New Translator Training Environments: Towards Improving Translation Students' Digital Resilience

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ABSTRACT

Technology has become an inescapable part of the translator's everyday life – it is used in virtually every aspect of the profession. The authors discuss the challenges posed by technology in translator and interpreter education through the prism of the changes that the COVID-19 pandemic has wrought upon global society – mainly distance learning and the new training environments outside the classroom. The pivotal assumption made in this article is that translator training environments have changed significantly due to technology. Given that new spaces for learning are formed, the article aims to problematise some key concepts crucial for facilitating translation students' autonomy and digital resilience. The article discusses new *online translation training environments* (OTTEs), defined as any online-based translation or interpreting educational setting that employs digital means for the acquisition of translator competence. The authors identify a set of principles that need to be considered when designing courses in order to ensure that the OTTE is a shared and supportive space.

KEYWORDS: translator training environment; digital resilience; translation classroom; technological anxiety; mutual feedback

1. Introduction

There has recently been a great deal of emphasis on student engagement in extra-curricular initiatives and emergent learning opportunities in translator and interpreter education. Translator and interpreter training environments (TTEs) have been moving away from the static and fully controlled spaces of the past and are beginning to embrace collaboration and engagement. The contemporary context presents the field of translator and interpreter (T&I) education with new challenges. Indeed, the pandemic's impact has put new demands on society. Whenever possible, people have been asked to work from home. School and

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university-grade students have been told to follow suit. People have found themselves in a new everyday reality and started to pay more attention to their work conditions at home, or rather their new work environment. In the case of T&I students, these changes have led to an increased need for generating new types of TTEs, as well as teaching practices and ways of organising translator training. The process of learning has shifted from university premises to the Web and, thus, the training environment has changed even more. Traditionally, the background for the TTE was a regular classroom. But the current situation and the immense use of technology have changed this approach. Combined with the necessities forced upon academic communities all over the world by the COVID-19 pandemic, technology has given us access to virtual classrooms. The authors of the present article understand TTE as any educational setting designed with the aim of assisting students in the acquisition of a set of competencies that enable the individual to start a successful professional career as a translator or interpreter. It should also be noted that the term TTE, as understood in the present paper, refers both to translator and interpreter (T&I) training environments. However, considering the direction of the ongoing crisis, the authors believe that it is important to try and outline a detailed definition of TTE (see Section 2 for more details).

By way of introduction to this special issue, the present article outlines some of these challenges with special reference to the development of translation students' digital resilience in a fairly supportive setting. The concept of digital resilience is understood here as a way of coping with digital challenges (Garista and Pocett 2014) grounded in the concept of learner autonomy within and beyond the TTE (see Fang and Morris 2021). The focus of this article is thus not only on the challenges posed by the forced transition to online translator training environments, but also on TTEs as a general subject of interest in the field of T&I education.

2. Evolution in the Translation Classroom

Translation teaching is not a fixed process. Changing market conditions demand the use of new techniques and the implementation of new technologies to satisfy student expectations in terms of course quality. The following section discusses the main differences between a regular and online classroom with regard to the interfaces used by both teachers and students. The idea is that current changes to the mode of teaching and learning are not revolutionary, but rather evolutionary in nature.

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Discussion of changes in the translation classroom must be contextualised with reference to the purpose of learning. The two main categories to be listed here, as indicated, for example, by Willigen-Sinemus (1988) and Dominic Stewart (2008), are: a) translation as "a didactic means in foreign-language teaching" (Pym 1992: 73; see also Gile 1995); and b) translation as an independent discipline that is not only studied but also used as a 'tool' to train translators (see, for example, Pym 2011a; and volumes edited by Malmkjær and Windle 2011; Venuti 2017; or Laviosa and González-Davies 2020). The present paper focuses on the latter. The traditional translation classroom used to be characterised as centred on the teacher who transmits knowledge to passive learners with the focus on the product, not the process (see Colina, 2003). Such approaches have been criticised by many scholars over the years (e.g., Kiraly 1995, 2000; Stewart 2008; Pym 2011; Klimkowski 2015).

