideas of various researchers. Admittedly, reading the literature at the level of the most recent state of a field of research requires knowledge of the academic jargon and insight into the models and paradigms. Since this is totally new for most students, they will need an introduction to the background.

Underlying the process of selecting a viable target text in the usual translation process is the recognition that differences between linguistic expressions and assessing the extent to which they are relevant in the translation situation. Such recognition requires empathic reading (which is also required to understand scholars’ views), objective comparison of data (a task which is part and parcel of a state of the art) and understanding of different linguistic expressions between different language texts (terms and concepts used by TS scholars need similar scrutiny if students want to arrive at deep understanding).

Translation students are used to showing respect to the source text as an independent text: this attitude can be further developed into respect for scholars’ texts, too, and the close investigation of source texts practises skills required to indicate which parts from texts are literal quotations and which are paraphrases.

4.3. Methodology

At the outset of the translation, students are required to judge the translation situation and decide on appropriate translation procedures and strategies (Chesterman 2005; Molina & Hurtado Albir 2002). In research, too, a method has to be decided upon. However, translation methods are very different from research methods. Very little is inherent in translation that immediately contributes to the competences of selecting and applying appropriate methodologies for a specific TS research task, although there are a few exceptions, such as practice with spreadsheets, databases, corpora or translation tools which will improve students’ competences necessary for descriptive translation investigations. Students’ use of electronic parallel or comparable corpora for translation purposes and their experience with corpus analysis—be it at a superficial level—and the application of particular corpus tools will help them produce corpus translation studies.
4.4. Data collection

In translation, students also need to collect data: they need to acquire additional linguistic and specialized knowledge in order to understand the source text and to know the target language. They will collect their materials, make them accessible for future use and set up their own annotation systems. For this purpose, they will consult databases and decide which are the best heuristic means: which corpora will they employ and how will they get access to them? For their own dissertation investigation, for which they will have to collect different data for different purposes, students will have to learn how to use different types of databases. Their practice with other databases will already have triggered some component competences so that collecting data will not be an activity that is totally new to them. However, extracting data from sources other than databases, may be a different sort of activity.

While translating, students continually determine which information from dictionaries, parallel texts, comparable texts, etc. is most relevant. The determination how much information is necessary is also a non-stop activity. Equally, in their research activity, students will have to decide how much information they will need. And although a large extent of that will already have to be determined at the beginning of the task, in contrast with the translation task, they will have to gather new information as they go along, too.

4.5. Data processing

When students translate a particular text type, they will need to be consistent and conform to its norms. If they adopt a particular translation strategy, e. g. historicizing a particular translation, students will again need consistency and follow the same principle. The stage of data-processing is, however, another one that is completely new to the student. Equally, research requires the application of specific methods and consistent behaviour which does play a large role in a translation that needs to conform to a particular register, or one that needs to conform to a publisher’s wish, for instance, to foreignize all culture-specific items.

4.6. Discussion

One of the most difficult decisions translators need to make is the selection of a viable translation from a series in the given translation situation. Decision-making is actually a constant activity in translation. In the discussion part of the research, students also face a series of facts from which they will need to select the most relevant ones in view of the answer to their research question. However, giv-
en the requirement of empathy with the source text writer, translation students at first sight are not much used to taking a personal position to a subject openly. Yet, some translators consciously take a particular approach to their translation and determine the best possible translation strategy. In addition, translation students that have been trained in lateral thinking, in solving translation problems by taking a new entry point or a different perspective (Kuβmaul 2000, pp. 87–89) will have had much practice in creative thought, which is an essential cognitive competence at this stage.

4.7. Conclusion

In translation, a constant activity is assessment: assessing the relevance of particular texts as a whole within a particular context, or even within a set of other translations or source texts, and assessing the relevance of passages within texts is something that translators very often need to do. When the students need to summarize their own research and assess its relevance, that will be a task they are already familiar with: synthetic competences required for the conclusion have also already been trained in a regular translation programme.

4.8. Report and revision

The main activity in translation (and now translation is used in its prototypical sense to denote written translation only) is written text generation. Most translation schools have report writing in their curriculum, which can be seen as a preparatory exercise to the register of academic texts. In addition, all students are taught how to write in the foreign language and check their texts meticulously. Of course, translation differs from research in that there is no source text to start from and structuring a text at micro and macro-levels is a fairly new activity. Students will also need to be reminded that the genre they are working within for their dissertation is that of academic texts.

