



Collective translation as training to the profession (?)

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L'article vise à vérifier si la traduction collective peut représenter une valide alternative pour la formation des nouveaux traducteurs. Après une présentation générale concernant les théories et les idées liées à la formation, l'article se concentre sur une expérience directe de traduction collective utilisée, pendant un cours en 2011, comme instrument pour introduire les traducteurs potentiels à la profession et aux mécanismes d'une maison d'édition. On a individué trois points problématiques. Le premier concerne la fragmentation du travail. Étant divisé en 14 parties, le roman à traduire représentait un défi de uniformité et compréhension générale. Le deuxième problème était la négociation: la relation professionnelle entre traducteur et réviseur n'était que partiellement reproduite par les figures impliquées: peut-on comparer la relation traducteur /réviseur avec celle entre étudiant(s) et formateur(s) en ce qui concerne le balance d'autorité ou la liberté de proposer de solutions différentes? Il faut aussi mentionner le développement de capacité de médiation entre les élèves pendant la phase d'uniformisation. L'article analyse les avantages et les désavantages de cet expérimentation et propose des solutions alternatives pour compléter la formation des traducteurs littéraires et éditoriaux.

Can collective translation offer a valid training for would-be translators? After an overview of the theories and the ideas connected to translator training, the paper focuses on a first-hand experience of collective translation, used as an introduction to the practice of the profession and the mechanisms of a publishing house, in a 2011 postgraduate translation course whose final objective was translating a children's novel for Salani Editore. The first issue underlined involves fragmentation: the novel was divided into 14 parts, a challenge in terms of

uniformity and overall comprehension. The second issue involves the negotiation between student and trainer, which only partially reproduces the translator-reviser relationship in terms of trust and power balance. Is the communication between teacher and student(s) comparable to the one between a reviser and the translator? Is there the same balance of authority? The third aspect is negotiation among the students, which opens up to skills apparently distant from the usual, individual, translation work. The paper underlines the advantages and disadvantages of the experiment and proposes new alternative to complete the training for literary translators.

This paper analyzes my first-hand experience of collective translation: the occasion was a post-graduate course focused on translation for a publishing house, attended in 2010/2011 at Agenzia Formativa TuttoEUROPA, Turin. The aim is to verify if collective translation can be used as a tool to disclose the practice of the profession in general, and the mechanisms of a publishing house in particular, to all would-be translators.

As Gile clearly points out (2009, 3), training is the key to approach translation with awareness and qualification. It discloses the students' full potential, helps them understand which field particularly suits them and, most importantly, it saves time in acquiring skills (ibid.,7). Training is indispensable to improve a natural talent with competences and techniques, although a question is being asked: can constant practice and experience compensate for the lack of 'talent', that natural ease in creating with words and sounds? Talent is still considered to be the core of the profession, and the main approach followed today is to improve and refine what is naturally there. Moreover, training elevates the standards and allows well-known professionals and beginners to meet and possibly to start new collaborations.

Research today is moving towards finding and developing a solid framework to guide such training, which, in 2009 as in 2016, is still largely based on professional experience. After all,

much of the research effort in translation studies has been inspired precisely by the need to [...] establish what may be considered best professional practice. The competences required by a profession are usually determined by studying the behaviour and actions of the field's successful professionals. (Sakwe, 2015, 90).

If this is the reference, the ensuing question is: who are the trainers? Most translation schools (whichever their field may be: literary or specialized) inevitably refer to professionals. Firstly, practitioners will provide insights on the translation-related chain of production, tips which can be offered only by those who live every day in close contact with publishing houses, who understand the system and who can explain it to outsiders. Secondly, only the experts of a certain field, who are really plunged into that environment, are seen as reliable trainers: hence, they are expected to deliver an efficient service and to attract more students.

The experience at Agenzia Formativa TuttoEUROPA, in fact, draws its potential not only from students having the chance to simply listen to translators explaining pros and cons of their works, but to be also taught by them, to have a face-to-face interaction in workshops, to confront and share ideas in seminars.

Interestingly enough, since training is a relatively recent practice, those same professionals who today work as mentors and teachers had in turn to learn ‘on the job’. Gile observed the approach of self-taught professionals and their possible difficulties in grasping some minor aspects necessary for their teaching to evolve even further: this opens up to new aspects of today’s training dimension. It means that translators with teaching aspirations should have in-depth didactic competence, hence, the ‘know how’ has to go hand in hand with the ‘how to teach it’. Secondly, it pushes research even further in finding complete training methods.

