

Translator and Reviser Training. The White Whales of Italian Academia

Abstract: Over the last decades, translation studies have experienced an almost uncontrolled expansion. However, in Italy, translation studies have not yet earned a place as an independent field of study, raising some important concerns over the existence and nature of experts in an ‘inexistent’ field and the actual object of training we should deliver to future professional translators. Translator training still struggles with the integration and definition of effective practice and exhibits gaps, especially concerning the almost complete absence of revision in Italian universities’ translation programs, as revealed by the survey conducted. Nonetheless, revision is an officially and institutionally acknowledged feature of professional realities and it is an unaware ever-present figure in educational environments, as instructors revise learners’ works, raising critical questions on whether current translation trainers exhibit highly developed translation and revision competences.

Drawing on aggregate data, this contribution aims to shed light on three critical aspects: i) the denial of the disciplinary identity of translation studies as an independent and complex discipline that goes beyond the threshold of the specific languages to which it is inextricably linked by Italian academic categories; ii) the alarming absence of translation revision (or at least, the lack of official references to it) in translator training offered by almost all Italian universities offering a Master’s Degree in Specialized Translation; and iii) the necessity to involve professional translators in translator training, in order to foster professional realism in class and guide learners through the acquisition of specific knowledge and competences that can only be unveiled by professional experience.

Keywords: *translator training, translation revision, revision training, translation trainers, academia*

1. Introduction

The growing interest in translation studies that we have observed over the last thirty years, across many different fields, is undoubtedly a successful outcome of the many efforts devoted to the development of a discipline that is not so young in terms of its existence, although some of its many aspects and applications have only recently been acknowledged by the academia and some others are still neglected. The activity of translation has a long history studded with ancient documents and examples, such as the well-known Rosetta stone or the Treaty of Kadesh, a bilingual peace treaty between the ancient Egyptians and the Hittites that dates back to 1274 BCE. However, it would be reasonable to assume that other occurrences of what we nowadays call ‘translational events’ have always been around since the very beginning of the development of different languages for communicative purposes. Even translational reflections can be found already in Roman works, as it is the case of Cicero’s comments (1st century BCE) on the nature/s of equivalence or, one century later, of St Jerome’s Latin translation of the Bible (1st century CE). However, attention devoted over the centuries to the subject of translation has been desultory and biased by some sort of conceptual fight over the supremacy of adjacent disciplines like linguistics, linguistic philosophy, literary studies, each claiming jurisdiction over the study of translation. It is not until the 1970s that a pioneering paper entitled *The name and nature of translation studies*¹ designates a new emerging and autonomous discipline by the name of ‘Translation Studies’. This paper marked a milestone in the history of

¹ James S. Holmes, “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies”, in James S. Holmes, *Translated! Papers on Literary Translation and Translation Studies* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988), 66-80.

translation studies because it dignified their scientific identity as an actual discipline and not just a minor branch of research overshadowed by other fields. Although in some environments said emancipation has never been acknowledged, research has continued to dig and investigate deeper into the nature of translation. In his paper, Holmes delves into the objective of translation studies, moving far beyond the theoretical aspects of the discipline and identifying the descriptive purposes of this field of research that make translation studies an empirical discipline.

The development of a wide range of descriptive translation studies has led the discipline of translation to cross its own boundaries and the boundaries of other fields, blending with adjacent disciplines like linguistics and literature but also with more distant ones. As a metaphorical interpretation of translation studies' endeavor to carve a niche in a crowded scientific ecosystem, we might dare to say that this has been a Darwinian act of 'academic evolution'.

This niche laid the basis for the shift from multidisciplinary/interdisciplinarity to transdisciplinarity,² which turned out to be a fruitful ecology for the emergence of Translation Process Research (TPR) in the late 90's, when scholars started to look at translation as a problem-solving activity³, raising interest for the psycholinguistic and neurocognitive components of translation and drawing attention on investigations aiming to probe the translator's mind. Informed by methods and frameworks originally developed for cognitive psychology and artificial intelligence, these research lines aimed to understand the cognitive processes underlying translational cognitive correlates and events occurring during the performance of a translation task. The ultimate goal was to develop new methods and approaches for translator training, driven by the belief that the secrets of a complex professional activity rest enshrined in the mind and experience of a professional.

2. Translator Training in Italy: A Forgotten Discipline

Over the last decades, we have been witnessing a growing and, we might dare to say, almost uncontrolled expansion of translation studies. Several disciplines and fields have started to intertwine to discuss and investigate translation-related aspects. This can be considered a great success for a discipline that, as mentioned above, dates back to more than 2000 years ago and in some countries has not yet managed to emancipate itself from other disciplines. If we take into account the Italian situation, translation studies do not even constitute an autonomous 'settore scientifico disciplinare' (the official denomination of academic fields and disciplines). It is sufficient to surf the Italian National University Council (Consiglio Universitario Nazionale – CUN) website⁴ to realize that translation studies do not actually exist at all for Italian academia. We might expect to find them within the area of linguistics (10-G), as many courses offered by Italian universities on translation theories and techniques usually fall under the academic field of "didactics of modern languages" (L-Lin/02). Unbelievably, they are nowhere to be found in that area, among "historical and general linguistics", "educational linguistics" and other unexpectedly relevant subjects like "Albanian language and literature" and "finno-ugric philology", which again (like translation studies) do not have a dedicated label as independent languages/disciplines. The word 'translation' is only mentioned in the denomination "language and translation" within single language-related areas, and not even for all languages. The list only includes five disciplines acknowledging translation as part of their research scope: Portuguese and Brazilian (L-Lin/09), French (L-Lin/04), Spanish (L-Lin/07), English (L-