The present authors understand translator education as a process of collaborative knowledge construction. Collaborative work is crucial for any learning experience since all cognitive processes begin as social exchanges and depend on guidance and support from others (Vygotsky 1978). The social contructivist approach has been proposed as a pedagogical approach in this context by Don Kiraly (2000) and has so far been successfully implemented in translator training. Kiraly builds his approach to translator education on theories of transformative learning and social constructivism, which gives him epistemological grounds for his model of teaching. Kiraly (2000: 19) clarifies that, "the empowerment method should not be seen as a fixed stage in the evolution of translator education methods that will have come and gone on the threshold of the new millennium. To remain viable, the method must be seen as a process rather than a product – a neverending collaborative process of experience, interpretation and re-evaluation". The goal of translator education understood in this broad sense is the growth of an individual (Kiraly 2000: 36).

It has to be noted, though, that such growth may be hampered by technological anxiety (discussed later in this section), especially when the trainee translator is faced with new digital tools and digital environments, in which those tools are utilized. The pace at which new technologies are invented and made commonplace is astounding, and only increasing. Therefore, T&I education should take into account the development of a kind of mental fortitude that allows students to handle such technological challenges, especially when we consider the nature of TTEs themselves. What needs to be stressed in the context of new (digital) TTEs is that collaboration does not necessarily mean being physically together and

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working next to each other. In fact, "true collaboration in the classroom does not mean having learners do translations individually in the company of peers. It means sharing responsibility for empowering the entire group as emergent professionals" (Kiraly 2000: 67). With this assumption, collaborative work does not have to take place in the physical translation classroom. With particular attention to improving translation students' digital resilience, the process of learning can or even should take place in new online environments. New developments in translation pedagogy have contributed to a shift in the way translators are trained. The changes may not be instant, but they need to be steady. Coupled with new developments in technology, as well as the requirements of the market, recent changes have already contributed to the incorporation of new training techniques, such as collaborative online learning (Jiménez-Crespo 2017).

It is a fact that technology is an integral part of working and cooperating in the process of providing translation services. As Dorothy Kenny (2020: 16) observes, situated cognition approaches to translation and translation pedagogy give serious attention to technology. Due to the fact that the majority of translation assignments and projects are carried out remotely by distant co-workers using digital tools, this type of work can cause some amount of technological anxiety, i.e. "the fear of computer assistance based on the assumption that a potential problem occurs in the process of translation and causes trouble that would be too difficult to solve" (Pietrzak and Kornacki 2020: 61). In contrast to cognitive friction which occurs and thus hinders the process of translation (Ehrensberger-Dow and O'Brien 2015: 103), technological anxiety actually prevents the process of translation from happening. Technological anxiety (not to be confused with computer anxiety, as discussed by, e.g., Rosen et al. (1993), Brosnan (1998), or Gilbert, Lee-Kelley and Barton (2003)) is understood here as a mental condition founded on the fear of technology used in translation and interpreting. Technological anxiety can be described as the fear that one is not able to deal adequately with technology-based problems in the process of translation. It stems from the belief that the person is not, in general, able to face new technological challenges, which can potentially lead to rejecting technology-based translation and interpreting jobs (Pietrzak and Kornacki 2020: 61-62).

Attitudes towards technology differ significantly not only among translation students but also among professional translators. Freelancers work under pressures of time and quality since the market has become more and more dynamic and competitive; thus, technology is no longer an

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option, but a requirement. Recent progress in digital technologies and the rapid development of computer-assisted translation (CAT) and machine translation (MT) tools are a matter of particular concern to translators who experience a lot of anxiety related to their working conditions and their future work. The findings of one key study on trends in the use of CAT tools in freelance translation (Pietrzak and Kornacki 2020) show that there is an increasing prevalence of technological anxiety among freelance translators, especially in the case of older translators. Participants in the study expressed multiple concerns, spanning from career uncertainty to worries about the somewhat unpredictable future of the profession.