We have seen that practitioners are essential in translation teaching: it is unquestionable. We have also underlined the contradiction which lies in teaching without having been previously trained: what can be said about their methods? It appears legitimate to expect a straight-to-the-point approach and, probably, less reference to translation scholars or theories: the case study will provide answers to such questions. In 2009, Gile stated that most research projects were carried out by academics with translation teaching experience, and training environments were referred to only for ‘reflection, observation and experimenting’. Today, however, academic requirements for teaching translation are more and more focused on finding a figure who embodies both dimensions: a way to finally reconcile theory and practice.

Training can be improved also by considering a series of apparently corollary skills, which in reality contribute enormously to a quality outcome:

While valorizing hybridity, literary theory maintains [...] a very individualistic vision of the process of creation and of translation, considering translation as a practice of writing and of reading, but never as one involving research and production. (Buzelin, 2007, 50)

Translating involves a series of equally important complementary tasks: these have rarely been analyzed in research and theory, where all the attention is channeled on the final result rather than on the process: "[...] Things like actively preselecting information, advising on how a particular text should be translated, and suggesting how best to act in order to attain cooperation (Pym, 2005, 600)¹". This is where a professional’s perspective shows its relevance and demonstrates that a more consistent link between practice and theory is required.

¹ The reference is to an English translation of the paper, originally published as “Ausbildungssituation in aller Welt (Überblick)”, *Handbuch Translation*, Ed. Mary Snell-Hornby et al., Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 1998, 33-36.

Translator education now recognizes that students need to acquire a wide range of interpersonal skills and attitudes in addition to the purely technical ones ('translator competence', Sakwe, 2015, 92). Having become multidisciplinary, translation today naturally involves linguistic command of target and source language, but it also requires an ease in dealing with documentation, different terminology and texts: «Students must learn this so that they can ultimately thrive collectively as members of a profession» (Olvera, Castro-Prieto, 2005, 132). We will see if, among other, more technical competences, collective translation can contribute to the development of such skills, and what could get in the way of achieving the best results.

The importance of proper translation training to get a clear idea of this dimension is universally – and rightfully – stressed. What seems to be missing, however, is a proper distinction between the training to become a literary translator and the training to become a specialized one: how they should differ, which competences they should concentrate on and why. The focus is often mainly on specialized translation and aimed at the development of those dynamic skills required to work for translation agencies. The dominant demands of the market appear to be the driving force. This is the direction towards which many universities shape their training (*ibid.*, 138), the objective being to create a model as close as possible to the actual professional environment surrounding the translator, so that students can become familiar with all key positions from the very beginning (there are many postgraduate courses which follow the same methodology). Such a goal is achieved, for instance, by simulating an actual translation agency, dividing students in groups, each one assigned with a specific translation task. The goal is to have them 'play' a different professional link of the chain so that they have a clear idea of the requirements to be fulfilled for each stage of the process.

Less attention, however, has been paid to a more literary-oriented training approach: translation literature is rich not only in confronting literary translations and their source-texts, but also (it could be said that it was the main approach until not too long ago) in underlining the translators' failure, which in turn allegedly confirmed the impossibility for translation to be anything more than a pale reflection of the source text. The greater complexity of the language and the more sophisticated linguistic eye necessary to grasp and reproduce stylistic subtleties surely require a more refined touch and writing quality. So, these could be some skills a literary translator would want to develop or improve, but the 'how' seems to be unclear.

Hence, the focus is on a market which has little to do with translating for a publishing house. Translating novels or essays might require extensive research to fully grasp a specific content (there can be no translation without comprehension) but the skills are particular ones, the expertise varied, and the working environment diverse.

The natural and more immediate environment of translation training is a class group. Pedagogical approaches now tend to stress three different orientations to translation classes: firstly, focusing on the context in which a text is being assigned, so that the essential background information is made available. Secondly, focusing on the process of translation itself, the methods applicable, the thoughts and decisions involved. Thirdly, the most common, focusing on what students have produced. Most of the time this involves the figure of the trainer, as judge of the work and keeper of the ‘right’ solution and the ‘better’ translation (Davies 2005 73). However, it has been observed that the process-oriented classroom brings more efficient results, by raising awareness but ultimately by improving self-confidence. If there are four kinds of students (active, passive, experiential and studial, Ellis 1985), there is more than one kind of good translator, and the objective of training is to help each of them develop a professional attitude. «The activities presented to the students should include a “thinking process” and a “tangible result”» (Davies, 2005, 73), that is, students ought to be trained to think in perspective, with a view to the purpose and the objective.