² Katri Huutoniemi et al., "Analyzing Interdisciplinarity. Typology and Indicators", *Research Policy*, 39.1 (2010), 79-88.

³ Michèle Kaiser-Cooke, "Translational Expertise. A Cross-Cultural Phenomenon from an Interdisciplinary Perspective", in Mary Snell-Hornby, Franz Pöchhacker and Klaus Kaindl, eds., *Translation Studies. An Interdiscipline* (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1994), 135-139.

⁴ Italian National University Council, *Academic Fields and Disciplines List*, <https://www.cun.it/documentazione/academic-fields-and-disciplines-list/>.

Lin/12), and German (L-Lin/14). This delineation and, particularly, the exclusion of this critical area creates a quandary for researchers working within translation studies who are therefore set as reckless for venturing into translation in other domains (e.g., interpreting studies, sign language translation, translator training, cognitive translology, TPR, or even translation in other languages like Arabic, Chinese, etc.) without the backing of an official acknowledgement.

A paradigm where translation studies do not have a place nor an acknowledgement as a discipline raises critical questions concerning i) the existence and nature of expertise and experts in a non-existing field, and ii) the actual object of training we should deliver to future professional translators.

3. The Ecology and Object of Translator Training

Questions on the nature of translation expertise, competence, and training open the field to endless possibilities and answers but their relevance and the viability of options mostly depend on the way we think of translation in the educational environment. Other variables to take into account in this reflection include the scope and the purpose of the settings in which translator training is supposed to take place. Universities, translation agencies, courses at private firms all design and include translator training for different purposes. Translation agencies and Computer Assisted Translation (CAT) software providers tend to target the acquisition of translation-related technical competences⁵ or administer short-term courses to provide their in-house/freelance translators with the competences and knowledge needed to shift their specialization from one professional niche to another.⁶ The situation gets slightly more complex when it comes to university training, depending on the place allocated to translation by the institution, based on the goals of the relevant university program. Therefore, a distinction shall be made between translation as a means and translation as an end. If we consider translation as a pedagogical exercise⁷, we see it as an activity employed to foster Second Language Acquisition (hereinafter SLA).⁸ This contribution does not discuss the extent to which translation can be used more or less efficiently as a pedagogical exercise for SLA, which has been part of extensive research conducted over the years in the well-known framework of the grammar-translation method.⁹

The other option is that we consider translation as a professional activity AND an academic discipline. In this case, we dive into a completely different educational ecology, which is specifically designed to train and/or educate future translators and future translation scholars. It is hard to trace a threshold separating the two identities and studies on competence have shown that the two worlds (i.e., the academic and professional realms) are thickly intertwined. The nature of translation competence has been widely discussed and investigated,¹⁰ leading to the distinction between ‘translation

⁵ Lucja Biel, “Training Translators or Translation Service Providers? EN 15038: 2006 Standard of Translation Services and its Training Implications”, *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 16 (2011), 61-76.

⁶ Anthony Pym, “Training Translators”.

⁷ Jean-René Ladmiral, *Théorèmes pour la traduction* (Paris: Petite Bibliothèque Payot, 1979).

⁸ Jean Delisle, *Translation. An Interpretive Approach* (Ottawa: Ottawa U.P., 1988); Anthony Pym, “In Search of a New Rationale for the Prose Translation Class at University Level”; Daniel Gile, *Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training*.

⁹ Shih-Chuan Chang, “A Contrastive Study of Grammar Translation Method and Communicative Approach in Teaching English Grammar”, *English language teaching*, 4.2 (2011), 13-24; Cagri Tugrul Mart, “The Grammar-Translation Method and the Use of Translation to Facilitate Learning in ESL Classes”, *Journal of Advances in English Language Teaching*, 1.4 (2013), 103-105; Niamh Kelly and Jennifer Bruen, “Translation as a Pedagogical Tool in the Foreign Language Classroom. A Qualitative Study of Attitudes and Behaviours”, *Language Teaching Research*, 19.2 (2015), 150-168; Alessandro Benati, “Grammar-Translation Method”, in John I. Lontos and Margo Delli Carpini, eds., *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 1-5.