What needs to be stressed here is the difference in the extent to which translators use and interact with technology. Some freelancers use only basic tools and thus are not exposed to technological anxiety as much as those who use CAT tools and MT engines on a daily basis. The work of the translator is "determined by internet searches, glossaries, spell checkers, grammar checkers, translation memory and machine-translation databases, and anything else resembling a communication technology" (Pym, 2011b: 4). In order to remain competitive on the market, translators have to embrace new digital tools and practices. Paulina Pietrzak and Michał Kornacki (2020) identify five modes of translator-technology (TT) interaction. These include basic, extended, CAT-inclusive, CAT-based and full TT interaction, listed according to the extent to which the technology is utilized. For example, basic TT interaction involves the rudimentary use of word processors and the internet to produce a translation. In the case of full TT, on the other hand, "translators make full use of CAT tools and their features, including concordancers, alignment, regular expressions, MT and managing their entire workflow (quoting, job processing and delivery, job subcontracting etc.). In this case, the entire translation workflow is CAT-oriented" (Pietrzak and Kornacki 2020: 33-34). It is the authors' belief that, in order to reduce the risk of technological anxiety in the translator's professional life, translator training environments should involve all the above-mentioned TT interaction modes.

Over the last two decades, there has been a growing recognition of the need to embrace an authentic experiential perspective in T&I training to help translation and interpreting students develop qualities and skills that empower them to meet market demands. The formal curriculum has been expanded with non-formal educational initiatives which empower students through engagement in projects outside academia. While formal translator education is institutionalised, planned, chronological and evaluated, non-formal learning tends to be more

open-ended, incidental and organised outside the formal curriculum. Non-formal initiatives in translator training include authentic projects, simulated (situated or real-life) workplace experience, workplace learning and lifelong learning. With its focus on enhancing learners' capacity to act like professionals, situated learning is defined as "a context-dependent approach to translator and interpreter training under which learners are exposed to real-life and/or highly simulated work environments and tasks, both inside and outside the classroom (González-Davies and Enríquez-Raído 2016: 1). Educational initiatives such as internships or student practices included in T&I training curricula offer huge potential and help to extend the limits of traditional formal education within academia. Such initiatives allow students to learn about the realities of a translator's work and the workflow and workspace of translation service provision in a given translation agency or other language service provider. The workplace can also be effectively simulated in academic environments in the form of a simulated translation bureau. Non-formal learning takes place in a variety of TTEs. This approach incorporates a holistic method of T&I training allowing the development of most practical skills necessary in the translator's work. Individual situational factors play an important role in such training. Trainee translators learn translation strategies and develop the skills related not only to language transfer but also to the whole process of translation service provision.

An integrated approach to learning seeks "opportunities for creating a curriculum for a workplace that will use non-formal learning experiences in harmony with formal educational efforts", which involves *sharing a curriculum*, i.e., inviting the voices of all the stakeholders involved in learning and work (Klimkowski 2015: 178). Sharing a curriculum can bring positive effects both for academia and for the workplace, as it can help shape their educational practices and curricula (ibid.). Effective professional T&I training calls for multiple voices in the translation classroom and curricula (González Davies 2004). As exemplified by Kiraly (2013: 215), situating must involve tasks that are as close to professional translation reality as possible. Approaching "cognition and learning as embodied action rather than the accretion of bits of knowledge and skills" is reflected in such near-authentic work settings (Kiraly 2016b: 12). All such new TTEs can be used to simulate the real-life working conditions of contemporary translators. What needs to be observed here is the significant role of technology in such non-formal educational initiatives.