What emerges from this quick theoretical overview is that translation training, although conducted in class, usually involves individual performance. Working independently, especially for small tasks, appears to be a time-saving procedure. However, there are some cases in which collective translation might be the only way to have all students participate in the assignment, especially when it is a substantial one, as in our case study: translating a whole book.

The question then is: amidst the wide range of possible teaching methods, can collective translation actually be seen as training to truly experience the literary dimension of translation? Does it answer and prepare the would-be translators for their first professional assignment? What are its strengths and weaknesses?

Collective translation might seem a modern practice, developed to answer the needs of a fast-paced chain of production, but it is more ancient than it might seem, and mostly linked to an institutional dimension. Examples of it can be found in Thirteenth-century Spain, with collected teamwork translations supervised by the King Alfonso the Learned, each member having a specific task. Collective translation appears to have been the preferred teaching and training

method for translation: as Pym (2002,1) says, such group work on actual translations can be traced back to the fourth century.

Collective translation is not often valorized or given proper recognition. Moreover, it is poorly documented. The point made by Buzelin (Buzelin, 2007, 51) is interesting: noticing that translation is often analyzed from a literary perspective, the procedural side of the event itself is underestimated, so that the experience of translation is strictly personal. It is plain to see the repercussions on the idea of collective translation: if translation is a matter between a reader and a text, if it becomes individual, private, intimate, how can it then be possible for a group of people to combine personalities and achieve a result which involves a high degree of interpretation, highly individual by definition? Such a 'romantic' vision contrasts with the practice of the work, where collective translation is often a way to save money and time, both in specialized and literary translation.

In Italy, the most recently discussed cases which partially integrated collective translation involved Ken Follett and Dan Brown. Ken Follett's second book of the Century Trilogy, *L'inverno del mondo*, was translated by Adriana Colombo, Paola Frezza Pavese, Nicoletta Lamberti and Roberta Scarabelli (Lamberti and Scarabelli also translated the third and last book of the trilogy): the book was probably split into three parts and then harmonised during revision. Much has been said about Dan Brown's *Inferno*. The Italian translators Annamaria Raffo, Nicoletta Lamberti and Roberta Scarabelli had to work with other foreign colleagues in what was called a 'bunker', with no phones or connections with the outside world so as to prevent any leak of information. Such a procedure, however peculiar and extravagant, brought together in the same room translators of different languages, working on the same text. Despite their having to work independently on their own version of the source text, one very positive side was that they naturally started to compare and discuss thorny points of the novel, exchanging solutions and possible alternatives. In this sense, it seems right to talk about a specific case of collective translation, for the final result was made up of much more than five or six portions simply glued together: it was a product of shared competence and shared ideas.

The case study: Collective translation at TuttoEUROPA

Before analyzing in detail its advantages and disadvantages, we should begin by introducing our case study.

The Agenzia Formativa TuttoEUROPA is a translation school in Turin: it offers postgraduate courses on Translation for publishers,

interpreting, audiovisual translation and specialized translation. The Translation for Publishers course is held annually, in two different languages: the first one is always English, the second alternates between French, German and Spanish. Predictably, these are the courses which profit most from collective translation. The courses at TuttoEUROPA are external to university, which enables it to elude some issues connected to the Department's visions and ideas on translation (one big issue linked to translation training being interdisciplinarity, especially since Translation Studies acquired the status of discipline itself). As Pym says:

More recent developments involve 'paraprofessional' training in non-university situations, usually in contexts where untrained bilinguals are already working as translators and interpreters and can benefit from short formalised instruction. [...] In Europe, where training has been centred on the universities, very little has been done to adopt 'real needs' approaches of this kind (Pym, 2002, 4)

Such 'paraprofessional' training has today gained full status, though still carried out in a non-academic environment; this means that such strategy, which looks to the real needs of the profession, is now more concrete than it was a few years ago, and the offers for summer schools or training courses is diversified and constantly evolving. Now the key aspect is, as mentioned above, the quality approach assured by professionals.

Students at TuttoEUROPA were selected through a three-stage test; the first one was a translation from the foreign language into Italian, to be carried out in a specified amount of time; having been assigned a computer, students were free to use whatever tool necessary to work efficiently. The second task aimed at verifying the linguistic skills in Italian through an essay; the third and final part of the selection was a series of questions to test the students' IT competence. It is already evident which competences are seen as the core of the profession: the ability to comprehend and transfer meaning from one language to another; the knowledge of the target language and the capacity to write efficiently various kinds of texts; computer skills.

After this selection process, the 2010/2011 final class consisted of fourteen people of heterogeneous background: some of them had already had professional translation experience (one of the students, for instance, had attended the German translation course the year before), others had recently graduated in Foreign Languages, others were simply driven by personal curiosity.