¹⁰ Wolfram Wilss, “Perspectives and Limitations of a Didactic Framework for the Teaching of Translation”, in Richard W. Brislin, ed., *Translation Applications and Research* (New York: Gardner, 1976), 117-137; Jean Delisle, *L'Analyse du discours comme méthode de traduction. Initiation à la traduction française des textes pragmatiques anglais, théorie et pratique* (Ottawa:

competence’ (i.e., the language- and transfer-related skills needed to produce an acceptable translation) and ‘translator competence’¹¹, further explored as including all the attitudes and skills and wider competences needed to shape the identity of the translator and their theoretical and practical perspective on the discipline of translation.¹² If translation is thus considered as a discipline AND a profession, performed by professional practitioners who exhibit features and competences that do not characterize other professionals like language instructors,¹³ it is necessary to assume that translator trainers need to exhibit these same features and competences in order to administer relevant training and enhance the acquisition of exploitable competences. Indeed, scholars have warned that translation is still taught by foreign language instructors with a degree in a field other than translation, or by people with no professional experience.¹⁴ This is concerning, especially seeing as how professional translation experience has long been considered an essential prerequisite for a trainer,¹⁵ especially because “it cannot be expected that language instructors without professional translation expertise will have a professional translator self-concept themselves or that they will be able to help their translation students develop one”.¹⁶

The relevance and role played by academic education in the exercise of the profession is indeed controversial, as academic qualifications tend to be assigned a lower market value compared to professional experience¹⁷. This is why a deep reflection on and subsequent changes are needed in the nature of academic training and the professional nature of academic trainers in university programs that label themselves as highly specialized, as in the case of LM-94 class of Specialized Translation.

4. Practice Turns out to Be Theory

These concerns on the necessity of having professional practitioners¹⁸ among the ranks of university trainers are framed in a wider discussion on the extent to which practice is implemented in the

Presses de l’Université d’Ottawa, 1980); Christiane Nord, *Text Analysis in Translation*; Anthony Pym, “Translation Error Analysis and the Interface with Language Teaching”; Albrecht Neubert, “Competence in Language, in Languages, and in Translation”, in Christina Schäffner and Beverly Adab, eds., *Developing Translation Competence* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2000), 3-18; PACTE Group, “Building a Translation Competence Model”, in Fabio Alves, ed., *Triangulating Translation: Perspectives in Process-oriented Research* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2003), 43-66; Daniel Gile, *Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training*, revised edition, first edition published 1995 (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2009).

¹¹ Donald Kiraly, *A Social Constructivist Approach to Translator Education. Empowerment from Theory to Practice* (Manchester: St Jerome, 2000).

¹² Hereinafter, any further occurrence of ‘translator competence’ hereby refers to the PACTE Model, see note 10.

¹³ Amparo Hurtado Albir, ed., *Researching Translation Competence by PACTE Group* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2017).

¹⁴ Olga Petrova and Vadim Sdobnikov, “How Can and Should Translation Teachers Be Trained?”, *Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes*, 9.2 (2021), 267-277.

¹⁵ Dorothy Kelly, “Training the Trainers. Towards a Description of Translator Trainer Competence and Training Needs Analysis”, *TTR. Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction*, 21.1 (2008), 99-125; Daniel Gouadec, “Position Paper. Notes on Translator Training”. In Anthony Pym, Carmina Fallada, José Ramón Biau and Jill Orenstein, eds., *Innovation and E-Learning in Translator Training* (Tarragona: Universitat Rovira i Virgili, 2003), pp. 11-19; Christine Durieux, *Fondement didactique de la traduction technique* (Paris: Didier Erudition, 1988).

¹⁶ Donald Kiraly, *Pathways to Translation. Pedagogy and Process* (Kent (Ohio): Kent State University Press, 1995), 3.

¹⁷ Anthony Pym, David Orrego-Carmona and Esther Torres-Simón, “Status and Technology in the Professionalisation of Translators. Market Disorder and the Return of Hierarchy”, *JoSTrans, The Journal of Specialized Translation*, 25 (2016), 174-187.

¹⁸ For a definition of professionalism in translation, see Helle V. Dam and Karen Korning Zethsen, “I Think It Is a Wonderful Job. On the Solidity of the Translation Profession”, *JoSTrans, The Journal of Specialized Translation*, 25 (2016), 174-187; Kristine Bundgaard, Tina Paulsen Christensen and Anne Schjoldager, “Translator-computer Interaction in Action – an Observational Process Study of Computer-aided Translation”, *JoSTrans, The Journal of Specialized Translation*, 25 (2016), 106-130.

translation class. This is a major topic, very dear to researchers working in the field of cognitive translology, Translation Process Research (TPR), and translator training research, as it leads to the everlasting quarrel over the balance between theory and practice. Since the development of the functional approach,¹⁹ scholars have tried to promote professional realism in class,²⁰ in order to conjoin the educational and the professional settings and make learners experience their future. Over the years, other approaches have been suggested, like the process-oriented approach, aiming to “raise [learners’] awareness of problems and suggest good translation *principles, methods and procedures*”²¹ (italics in the original), and the social constructivist approach,²² which considers trainees as future professionals whose ultimate goal is to join a professional community and, in order for this wish to come true, they need to acquire the knowledge, experience, and mental frameworks that are typical of said community. In other words, they need to shape and work on their threshold concepts in the translational discipline.²³

All of these approaches and many others, including the postpositivist model,²⁴ the PACTE dynamic model,²⁵ and observational models,²⁶ have outlined new perspectives on translator training to successfully integrate translation theory and practice, hence it would be reasonable to assume that almost all translation university programs include practical activities related to translation. However, to what extent is this practice performed? Should learners be content with any kind of practice? Is it sufficient to bring a text to class and translate it? And what types of texts are to be chosen? What are the criteria applied to make said choice? Are they linguistic criteria and/or translational criteria? Moreover, is a text enough, or further materials are needed, like the ones provided to professional translators in professional environments?