5. Discussion and conclusion

From §4 we conclude that, even though our knowledge of translation competences and research competences may still be lacking in depth and breadth, we see that all research stages require competences some of which translation students have already practised in their translation work to a certain degree. While many of the research competences are similar to translation and interpreting competences, it is clear that the writing competences necessary to produce a dissertation
are practised much more often in translation classes only. However, all the attention paid to coherence building in note-taking in consecutive interpreting classes constitutes a beneficial environment for strengthening logical thought and text construction in those students.

Translation training thus already prepares students for certain research activities. If teachers feel that these activities are performed too poorly nonetheless, the problem may lie in the fact that research and translation may differ from each other in the degree to which these competences need to be mastered. The extent to which this preparation contributes to the level of competences required for research is a question that still needs to be investigated and could probably even be established experimentally.

We could also ask the reverse question: do research activities prepare students for translation? From reading the research findings in TS, translation students, whatever language pairs they are working with, certainly become acquainted with processes and results in translation: they become familiar with what translators actually do when they face translation problems, such as dialect or other non-standard forms of language, imagery, rhyme/metre, allusions, technical terms, humour, names and other cultural references. They find out how translators solve their translation problems. They learn how translators select one viable translation among the many different translation possibilities that can be construed. Although this knowledge may not have a direct positive impact on their own translation work, their broader knowledge of finding possible equivalents will definitely not prevent them from doing better. Even carrying out small research projects may be of benefit: although the goals of such a research project may be wider than those of solving a particular translation problem, and although it may remove them from the usual activities with texts in translation exercises, I would hypothesize that students describing and analysing source and target texts will reinforce the competences for their own translation activity. I would expect them to be better able to see for themselves what professional translators actually do and assess the width of the range of tools provided by language (morphology, syntax, lexicon, information distribution patterns, perspectives, etc.) rather than take recourse to the few examples delivered by the teacher’s syllabus and some general guidelines. Their knowledge of the effect certain translations have on the readers will be expanded: students studying explicitation phenomena in translations should have improved their insight into the inferences that readers may (not) need to process more or less explicit viable target texts (TT1, TT2, … TTn). Of course, it is again up to empirical investigation to confirm or reject this hypothesis.

Consequently, there is a considerable amount of overlap between translation competences and research competences in general: translation and interpreting classes can be expected to train many a research competence indirectly. Teachers
in research institutes do not have to spend time and attention to all research competences. Obviously, teaching one of them does not necessarily mean that time is lost that would otherwise have been devoted to translation classes: practice in those competences may be expected to strengthen both translation and research practice at the same time. Does the above list of common research and translation competences imply that more attention should be paid to them than to the many translation and interpreting competences that are absent in this article because they are not present in academic research? Certainly not, the list only shows a degree of overlap between a number of translation and interpreting competences and research competences, whose practice may be expected to contribute both to research and to translation and interpreting. There is definitely potential for mutual support: a competent translator will already have developed some research competences.

This integrated view of research and translation competences has one main advantage: it allows institutions to reduce the number of additional competences required from translation/interpreting students to a considerable degree. It is now possible to enumerate those competences that translation and interpreting teachers may want to introduce into their curricula in order to improve their students’ academic competences. They can be summed up in ten points:

1. to possess knowledge about the state of the art in TS
2. to use academic databases
3. to note down sources explicitly and consistently
4. to have an insight in the feasibility of a particular investigation
5. to be familiar with the appropriate methodologies and choose the most appropriate among them
6. to report explicitly methods and/or argumentations and/or statements
7. to apply data analysis consistently
8. to read and think critically
   - to create new thoughts
   - to formulate an original research question
   - to decide upon generalizability and comparability
   - to draw inferences from data
   - to construct consistent argumentation that is structured logically
   - to formulate self-criticism
9. to refer to sources and quote them
10. to compile a bibliography.

This article has provided a survey of TS-research competences and presented arguments for assuming a set of TS competences to interrelate with translation
competences. However, the interrelationships themselves have not yet been explored, nor have different competence levels been identified nor has the way been discussed in which a student’s level can be determined. Nor does the present article set out the way how to optimally learn or teach translation research competences. Attention can be paid to quotation analysis and critical reading (see also Göpferich 2000), special interventions as described in Davis (Davis et al. 2006, p. 1) or integrated with other course tasks as in Larkin and Pines (Larkin & Pines 2005: 2). Other approaches may reveal additional valuable insights into the issue: guided autobiographies, course-integrated scavenger hunts or maybe even gaming (Warmelink & Mayer 2009). In the future, exercises could be developed in which translation students are required to transfer their translation skills to research, and vice versa. These are all areas that require special attention in the future.