It was a full time course, which occupied the students five days a week, from November to June.

The first part of the year (roughly, from November to February) was to serve as training. Students worked on excerpts from diverse texts (children's books; essays on a specific subject; poetry), to be translated at home. In class, two volunteers presented their work, which was meant to spark debate and discussion among the teacher and the class².

Hence, the workshop perfectly fits in with what it said to be the main classwork procedure: translations are prepared at home and discussed in class (Ulrych, 2005, 15), where corrections are carried out:

- through teacher/student interaction
- by students in groups.

The pedagogical approach consists in preparing the field for the specific task (concerning a specific literary genre) by introducing the main problems in translating that genre or discussing possible strategies and implications ranging from cultural to linguistic specificities. By doing so, students are ready to work on a text which is not simply destined to enrich the list of practice exercises, but allows them to build up a solid and varied background. This would have been of help, since students would have had a first guide to direct their efforts: the translation would have benefitted from it. Despite this lack of proper introduction, such a procedure surely helped students to get used to having their work analysed by other people; no matter how good the translation was, a margin for improvement could always be found and possible alternatives would be offered, making it a very profitable lesson for the second part of the course.

Translation can never escape the everlasting duel between theory and practice. The debate revolves around the usefulness of including translation theory – the academic, theoretical dimension of translation – in training syllabi. TuttoEUROPA did not forget this, and some lessons concerning key theoretical points, the main scholars and their theories were included as part of the training. It seems that in 1992 as in 2016, Mossop's thoughts on the importance of teaching theory are still valid: a theoretical background allows translators to develop awareness of their methodology and approach, leading to a more conscious decision-making process and greater coherence, but also putting those ideas into discussion, which in turn can give new life to the discipline.

² Teachers deserve a mention. They were (and still are) often recognized professional translators actively working in the field: as well as Paola Mazzarelli, who translated Catherine Dunne and held the majority of meetings, some seminars were held by Susanna Basso (who until not too long ago was Ian McEwan's only translator), Norman Gobetti and Franco Nasi, translators working for the Einaudi Editore publishing house.

«One of the most valuable reasons for providing students with a theoretical framework is to give rise to reflection on what translators are doing and why» (Tennent, 2005, XXI). Here comes the first split between the academic environment (which until not too long ago focused on theories and produced workshops whose end was to analyze and operate according to this or that theory) and the practical schools and workshops, which, as we have just said, are directed by self-made translators whose theoretical (and pedagogical) background is variable but supported by invaluable years of experience. Students usually miss the opportunity to naturally merge the two dimensions, and often find themselves excelling at knowing translating principles and problems after their graduation in Translation, but lacking knowledge of practical methods related to the profession. The two aspects can and should go together in shaping both academic programs and practical workshops, for a theoretical background is essential to shape a sense of awareness and responsibility towards the text and its content on one side, and practice is indispensable to give the first drafts of methodology and insights. As Ulrych says, academic environments are seen as the best place to develop competence but, at the same time, they fail in providing real-life experiences of translation. (Ulrych, 2005, 3). In general, training has become more and more challenging. Translators are expected to possess more than a satisfactory linguistic competence: the new skills required are considered equally important, although fully achievable once the translator is plunged into an actual working environment.

Another problem often mentioned in literature concerning translation training is the scant attention given to information technology applied to translation. Our case study at TuttoEUROPA included two hours weekly dedicated to the use of word processors, which served as an introduction to the secrets and tips of the program. However, more could have been done. Little was said about other useful instruments such as on-line corpora (often accessible only through membership, so it would have been extremely profitable for students to learn to use them first-hand) or explanation about software such as InDesign, used by publishing houses and often mentioned during seminars. Moreover, literary translators are only apparently dispensed with computer knowledge: despite not being strictly asked to work with CAT tools, they must be able to search and use the web nonetheless. Hence, unraveling the secrets of the internet search, disclosing websites or online resources available, can and must be a priority.

In March, the translation internship began: students were to translate a book, *My sister lives on the Mantelpiece*³ by Annabel Pitcher, for Salani Editore, an Italian publishing house specialized in children's literature (it is the Italian publisher of the Harry Potter saga). In order to do so, the book had to be split into fourteen parts. There were three main steps. In the first one, every student worked independently on their draft of the assigned pages. After the teacher's revision of every part, in which the weaker passages or the choices in need of improvement were marked, students had to write their second individual draft.