These are all good questions that a trainer should take into account when designing a course but in order for them to ask these questions, they should be aware of the materials other than source texts in use in professional translation environments, of the cognitive factors affecting the learning of complex problem-solving cognitive tasks, and of all the cognitive, social, professional, and identity implications involved in translator training. Translator trainers delivering academic training come from different backgrounds, mostly including – besides translators – language instructors and Translation Studies scholars (Kelly 2014). The ultimate question is then, how can an instructor who has never worked as a professional translator in a professional environment, with no knowledge of cognitive translology and with no prior training on translation pedagogy, have awareness of these matters?

One of the major concerns with university translation programs is that they still rely on a deductive method,²⁷ implying that learners need to self-devise procedural knowledge by practicing translation

¹⁹ Christiane Nord, *Text Analysis in Translation*.

²⁰ Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, “Starting from the (Other) End: Integrating Translation and Text Production”, in Cay Dollerup and Anne Loddegaard, eds., *Teaching Translation and Interpreting 2. Insights, Aims, Visions. Papers from the Second Language International Conference, Elsinore, Denmark, 1993* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1994), 143-150.

²¹ Daniel Gile, *Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training*, revised edition, first edition published 1995 (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2009).

²² Donald Kiraly, *A Social Constructivist Approach to Translator Education*.

²³ Jan H. F. Meyer and Ray Land, “Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge (2). Epistemological Considerations and a Conceptual Framework for Teaching and Learning”, *Higher Education*, 49.3 (2005), 373-388.

²⁴ Donald Kiraly and Sascha Hofmann, “Towards a Postpositivist Curriculum Development Model for Translator Education”, in Donald Kiraly et al., eds, *Towards Authentic Experiential Learning in Translator Education* (Göttingen: V&R unipress GmbH, 2016), 67-87.

²⁵ PACTE, “Investigating Translation Competence. Conceptual and Methodological Issues”, *Meta: Journal des traducteur / Meta: Translators’ Journal*, 50. 2 (2005), 609-619.

²⁶ Rossella Latorraca, *Modeling Translation. An Interdisciplinary Approach to Translation Training* (Roma: Carocci Editore, 2020).

²⁷ Dechao Li, “Think-Aloud Teaching in Translation Class. Implications from Taps Translation Research”, *Perspectives*, 19.2 (2011), 109-122.

without any purpose and bound to a narrow context, like the translation of a text belonging to a specific genre and/or field.²⁸ As a result, students risk to acquire situational knowledge that does not turn into episodic content and cannot be used for case-based reasoning in new instances, since they cannot relate the concepts acquired to any actual professional situation.²⁹ In other words, this hampers the ‘transfer’³⁰ of knowledge, which is a key factor affecting success in problem-solving tasks. When this happens, we are missing our aim in translator training, which is to prepare learners for the professional reality.

A common scenario in traditional translation training is the one where learners are required to self-devise knowledge based on the comparison of their performance with a good ‘model’ translation or based on the errors that have been marked by the trainer.³¹ And here it comes: translation revision. What might be erroneously deemed as ‘correction’ is actually an exercise of translation revision. Therefore, the trainer performs translation revision but said trainer may be neither a translator nor a reviser, with critical implications, since the outcomes of said revision should serve as a learning tool.

Browsing a series of Italian Master’s Degree dissertations on specialized translation³² that suggest and/or discuss the translation of a specialized text, it is evident that corrections and translation analyses usually rely (sometimes exclusively) on hard-to-eradicate, 30-year-old theory of translation strategies, that do not capture the entirety of translator competence. Moreover, it is still not clear why every piece of literal translation continues to be identified by these students as a ‘strategy’. For instance, in a renowned paper³³, the strategy of ‘dissolution’ is described by offering the example of the French expression *tir à l’arc* translated in English as ‘archery’. Such example can be readily found in a graduate thesis produced by Italian students enrolled in specialized translation programs. However, this cannot be deemed as a translation strategy applied. The definition of ‘strategy’ is strictly linked to the activity of planning the course of action to take when facing a problem. In the case of ‘archery’ there is no need for the use of strategies, because no problem has arisen. In this case the use of one word to translate a 4-word expression is not the result of any planning or strategy applied by the translator but it is forced by the target language norms, which have a single noun to identify that sport versus than the Italian use of a phraseme. Similarly, there is no amplification when translating the Saxon genitive in Italian by using the preposition ‘of’, because the rules of the target language prevent us from using the same pattern, we are not pulling a brilliant solution out of the hat and, certainly, we are not applying any strategy. Yet they still permeate hundreds of dissertations on specialized translation along with similar examples of other misunderstood strategies. This state of affairs suggests that there must be something wrong with the way said strategies are delivered to learners and with the use they make of them.