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3. Translator Training Environments

As already stated in the Introduction, a TTE can be defined as any educational setting designed with a view to assisting students in the acquisition of translator competence and preparation to start a successful career as a translator or interpreter. The widespread use of technology and new requirements involving distance learning justify the following categorisation of TTEs:

a) **regular classroom** – this is the usual setting for translator training, which includes a physical classroom with all the equipment necessary to conduct a regular class on translation or interpreting. The trainer and students use the tools available in the room (e.g., workstations or interpreting booths) and are not required to provide their own equipment (although such practices may be encouraged as a means to learn and practise using the student's own equipment). Stadler-Altmann (2015) notes that the physical setting in which students gain skills is of paramount importance as it may influence student outcomes (see Moos 1979; Steele 1973; Bronfenbrenner 2005, Pietrzak and Kornacki 2020).

b) **virtual classroom** – while Miguel Monasor, Aurora Vizcaíno and Mario Piattini (2010) refer to this notion as a 'central server[1],' it is much more than that. The definition they provide describes it as a platform "which offers a set of services required by the [learner's and instructor's] interfaces and manages the required information stored in its database regarding learners and training" (ibid. 174). In other words, it is a digital platform where the content is published by the teacher (e.g., Moodle or Blackboard) and accessed by the student, or a communication system that allows for live class sessions similar to a normal class, but remotely, over a distance. While this rather simplistic definition is adequate, it is valid only when combined with the notion of the interface (see section c) below), or the means of accessing the content.

c) **interface** – the present authors have decided to broaden the definition offered by Monasor, Vizcaíno and Piattini (2010) who distinguish between learner and instructor interfaces. Monasor, Vizcaíno and Piattini 's approach is directly related to the specific context of a virtual training environment they developed. In general, the interface is the local hardware and software environment (i.e., a computer or a program) necessary to partake in a course.

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[1] They use the term to denote one of three components that constitute a virtual training environment, the other two being the learner's interface and the instructor's interface (Monasor, Vizcaíno, and Piattini 2010).

If the course is a regular one, the interface may concern, for example, electronic tools required to complete a home assignment or carry out a computer-based task in the classroom. If distance learning and a virtual classroom are involved, similar (if not identical) tools may be required, albeit on a much larger scale (mainly to facilitate communication). The interface does not have to include the same tools both for teachers and students, since trainers may require additional tools in order to create and publish content for students.

The three domains outlined above constitute core categories that can be used to tag a TTE, be it in a physical (regular) or virtual sense, or a combination of both (interface; physical tools to access virtual content).

The fact is that globalization and advances in communication and translation technology have already changed the regular classroom. Translation classrooms with students translating documents using pen and paper are still to be found. This may be due to the lack of proper equipment (workstations, software) or it may be a translation teaching technique in itself. Both cases can be explained in a number of ways, depending on the country, university, or local settings and preferences. For example, the first case could be explained by the lack of funding or lack of trained staff who could utilise the equipment, while the latter can be seen as an example of too much focus and attention paid to the process, the conduct of which is not applicable to professional setting nowadays. Maria González Davies (2004: 1) calls it "a description of what happens in translation, but not of what happens in the classroom." The point is – the regular classroom is not, and cannot be, regular anymore. In order to become competitive at the onset of their professional careers, students have to use technology. If it cannot be introduced to the classroom using available equipment (provided by the university), the trainer has to research technical capabilities of his/her class and provide them with tasks and activities that are engaging and develop their translation competencies (see PACTE 2005), but do not necessarily have to take place in the classroom itself. Such an environment can be referred to as *a hybrid classroom*. This type of hybrid classroom constitutes a link between the traditional (physical) and modern (online) classroom. It is the authors' belief that regular classrooms are on the decline, mainly due to easy access to the Internet and personal computers. Therefore, even if there is no access to the full range of tools at a given university, both trainers and students can access additional resources (the simplest example being a home assignment

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in a digital form delivered over e-mail) outside the university's infrastructure. Of course, the question about the quality of such methods remains relevant here.