The second step marked the beginning of the collective translation work. Four teams were formed: members had to put their translation together, entirely revise the assigned pages, and then come to an agreement for a (provisional) final version: four separate parts started to merge into one, big portion of the book. Thirdly, after having worked on their final draft, all teams exchanged their versions with a view to unifying the style and coming to an agreement on some thorny recurring issues of the novel. It can be said that the *task learning* approach was privileged: a chain of activities all related to each other and sequenced in such a way that they lead to a final product (Davies, 2005, 73).

By June 2011 the book had been translated and handed back to Salani, which, after an ultimate revision, published it in 2012. This is the main strength of the course, since motivation is the primary factor in the learning process. In translation training a huge drive comes from working to generate genuine translations: ««Projects carried out for the benefit of actual users, as opposed to tasks which may involve real-life texts but are not intended to be used outside of the classroom environment»» (Szymczak, 2013, 61).

Knowing that publication is the final goal of the traineeship makes it possible to overcome the sense of irrelevancy often experienced by translation students. The text, in fact, does not represent a real challenge unless it is destined for the market, and that is the ultimate motivation students need: the sense of responsibility which comes from knowing that the texts produced day after day will have a purpose, in this case, it will end up on the shelf of a bookstore. Hence, the pressure is that of a real commission, with all related issues, and

³ When the book came out, students had the chance to experience first-hand the logic of a publishing house when they discovered that the title had been changed into *Una stella tra I rami del melo* ('a star among the branches of an apple tree'). Students' bewilderment was justified by the fact that nowhere in the book could a mention to apple trees be found. Nor was the cover more faithful to the main characters in the book (a young boy and his Islamic first love), since it showed a red-haired young girl.

far from a simple, ‘innocent’ classroom simulations, where «the “real-life” aspect of most assignments is often limited to using real-life texts, but it shies away from real-life clients, workloads, deadlines or responsibilities» (Ibidem, 62).

In this sense, of equal interest is the project described by Szymczak about a training project involving translation of Wikipedia articles. According to the author, such a project, highly valued by the students, deals with almost all aspects mentioned until now: professionalism, the sense of responsibility, the mutual learning environment. However, the fact that students could choose the article to translate partially invalidates the simulation. Unless the translation stems from a successful proposal to the publishing house, translators do not get to choose the text to translate: over time, if they are competitive and capable, they create a secure network of subjects or authors, but projects are usually assigned, not chosen. This is what happened at TuttoEUROPA. Some were at ease with the language and the overall style of the book, but those more attracted to other genres still had to participate. In this sense, the task was challenging and truly authentic. For this to be possible, however, the trainers must have very good professional contacts, and this is maybe the most valuable asset provided by professional translators: a network consistent with the needs of trainers, which includes possibilities harder to find elsewhere.

The position of the trainer/s deserves a mention. It is said that a simulated working environment puts the trainer, the supervisor, at the core of the entire process (Ibidem, 62). As a consequence, knowledge is not created but transmitted by a ‘judge’ who determines the general approach and style. In the initial months of attendance at TuttoEUROPA, all students had to translate excerpts from different books and diversified genres, and the product had inevitably to be submitted to a class discussion where alternatives were considered and corrections were made. Dealing with literary texts, however, requires a sensitivity to the turn of the phrase, internal rhythm, pace, which needs to be channeled, even taught. Translating Ian McEwan offers completely different challenges than translating a catalogue or another commercial text. A sensitivity towards the structure and musicality of the target language, where already present, can only be nurtured and channeled by someone familiar with such a code, language, spirit. Especially since the final product ends up in the hands of expert and professional editors, who expect and request quality standards, no matter who the translators are. In literary translation, students need to be guided in perceiving the right turn of phrase, in understanding the

balance of literary writing: which is why trainers are probably irreplaceable.

Confronting criteria and practical experience

Much has been said about training, its key points, proper approach and organization.

What has been said so far will be used in the analysis of the case study, so as to underline strengths and weaknesses of the practice of collective translation organized at TuttoEUROPA.

The case study chosen fits perfectly in with the natural critical learning environment model of education proposed by Ken Bain (2011, 47). Faced with an authentic task, students must develop a new frame of mind in order to complete it: that frame will last permanently and become background knowledge. This is particularly true in translation: in such practical workshops, freshly graduated students often experienced the distance between their academic training and the reality of the profession, not in terms of theoretical problems shown during translation courses, but in terms of the solutions normally expected in the professional environment. Knowledge is not simply shown but is hands-on. For instance, during the first months of school it became apparent that lexical precision was not to be an obsession for students: trainers focused much more on the flow, rhythm and turn of the phrase, making sure that it sounded natural in Italian, even if that meant drastically changing the English order of the phrase. Students struggled with a practice – rearranging the distribution of the elements in the sentence – which was natural and immediate for professionals. The focus on the practical level was at its peak, and it could only bring benefits.