Although, as mentioned before, research on translator competence has proven that said competence is a complex package that includes several sub-sets of subcompetences, a tendency persists of forcing learners to learn strategies, theories and other theoretical tenets outside of any context, without any reference to actual professional situations. Why can we not make peace with the fact that translation is

²⁸ Wolfgang Lörcher, “Investigating the Translation Process”, *Meta. Journal des traducteur / Meta. Translators’ Journal*, 37. 3 (1992), 426-439.

²⁹ Mona Baker and Carol Maier, “Ethics in Interpreter & Translator Training”, *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, 5.1 (2011), 1-14.

³⁰ Andreas Lachner and Matthias Nückles, “Bothered by Abstractness or Engaged by Cohesion? Experts’ Explanations Enhance Novice’ Deep-Learning”, *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 21.1 (2015), 101-115.

³¹ Donald Kiraly, “Project-Based Learning. A Case for Situated Translation”, *Meta. Journal des traducteur / Meta. Translators’ Journal*, 50.4 (2005), 1098-1111.

³² Aggregate data drawn from hard copies personally consulted, digital institutional theses repositories, and dissertations uploaded and available for consultation on websites (e.g., docsity.com).

³³ Lucia Molina and Amparo Hurtado Albir, “Translation Techniques Revisited: A Dynamic and Functionalist Approach”, *Meta. Journal des traducteur / Meta. Translators’ Journal*, 47.4 (2002), 498-512.

much more than applying few ill-explained strategies, that we need professional competences to perform this job and professional translation-related competences to teach the job and revise translation products, so that learners can finally be trained as future professionals?

5. Translation Revision Training: The Elephant in the Room

Revision is then something practiced as ‘correction’ within translator training but seldom addressed and implemented in the design of university translation programs. And yet, there are many reasons for revision and revision competences to be taken into account in the design of translation curricula and, subsequently, with competent translation trainers.

The translation industry is an ever growing market, pushed by an increasingly globalized world where language services are worth almost 47 billion dollars in 2018 and expected to increase up to \$56.18 billion by 2021, according to the CSA research annual report on the language services market³⁴, and the demand continues to rise. International organizations providing standards to ensure quality, safety, and efficiency of products, services, and systems include translation among all other industries, from technology to food safety, agriculture, and healthcare. Despite the academia’s insouciance, translation revision is not disregarded by international providers of standards. On the contrary, not only is it considered as a language service that language service providers are required to offer along with translation, it also plays a critical role in the assessment of translation quality, when it comes to the specifications of the product and/or service negotiated with the client.

Both the European Committee for Standardization (ECS) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) reserve a special place in their quality standards for the role played and the responsibilities held by the reviser. According to ECS quality standard EN-15038:2006, any translation service under this norm must include translation AND revision, where the reviser is described as a person other than the translator, with appropriate competences in the source and target languages, who shall assess the translation’s suitability for purpose. The standard also specifies that the process includes comparing the source and the target text to check its appropriateness of register, style and terminology consistency.³⁵

Similarly, ISO 17100:2015/Amd 1:2017 highlights that translation service providers (TSPs) are required to ensure that the content is revised (and even reviewed, if needed) by a person other than the translator, who shall have translation competences and compare source and target texts. Moreover, the reviser shall correct any error and fix any issue detected or report said errors to the translator and demand correction, repeating the process in a loop until both the reviser and the TSP are satisfied.³⁶

The reviser is thus a professional assessing the quality of a translation performed by another professional. Although international standards underline the necessity for the two processes of translation and revision to be performed by two different professionals, the same standards describe the revision process as a ‘comparison of the source and target language content’. Said comparison is only possible if the reviser exhibits translator competences, besides revision ones. And said standards provide, in effect, the competences required of revisers which include the same competences required of translators (i.e., translation competence, linguistic and textual competence in source and target language, competence in research, information acquisition and processing, cultural competence, and

³⁴ Common Sense Advisory (CSA), “The Language Service Market: 2018”, Report, 14 June 2018.

³⁵ European Committee for Standardization, *Quality Standard for Translation Service Providers, EN-15038:2006*, 11.