Finally, some may claim that the norms of academic writing considerably differ in various linguistic and academic communities and that much of what has been said about research does not apply to all translation students’ research projects (see e.g. Ventola & Mauranen 1996)). This may certainly have been the case in the past. However, as the research community is becoming increasingly global, and as access to research funding is becoming increasingly competitive, norms about research also seem to converge. While previously there was financial support for research that only focussed on ideas, increasingly, research-funding bodies require descriptive studies of empirical facts and embedding into existing research paradigms or theories in addition to the new creative thoughts that scholars may raise: University College Ghent, the Flemish Research Foundation, the Australian National University Research School of Humanities, the Economic and Social Research Council in the UK are just a few examples of this tendency. Does this development mean that TS may be losing some of its appeal? I would argue to the contrary: TS remains one of the most exciting fields for a student. Like nursing and teaching, TS is a research domain that actively enquires into the process of a professional activity. Being part of that inquiry must be a unique experience for every TS student.

Most importantly, however, a view in which research and translation competences are seen as potentially supportive of each other facilitates the extra task that academizing institutions have now been charged with and allows them to combat increasing pressure to improve their output in both areas without having to separate research from teaching. If the teaching of research competences is reduced to a set of ten major academic competences, the trainee will not be overburdened and yet be qualified enough to undertake small rigorous and relevant research projects. If institutions succeed in this task, they will reach the goal that so many ac-

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5. One study in the field of sociology has provided some empirical evidence for the positive impact of data analysis both on content and on research competences (Atkinson & Czaja, 2003).
tors in the field want: a profession whose members are competent and recognized academically.

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Abstract

In previous discussions relating both research and translation/interpreting to each other (e.g. Andrew Chesterman & Wagner 2002; Klaudy 2006; Pöchhacker 1992), the main focus was either on the extent to which research findings improve translation/interpreting processes and competences or on different paradigms within translation research (Gile 2008). This article heuristically investigates any links between translation/interpreting competences, on the one hand, and competences required for research, on the other hand.

To establish a research competence taxonomy that is related to translation studies, four different sources of information have been relied on: two public authorities, one scholarly organization and one translation and interpreting training institution. This conceptual study points out that many competences required for research within translation studies are closely related to translation and interpreting competences (Vandepitte 2007), so that an integrated view of research competences and translation competences is called for. Such a view will reduce the translation and interpreting institutions’ task of teaching research competences to a set of ten major academic competences.

Keywords: translation/interpreting competences, research competences, translation/interpreting training, research training, translation/interpreting institutions
Résumé

Dans de précédentes discussions qui établissaient un rapport entre la recherche et la traduction et l’interprétation (par ex. Andrew Chesterman & Wagner 2002 ; Klaudy 2006 ; Pöchhacker 1992), l’accent était principalement mis soit sur la mesure dans laquelle les résultats d’une recherche améliorent les processus et les compétences en traduction et interprétation, soit sur différents paradigmes dans la recherche en matière de traduction (Gile 2008).

Cet article examine de façon heuristique les liens entre les compétences en traduction et interprétation, d’une part, et les compétences nécessaires à la recherche, d’autre part. Pour établir une taxonomie sur les compétences en recherche en rapport avec la traductologie, quatre sources d’information différentes ont été utilisées : deux autorités publiques, une organisation scientifique et un institut de formation en traduction et interprétation.

Cette étude conceptuelle souligne que de nombreuses compétences nécessaires à la recherche en traductologie sont étroitement liées aux compétences en traduction et interprétation (Vandepitte 2007) de sorte qu’une vision intégrée des compétences en recherche et des compétences en traduction est nécessaire. Un tel point de vue limitera la tâche des instituts de traduction et d’interprétation concernant l’enseignement des compétences en recherche, à un ensemble de dix compétences académiques majeures.

Mots clés : compétences en traduction et interprétation, compétences en recherche, formation en traduction et interprétation, formation en recherche, instituts de traduction et d’interprétation

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