Bain mentions the confrontation with a plausible workload as a further positive aspect of a natural learning environment. From this perspective, however, collective translation only partially applies to it: despite being sometimes seen as a solution to save time, collective translation is still an exception, not the rule in literary translation.

Most professional interpreter and translator training programs worldwide consist essentially of practical interpretation and translation exercises: a source-language text or speech is selected, students are invited to interpret or translate it, and the result is commented on and corrected by or under the guidance of the instructor (Gile, 1995, 12).

As we have already seen, the first part of the course at TuttoEUROPA was no exception: students faced and tried to master various texts, different languages and registers under the guidance of a tutor who, inevitably, pointed out not only the possibly valid

alternatives, but also the ‘wrong’ choices in terms of internal rhymes, poor pace of the sentence or inconsistencies. This way, students approached the task with a more professional eye on the quality of writing. Kiraly’s transformationist model (Kiraly, 2014, 23) connects learning and social experience, and once again it appears to fit the case of collective translation as a tool and actual training for the profession. By proposing different solutions and far from imposing a rigid ‘right versus wrong’ translation, discussion and sharing brings mutual enrichment in strategies and approaches.

Editing, in particular, is an important component of the translation process as the final target language version is not achieved at the first attempt; re-encoding the message of the source text in the target text involves various stages of writing and rewriting. (Ulrych, 2005, 9)

Here is where group work shows its utility: the organization of groups and the consequential revisions definitely meet the requirement stated by Ulrych. Having to work on progressively wider portions of text implied constant rewriting, smoothing, reformulating until the best solution possible was found. Students ended up knowing the source text by heart, and, most importantly, understood why translators are said to be the best readers of a text: by the time their work ended, they could quote the weaker passages of the text. This brings us to another crucial point, that is, the problem of the quality of the writing.

«Translators are not infrequently confronted with defective texts, and they need to be able to summarize, explain or adapt according to the needs of the employer or reader concerned» (Snell-Hornby, 1992, 20). It should not come to a surprise that such bad writing sometimes affects literary texts or essays as well.

It is said that translator training should include working on the target language in terms of style and turn of phrases, hence, intra-lingual translating: reworking on poorly-written texts so as to make them understandable for the target audience (Ulrych, 2005, 12). The novel to be translated was not impeccable: from a linguistic point of view, it suffered from sentence repetitions and many reiterative lexical choices. Translators were forced to elaborate alternative solutions: as it emerged from the laboratory in the first part of the year, Italian does not absorb repetitions as easily as English. One recurrent phrase, which was pointed out as the ‘motto’ of the main character, was adjusted from time to time but trying to keep it always recognizable; synonyms were found for those lexical choices which did not have a strong impact on the overall balance of the text, that is, they were simply monotonous and predictable once transported into the Italian target text.

This being said, it is evident that students had to confront very practical problems, hence experiencing a tougher and less ‘domesticated’ text: they developed the skills and tactics necessary to approach them efficiently.

The importance of authenticity of the task has unanimously been recognized. As Ulrych states (2005, 17), the kind of work carried out depends on what the teachers deem to be necessary and professionally useful. In translation teaching, great importance is given to the definition of ‘competence’. A clear distinction becomes even more challenging since all figures involved in the field perceive such competence differently. Trainers may have diverging ideas on what competence is and how to develop it. Firstly, competence involves the ability to understand the source language (linguistic competence) and to properly transpose that content (the actual translation competence). Around that core gravitate only apparently corollary competences such as knowing how to research and how to collect the necessary information (methodological competence); the ability to deal with different kinds of texts and subjects (disciplinary competence); the confidence with Cat Tools and technical competence.

As Kyrally points out, the necessary skills go beyond the linguistic area and involve abilities useful when the translator leaves his studies and moves into the world of contracts, client-seeking, etc. Less has been said on how to develop those skills required translating for a publishing house. In Italy, setting up a collaboration with a publishing house is quite hard: some of the aspects which could make the difference in this field could and should be better underlined. For instance, more attention should be given to explaining in detail the preparation of a translation proposal, which is the first step for a translator to approach a publishing house. During the course at TuttoEUROPA, for example, some seminars were devoted to the world of publishing houses and the making of a book – useful and inevitable to gather the basic information – but little time was devoted to explaining in more detail *how* to write a translation proposal: how long should the presentation be? Which aspects should be stressed according to the addressee? How long should it be? Which chapters should be chosen to translate? Should the translator choose the very first chapters or select the key ones? How many chapters are to be translated? And, once the proposal is ready, who should be the addressee?