³⁶ International Organization for Standardization, *Translation Services – Requirements for Translation Services, ISO 17100:2015/Amd 1:2017 standard*, 10-11.

technical competence) and translator qualifications (degree in translation or five-year full-time professional experience).³⁷

It is now clear that revision is a fundamental aspect of translation and that reviser competences are closely intertwined with translator competences, implying that they cannot be overlooked in translator training. As a confirmation, the professional role of the reviser is even acknowledged by the Italian Ministry of Education, when outlining the final goals of the Italian Master's Degree in Specialized Translation and Interpreting (LM-94, the shallow merger of translation and interpreting would require an entire separate critical discussion but it will not be tackled in this contribution), including among said learning goals the 'acquisition of competences pertaining to the editing and revision of texts' (my translation):

Ai fini indicati, i corsi di laurea magistrale e gli eventuali curricula comprendono, oltre allo studio approfondito dei principi dell'interpretariato e/o della traduzione, attività dedicate all'affinamento della competenza nell'italiano e nelle altre lingue di studio, attività dedicate all'acquisizione delle tecniche dell'interpretazione/traduzione specifiche del settore scelto; attività dedicate all'acquisizione di competenze in merito alle scelte stilistiche e all'analisi del discorso nelle sue diverse modalità di realizzazione; attività dedicate all'acquisizione di tecniche di documentazione, redazione, cura e revisione dei testi.³⁸

and identifying the professional figure of the reviser as one of the career opportunities offered by this Master's Degree:

Sbocchi occupazionali e attività professionali previsti dai corsi di laurea sono, con funzioni di elevata responsabilità, presso enti pubblici, privati e istituzioni internazionali negli ambiti ... della traduzione e della redazione, cura e revisione di testi specialistici nei settori giuridico, economico, medico, informatico e della multimedialità, dell'assistenza linguistica nel mondo editoriale, pubblicitario, turistico e culturale, della ricerca e della didattica.³⁹

Since the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities, and Research lists revision as one of the professional careers that learners are able to start at the end of their Master's Degree program in Specialized Translation and Interpreting, we can assert that there is an acknowledgement, to some extent, of the existence of this mythological figure of the reviser. Hence, it would be reasonable to assume and expect that universities offering this Master's Degree program also administer classes, seminars, and workshops aiming at the acquisition of revision-related competences. Unfortunately, a survey conducted on Italian universities offering a Master's Degree in Specialized Translation and Interpreting in academic year 2020-2021 suggests otherwise.

Of all the public and private universities and equivalent institutions existing in Italy, only 15 offer a Master's Degree program in Specialized translation and Interpreting (LM-94). Some of them distinguish between two different curricula within the program, one addressing translation and the other one focusing on interpreting. For the aims of this contribution, only translation curricula were taken into account. By looking at the courses scheduled for academic year 2020-2021 in each university program, it is apparent that revision is not taken into account in translator training and even where it is included, it only occupies a marginal space.

³⁷ International Organization for Standardization, *Translation Services – Requirements for Translation Services*, ISO 17100:2015/Amd 1:2017 standard, 6.

³⁸ Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research, *Decree nr. 270 of 22 October 2004*.

³⁹ Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research, *Decree nr. 270 of 22 October 2004*.

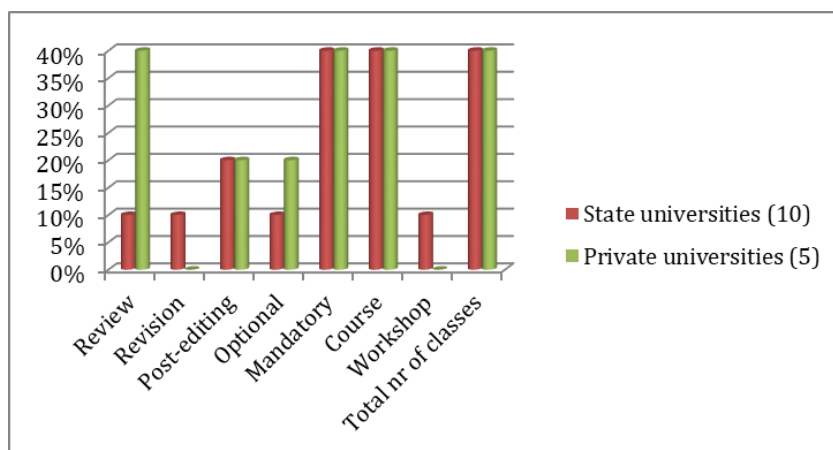


Fig. 1: Distribution of (purported) revision classes across public (red) and private (green) Italian universities, with indications of the nature of the class and attendance requirements.

As shown in Fig. 1, there is no substantial difference between public and private universities in terms of the number of purported revision classes administered and in the modalities of participation. Although this might look promising for evaluating the state of public academia in terms of translation-related pedagogical offer, it is worth to point out that the number of public universities offering LM-94 is almost double the number of private universities offering the same program. This implies that a significant number of public universities does not offer any course pertaining to translation revision, review, or post-editing. (Fig. 1). To get a clear picture of the blatant absence of revision in translator training offered to Italian translation learners, the results of the abovementioned survey are reported in detail in Table 1.