Regular classroom TTEs have been analysed in depth by the academic community (e.g., Baldwin and Ford 1988; Wexley and Latham 2002; Velada and Caetano 2007). As early as the 1980s, Timothy Baldwin and Kevin Ford (1988) noted that only some of the experience acquired in training can be effectively used in the actual job. About 40% of the acquired skills are ready to be used immediately after the training is finished, but this drops to 25% after six months and 15% after a year (Wexley and Latham 2002). Raquel Velada et al. (2007: 283) suggest that "trainees may be unable or less motivated to retain and use the information gained in the training program." Therefore, the regular classroom training process may not be very effective in terms of the time and effort involved in the course vs the skills acquired by students. The employment of a regular classroom is surely not the only contributor to the ineffectiveness of training, but the purpose of bringing this data to light is to turn readers' attention to the problem of managing the transition from the classroom to the workplace. Research concerning the traditional setting is readily available. It can only be speculated how the increasing use of online classrooms will affect the figures given above. Of course, the authors acknowledge the above can be considered relevant primarily to translation courses, and even then, only to a certain degree. It should be noted that the effectiveness of the training process depends on many different factors, like certain university policies and accessibility to relevant tools in certain countries.

Moving beyond the scope of T&I training, the general trends of higher education training differ and depend on certain institutional policies. However, in general the notion of the online classroom assumes that both the teacher and students use their respective immediate interfaces (computer, software, peripheral equipment [e.g., a microphone or a webcam], furniture, and so on) to communicate and participate in the training process. While such distance learning has obvious benefits (home [friendly] environment, security, or saving time, for instance), it has its drawbacks, too. Both parties have to own the necessary equipment and know how to handle it. Moreover, they need to know how to access and use the class resources. A home office (or 'home university' in this case) requires both teachers and students to work and learn in a shared environment, with potential disturbances from other family members. On top of that, it requires the trainer to understand potential interface problems on the students' part and design course activities accordingly, engaging students as much as possible. The students, on the other hand,

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have to learn how to plan and organise their own work, and to engage with the trainer in the new, virtual classroom.

When it comes to physical classroom settings, Fred Steele (1973) provides a framework for successful classroom organisation and identifies five functions within the classroom environment that have to be followed in order to achieve effective teaching and learning. It needs to be mentioned here that although references from the 1970s may appear irrelevant in the case of such a rapidly changing topic, the traditional understanding of a classroom still offers much in terms of new approaches and solutions to the complex problem of creating an effective classroom environment, particularly in light of current and future changes. These include security and shelter, pleasure, symbolic identification, task instrumentality and social contact. The most obvious functions that can be fulfilled in a regular classroom are symbolic identification, task instrumentality and social contact. The same can be fulfilled in the case of the online classroom. Pleasure, understood as the pleasure derived from the learning process and skill acquisition, is also perfectly possible to attain in both settings. However, security may be an issue. Although some may consider 'security' in this context as merely being protected from the outside world, its psychological level may go much deeper. It has to be remembered that the new online setting requires students to know how to access, receive and process the content provided by the teacher. Many students may feel insecure, for example, about the fact that the microphone can also pick up background noise and voices from the family or that the webcam may record their immediate surroundings. Those problems have been associated with teaching and learning in regular and hybrid classrooms. The online classroom is different in that it multiplies these issues and moves them to a new level. The role of the trainer is to control the environment used by the students to acquire knowledge. Only through their support will students acquire tools that allow them to make the most of the new form of teaching. The technological evolution has already passed through translation classrooms. Translation trainers must now follow suit and evolve their teaching methods.

Given that both formal and non-formal educational initiatives can be combined with a view to preparing students adequately to enter the translation market and succeed in making their career, it needs to be emphasised here that in the case of TTE (understood as any educational setting designed to facilitate learning and preparing to become a translator or interpreter), the setting has to allow the trainer and the student to share knowledge, negotiate and cooperate.