These are questions every translator has in mind when preparing a proposal, but seldom are they dealt with in detail in the environment which potentially has the answer, that is, a translation school.

Developing such specific competences is essential to give students all they need to start a career in that sense. What the author of this paper has noticed in various translation seminars is that much attention is given to stressing the delicacy of the task, the need to balance, the respect of the author: these are all essential concepts every translator aspiring to translate for a publishing house should keep in mind, but they also are very volatile concepts, acquired through experience. A translation student who wants to work for publishing houses needs knowledge and skills somehow more practical, as the example above suggests.

Moreover, it is said that a good literary translator is first and foremost a good reader and a good writer, but, thinking of the skills and competences to be promoted and cultivated, is it all natural talent or are there other activities – rigorously aimed at improving writing skills – which can support and strengthen the translation workshops, apart from the classic translation tasks? Training should consider workshops specifically focused on stylistic analysis and writing, and those corollary linguistic abilities

Coming back to the case study, one of the positive aspects was a new awareness in terms of effective or adequate turns of phrase, acquired by contrastive analysis of many different translations one after the other. Weaker translations are easier to identify when heard before or after a more fluent or convincing one. So students can grasp the possibilities revealed by the target language and learn new ways to combine words and sounds.

From a psychological point of view, students with less confidence or simply shy could benefit from the discussion without the inhibition of a class confrontation. The pressure on not losing ‘face’ is always present, as is the desire to be appreciated and well-judged by colleagues, but the strongest tension is felt towards the teacher/tutor. The class work during the first months could end up by stressing the student and compromising the result: for instance, it might be difficult for a shy student to explain to the teacher the reasons behind a certain choice. What originally was a lack of confidence may be interpreted as weaker decision-making skill. Is this important to shape a good translator? It certainly is, a good part of freelance translating revolves around self-publicity and self-confidence. Some may have the chance to develop these skills in a less traumatic way.

A good teaching course, as demonstrated above, trains for all aspects of the work. Another positive aspect of collective translation was then to introduce students to careful planning: the three months’ time (at the end of which the translation had to be ready) imposed a rhythm which resembles closely the harsh timetables professional

translators are so familiar with. All students knew that their drafts had to be ready for a due date, and they had to prepare accordingly.

However, having to split the work involves genuine commitment from all participants, or some may have to carry on their shoulders the responsibility of many. This is what happened when some students ended up burning the midnight oil due to a lack of collaboration in the very final part, where the novel had to be re-read from beginning to end before handing it over for the last time. It could be said that it was a fruitful experience of team-work, both successful and negative.

The third and the most important advantage, however, is that students made initial acquaintance with a very competitive world, usually hard to access, with a shared responsibility and less fear of judgment. Schools provide "a safe environment where students are free to fail, suffer frustration, and re-engage with problems in a supportive environment (provided they are distinctly separated from the evaluating moment or grading procedures)" (Szymczak, 2013, 61). In fact, although each one recognized the part originally assigned, students were able to perceive the group work and to embrace the book in its entirety thanks to the ensuing discussions and the acceptance of alternative modifications.

A faithful reproduction of the chain of production, however, is impossible. What are the main issues here? First of all fragmentation: a novel divided into fourteen parts is a challenge in terms of uniformity and comprehension. If it is maybe naïve to think that translators start working on the target text after having read the complete book, they benefit nonetheless from continuity: they deal with the text from beginning to end, and are aware of possible repetitions or frequent issues concerning *realia*. This allows them to keep control of the target text, avoiding re-negotiation of a translation choice. Despite having read the entire novel, students were naturally more engaged with their own part than with the others. During the small group discussion it already emerged that there was no initial overlapping of translation choices for a single occurrence, and discussions were inevitable and necessary. Then, during the overall discussion meant to unify the entire book, it was discovered that that same occurrence was present in other groups' draft, which inevitably led to further consultation. This meant there was not a final decision until the very last step of the process, which led to some frustration: having to come back to already discussed points was inevitable, for the ultimate goal was a quality work; however, the feeling was one of going round in circles, to repeatedly keep solving the same problem.

One more aspect which soon became obvious, and which worsened with time, involved style. Not only was the major consequence of

considerable fragmentation a detachment (at least initially) from style and words, but it also led to a huge effort to achieve uniformity and coherence. Only during the first group meeting was the clash of different writing styles truly evident. Some of the students had a very distinctive and recognizable style, a product of their personal writing philosophy: the discussion was articulated around how to harmonize and smooth out some evident differences. In the end, students did not have full control over their texts, due to the division into parts and to the compromises necessary to reach a final result.