Public university code	Revision	Review/Editing	Post-editing
UNI-a	✗	✗	✗
UNI-b	✗	✗	✗
UNI-c	✗	✗	✗
UNI-d	✗	✗	✗
UNI-e	✗	✓	✗
UNI-f	✗	✗	✗
UNI-g	✗	✗	✗
UNI-h	✗	✗	✓
UNI-i	✓	✗	✓
UNI-j	✗	✗	✗

Private university code	Revision	Review/Editing	Post-editing
UNI-i	✗	✓	✗
UNI-j	✗	✗	✓
UNI-k	✗	✗	✗
UNI-l	✗	✓	✗
UNI-m	✗	✗	✗

Table 1: Distribution of (purported) revision classes by university. For each university (labeled by codes) the absence (red x mark) or presence (green check mark) of revision, review, and post-editing classes are reported.

By observing Table 1, it is clear that the overall situation is not properly described by cumulative data shown in Fig. 1. An examination of each university’s LM-94 program revealed that only 6 universities out of 15 ‘purport’ to offer a class on revision. These results are even more alarming if we take into account public universities alone, where only 3 public universities out of 9 ‘purport’ to administer revision courses over their LM-94 programs. The reason why said courses are hereby defined as ‘purported’ translation revision courses is that they are labeled in their relevant programs as ‘Writing and revision workshop’ (UNI-e), ‘Italian Language Drafting and Revision’ (UNI-i), ‘Revision, adaptation and text pragmatics’ (UNI-l). However, as specified in the relevant descriptions, these classes all tackle the examination, correction, and adjustment of L1 texts, which are not required to be translations nor, even where they might be, source texts are taken into consideration. This process is actually identified as ‘review’ or ‘editing’, which is different than ‘revision’, as outlined by European and International standards, which clearly define ‘review’ as the monolingual examination of content, also known as ‘monolingual editing’.⁴⁰ The difference between the two professional activities will surely be apparent to translation scholars, as the discussion on the two definitions has already been addressed⁴¹ and can be summarized by the definitions provided by Mossop, who delves deep into the different nuances of each activity and specifies that editing can be even distinguished from review, inasmuch as editing is ‘the process of reading a text that is not a translation (or is not being treated as a translation) to spot errors, and making appropriate amendments’,⁴² whereas the reviewer is identified as ‘a subject-matter expert who examines a manuscript to determine whether it makes a contribution to its field, to suggest additions or subtractions from coverage of the topic, or to identify conceptual or terminological errors.’⁴³ Finally, revision is defined as the ‘process of reading a *draft translation* to spot *errors*, and making appropriate *amendments*’⁴⁴ (italics in the original), consistently with the definition provided by the Spanish Department of the Directorate-General for Translation of the

⁴⁰ International Organization for Standardization, *Translation Services – Requirements for Translation Services*, ISO 17100:2015/Amd 1:2017 standard, 2; European Committee for Standardization *Quality Standard for Translation Service Providers*, EN-15038:2006, 5.

⁴¹ Anne Schjoldager, Kirsten Wølch Rasmussen and Christa Thomsen, “Précis-writing, Revision and Editing. Piloting the European Master in Translation”, *Meta. Journal des traducteur / Meta. Translators’ Journal*, 53.4 (2008), 729-947.

⁴² Brian Mossop, *Revising and Editing for Translators* [Translation Practices Explained], Manchester/Northampton: St. Jerome (2014), 224.

⁴³ Ibid., 228.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

European Commission, defining revision as the ‘comparison of a translation with its original in order to point out and/or correct possible shortcomings, both in terms of content and formal presentation’⁴⁵.

It is thus clear that almost all of the courses administered that aim at the acquisition of text-assessment competences cannot be considered as revision classes. Besides post-editing courses, which obviously address different competences, related to IT skills and machine translation (and are indeed labeled as belonging to ING-INF/05 academic field, underlining their strict relationship with IT subjects), the courses purported as revision classes can actually be identified as review/editing classes, which is why they are placed in a separate column in Table 1. As a confirmation, all the LM-94 programs including said classes categorize them as belonging to L-FIL-LET/12 academic field, labeled by the Italian National University Council as ‘Italian linguistics’.

Therefore, if we remove from our survey review/editing courses and post-editing courses, there is only one university in the entire Country that officially includes a course focusing specifically on translation revision in their curriculum designed to train future translators. No wonder this same university is one among the four (2 public, 2 private) Italian institutions offering certified Master’s Degree programs in translation that belong to the European Master’s in Translation (EMT) network.⁴⁶

With reference to the place allocated to translation revision in translator training, the fact that it can only be found as a course in a single university in the entire Italian territory raises concerns about the importance given to this specific aspect of translator competence and to the discipline of translation studies as a whole. In effect, one of the major implications arising from the implementation of translation revision in translator training programs would be the identification of competent instructors suitable for the role of teaching this activity.