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Communication must therefore be at least bidirectional to facilitate information exchange between all stakeholders of the educational process.

By contrast with a learning environment, which is understood here as a broader term, involving unfacilitated learning or self-learning, where the student becomes an *autodidact,* as noted by Kiraly (2000), without the assistance of an external trainer, the notion of a TTE assumes active instruction, guidance and feedback throughout the learning process. Hence, in TTEs, learning is both guided and intentional. All the stakeholders share a training environment; the trainer has the opportunity to identify problems in the training process and adjust the course accordingly. At the same time, the student can ask for clarification or simply additional information.

The above discussion is relevant for the tools and settings that we employ today; however, we can expect further developments in teaching methods in the immediate future, so the term *new translator and interpreter training environment* – as used in this paper – will soon become obsolete. Therefore, it seems prudent to narrow the notion to make it more universal and refer to *online translation training environment* (OTTE) which can be defined as any online-based translation or interpreting educational setting that employs digital means for the acquisition of translator competence.

Given that contemporary translation is highly dependant on technology (see Cronin 2003; Doherty 2016, do Carmo et al. 2020), it seems natural for translation trainers to incorporate the new digital setting into their courses. Translation programmes are gradually adapting their curricula to address the need for technological skills and provide students with such training practices (Rothwell and Svoboda 2017). Providing translation students with such training practices leads to a "professionalisation process in the curriculum where technology is considered core in the training of translators" (Rodríguez de Céspedes 2019: 111). However, the successful implementation of digital tools is directly related to the technological affinity and professional experience of the trainer, as well as the affordability of the institution hosting the course.

What needs to be taken into consideration here is the fact that the employment of online classrooms is very often not just a pedagogical decision but rather depends on certain university policies and the accessibility of relevant tools in certain countries. It needs to be acknowledged

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here that some of the theoretical assumptions and practical recommendations underlying this article might not be easily taken up in the same way in various international contexts because of different financial and cultural backgrounds. It seems crucial to observe here that it may well be impossible to list all instances of online settings which could be used in OTTEs given the circumstances and varied technological capabilities. Although specific problems differ in different institutional settings, the vast majority of current OTTEs involve at least slightly extended interaction with technology. What must be recognized in every OTTE – regardless of the technical way in which the training is organized – is the diversity of students' needs (see Section 4).

4. Growing Learner Autonomy

All the new training environments differ in the level of learner autonomy. Moving from the translation classroom, through workplaces, to virtual environments illustrates the learner transformation not only as regards technology immersion but also regarding their autonomy. Learner autonomy is a gradual process, which is reflected in the dynamics of changing environments and facing new challenges with less guidance and control from the teacher. Thus, when the learning environment moves towards new settings and more innovative models, the learner is naturally driven from the first stage of being a dependent learner to becoming a more involved and self-directed learner (Grow 1991:129).

It needs to be observed here that new TTEs which are created online move towards more autonomous training. Learner autonomy is a prerequisite for developing metacognitive skills since students need to build their own autonomous systems of self-regulation to become self-directed life-long learners. What is advocated in the quest for both learner and teacher autonomy is an attitude of openness towards educational worlds outside formal academic education. As Konrad Klimkowski observes, "an effective situating of T&I education calls for extra-curricular educational initiatives; not only to complement the formal T&I curriculum, but also to expand the standard way of thinking about, planning and implementing T&I educational holistic solutions" (2015: 151). OTTEs (see Section 4) can serve as a good medium for autonomous strategic learning.