Collective translation presupposes collaboration, with people discussing and sharing ideas, but it inevitably raises new questions related to the psychological aspects of group working. Since there can be many translations of a single text, collective translation entails a great deal of mediation: another issue thus involves negotiation, which only partially reproduced the translator-reviser relationship in terms of trust and power balance. Inside the teams, students exchanged their own translations and had to come to a common first draft: the collision between colleagues and the clash between dominant personalities sometimes became an internal problem. Some students refused to have their drafts revised by the other team colleagues, claiming that if the tutor had accepted that choice, there was no reason to modify it (which brings us back to the influence of trainers, whose opinion is the only one that truly matters and who serve as a constant reference for students). For this reason, collective translation poses issues related to self-identity, self-esteem and 'face-saving'. In a group made up of different personalities, translation styles and backgrounds, each ego is virtually called into question by the very act of discussing and criticizing ideas in order to come to a shared version. Some group members felt the revision by other colleagues as a personal attack, as if colleagues were not allowed to modify what the trainer had approved. 'Conflict produces ego-threat,' which greatly complicates conflict resolution' (Bader, 2010, 185). Some personalities being stronger than others, the discussion sometimes pivoted more around stating each other's individualities than going towards the primary objective of smoothing out the style.

The relationship with the reviser/tutor is worth a mention. As is made clear, the course did not give the chance to interact directly with the publishing house. This means that, despite the translation being commissioned from Salani Editore, the students were still referring for every aspect, especially revisions, to the tutor who had been following them since the beginning. This brings us to the plausibility of translation courses and the truly complete experience of all aspects of the chain. In this case, translators could not discuss the revision by

Salani nor work actively with them, as it normally happens in translating for a publishing house. This might not seem important; however, the reviser-translator relationship is one often based on trust and discussion, as demonstrated by the annual conferences held at the Turin International Book Fair, where translation, its aspects and its problems are discussed in a series of meetings under the title ‘l’Autore Invisible – the invisible author’. Here, a long-standing tradition is to host both the translator and the reviser of a recently published book, to underline the collaboration needed to work on the target book in the most efficient way possible. The stress usually falls on the relationship of trust and mutual collaboration which is established between the two figures: it is consequently presented as a key element for a good translation.

Can the communication between teacher and student(s) be comparable to the one between reviser and translator? Is there the same balance of authority, the same freedom to discuss alternative solutions? The answer is obvious: students do not have the necessary experience or confidence to challenge the opinion of an expert. It still is a matter of trust, the difference is that the two parties are not on the same level, they are not ‘equal’. Such an unbalanced position depends on the seriousness of the task appointed. As seen from other translation teaching experiences mentioned above, tasks involved Wikipedia articles, or private requests from Departments of the same university which held the translation course. In this case, it is a publishing house: the implications of immature or unprofessional work are evident, since the translation is meant for the real market. Translation involves a certain degree of responsibility, and results must be in keeping with the status of the client. This is why this also has a positive side: students share the responsibility with a more reliable professional; they are somehow protected, safe. The bigger the client, the bigger the responsibility. But this also offers a more prestigious acknowledgement, and, above all, motivation: as we have seen, offering work for actual use is one of the key elements to offer students in order to engage them.

Developing «the students’ “self-concept as translators”» (Davies, 2005, 77) should be, among other key objectives, the ultimate goal at the end of a course. In addition to the knowledge connected to the skills and the strategies necessary to be a professional, students must be able to understand their strengths, how to develop them and how to exploit them. This, naturally, involves an approach to teaching translation which goes beyond the mere linguistic exercise, and involves a more detailed attention to the student’s characteristics so as to channel them better into a tailored training course. Translators

normally need to engage with longer texts: in our case study, the amount of individual work was not enough for students to develop the necessary confidence in their abilities. What appears to be the greatest strength of the course is also, in a way, its greatest weakness. Since the target text was a hybrid mix between individual and collective choices, students were not in full control of their work: being protected from failure also meant not knowing for sure if their own translation, their own solutions and ideas, would have been up to the standards; in a word, they could not have the chance to truly test themselves *and* profit from the tailored advice of professional translators at the same time.

Collective translation, in this case, offered a reassuring experience from a psychological point of view thanks to the protective shell of the group and the school; students were introduced to a new working dimension, certainly more realistic in its objectives than it is normally found in translation training. However, it inevitably shielded would-be translators from some of the real aspects of the profession, which remain essential for a translator to move with ease.