6. Conclusions

There are no real conclusions to draw from this contribution but some reflections can undoubtedly be triggered by the discussion and the criticalities described above. In a country where translation studies are still swallowed by a black hole of denial, where the national academia and governmental institutions fail to designate a proper scientific domain solely and entirely to translation studies, the definition of translation professionals, translator competence, translator training, and translation trainers is a matter of utmost urgency. Translation revision is really an elephant in the room, many speak about it, we even purport to offer courses on the topic but we refuse to officially acknowledge the dignity of translation as a discipline and the role played by translation revision in the shaping of translator competence. As a matter of fact, revision is almost absent in Italian translator training programs, as only 1 university out of 15 offer a course in revision within a Master’s Degree program in Specialized Translation (LM-94). The only moment over regular translator training programs where we can be sure revision is brought into the picture everywhere is when instructors revise translation tasks and deliver their corrections to learners. We can all agree on the fact that revision can be used as a didactic tool to show learners slips in their performance but the criteria upon which instructors build their revision performance need to be clearly outlined and their annotations should reflect said criteria.

⁴⁵ European Commission, Directorate-General for Translation, Spanish Department, *Revision Manual*, Brussels & Luxembourg (October 2010).

⁴⁶ The EMT’s Competence Framework, drafted in 2017, identified the areas of competence that must be part of the learning outcomes of learners enrolled in a EMT program, based on the assumption that a MD in translation aims to teach a ‘combination of knowledge and skills which will enable students to achieve the competences considered essential for access to the translation industry and to the wider labour market’ (page 4). Said competence are distributed across five main areas, including: Language and culture, Translation, Technology, Personal and interpersonal competence, and Service Provision. All MD programs that wish to be part of the EMT partnership must train learners on these five areas of competence.

Moreover, revision should be part of the curricula devoted to translator training, as it is intended in the requirements for translation services outlined by international quality standards provided by the European Committee and the International Organization for Standardization and in the descriptions of Master's Degrees in Specialized Translation provided by the Italian Ministry of Education. The descriptions of our Master's Degree programs include among their learning goals the development of revision skills and include revisers among the professional careers that learners can undertake at the end of their study programs. It is our responsibility to help them acquire the competences and knowledge needed in order to fulfill these desired outcomes.

The main goal of translation training is to prepare learners for the professional reality. This is the main goal of learners as well. When they enroll in a training program, they do it in the hope that they will earn the keys to open the gates of the professional translators' community. Their main aim is to join this community and start a professional career in translation, which includes also revision. Well, according to Common Sense Advisory (CSA)'s 2020 report on professional translators and interpreters, professional translators never offer or perform translation tasks alone. Although translation appears to be a nearly systematic task (97% of respondents), revision seems to be performed by 72% of translators from all around the globe, followed by other tasks such as MT post-editing (35%), and localization (28%).⁴⁷ When training is provided by translation agencies, they train vendors both on translation and revision. Hence, revision is part of the professional reality of the translation career and we should train translation learners on the many subtle aspects involved in translation revision that are known and widespread across the professional community but that might be obscure to those who do not work in the field.

This professional communitarian knowledge raises a series of questions on who shall take on the role of training future professionals on important translation and revision matters that are seldom addressed by translator training programs, like the way revisers manage quality assessments, reference materials, client requirements, brand requirements within client requirements, among others. Interpersonal competences are also critical in the outcomes of the revision activity, like the different approaches employed by revisers to negotiate changes with the translator, negotiation occurring with the client, and negotiation occurring with the agency. Furthermore, to what extent should revision affect the product? What happens when the reviser does not apply any change? How do we ask the translator to work on something they have already worked on again?

These are only few of the aspects involved in translation revision as a profession and translator training needs to include revision in relevant university programs. It has been pointed out by scholars that "true expertise can only be developed on the basis of authentic situated action".⁴⁸ The use of real-life materials in simulations of professional situations has been widely explored in translator training with effective results, especially when professionals were involved. Previous research has already raised concerns about instructors' training, especially when they are well trained on translation theory and research but not on translation pedagogy, assuming that "those who know, know how to teach".⁴⁹ Not only is it difficult to say how 'those who know' are trained to be translation scholars, when translation studies are not even a recognized discipline, it is also hard to tell how many professional translators (legitimately exercising the profession, as freelancers or in-house translators, with a regular activity documented by invoices, contracts, and agreements) are involved in translator training at the university level. The collaboration of professionals and academic scholars might indeed boost the acquisition of both procedural skills and theoretical knowledge, in order to enhance the development of

⁴⁷ Common Sense Advisory Research, *The State of the Linguist Supply Chain – Translators and Interpreters in 2020*, (January 2020) 12-13.

⁴⁸ Jacobus A. Naudé, "A Socio-Constructive Approach to the Training of Language Practitioners at the University of the Free State", *Journal for New Generation Sciences*, 6.3 (2008), 61-77, 69.

⁴⁹ Dorothy Kelly, "Training the Trainers.", 102.

what we might call ‘meta-translational’ competence, i.e., the ability to build theoretical and socio-ethical perspectives on the discipline and on the professional ecology in which the discipline finds its practical applications.

It is a hope that the balance between theory and practice can be eventually achieved by opening the doors of the ivory tower to professional translators, who can surely enrich the translation learning process with authentic training that can unveil the most intimate secrets of the profession and create an actual bridge, merging the educational and the professional worlds of translation.