Nevertheless, what must be emphasised in the case of OTTEs is the need to ensure that certain principles guide the facilitators when they plan the course design. First of all, one aim which

must not be ignored involves the professional competence that translation students need to develop not only in response to but sometimes also despite rapidly changing circumstances. The term professional competence is used here to describe the knowledge, code of conduct and psychosocial skills of the translator. Initially understood as merely language proficiency, translator competence goes beyond a transfer competence and has been identified and explored as a combination of a number of skills and qualities that make up the translator (see for example González Davies 2004; Göpferich 2009; Gouadec 2007; Kelly 2005, 2008; Kiraly 2015, 2016; Lörscher 2005; PACTE 2011; Pym 2011a, 2013).

The course design that attempts to equip translation students with skills needed in the translation industry must take into account not only the translation process itself, but the whole process of translation service provision. The skills that are involved in this process include not only the knowledge of both languages and cultures; however, here it needs to be stressed that the linguistic aspects cannot be neglected since the use of language in the translation process must be not only correct and appropriate to the situation, but also lead to the achievement of the intended purpose of the translation, taking into account the specificities of the recipient audience. However, more importantly perhaps, the skills that need to be recognised as important components for practice in an OTTE, are also, among other things, the ability to prepare efficiently for translation commissions in a relatively short time, to conduct research and obtain information, or to use computer-assisted translation tools. It should therefore be stressed that professional translator competence also encompasses the ability to communicate and manage relations with the client.

What is more, the course design must address issues of adapting to translation market conditions. These include marketing skills, the ability to negotiate and comply with the arrangements made, and the ability to cooperate with all participants in the process, that is, the client, project manager and/or other stakeholders. What also needs to be taken into account are the psychophysiological aspects of translator competence, which consist of cognitive skills and psychophysical qualities, such as memory, perception, attention, emotions, motivation, self-confidence or self-regulation. These skills require special attention in the translation classroom where students are guided by the teacher, but in the OTTE they seem to be practised as a matter of course by students who develop their own systems of metacognitive skills.

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5. Improving Translation Students' Digital Resilience

New tools are now being developed en masse to facilitate distance learning, which has been forced upon the teaching community in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak. Therefore, it seems hardly feasible to delineate all the possible options of online settings which could be used in OTTEs. The technical details of online-based translation or interpreting educational settings can vary to a large extent as regards, for instance, the interface, the application of real-life systems, the type of platform for sharing materials or the type of interactions (synchronous or asynchronous). Nevertheless, regardless of these differences, the point to be stressed here is that course designs must accommodate differing needs and ensure that the environment is supportive and appreciative of translator competence development.

A course design needs to take into account the tools that are provided to enable the learning process, which means that a teacher ought to follow certain rules in order to offer fair and transparent learning opportunities to all the students attending the course. First of all, students have to be informed about the nature of the course (digital form). The very first class, or a series of classes, need to take into account group diversity (gender, background, computer literacy) and propose uniform guidelines on how to access the course content, process it, and submit personal data to the trainer. Students need to be aware that they can access the data provided by the trainer, and that they can ask questions of their own, providing their own data when necessary.

Communication channels that are relatively easily accessible enable multidirectional flows of knowledge and educational interaction. Therefore, it is the authors' belief that digital resilience can be trained successfully in an environment that follows the following principles:

- digital form – takes place over digital channels (data exchange, synchronous or asynchronous communication, and so on);
- bi- or multidirectionality – teacher and students can communicate both ways over channels set by the teacher or, on top of that, students can communicate with each other over channels set by the teacher;
- transparency – the teacher identifies primary and secondary communication methods, rules of online class conduct, data exchange policies and other online course-related issues;

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- ease of access – the teacher uses technologies that are easy to access by the student, providing him/her with all the tools necessary to partake in the course (together with clear instructions on how to install and use them).

The four categories listed above provide a clear indication of the areas that have to be pursued by translation trainers in order to set a successful online training environment and, as a result, enable students to develop their digital resilience in a friendly and affirmative setting. The issue of bidirectionality of communication is particularly important here, in light of the pandemic situation which resulted in translation courses conducted solely online.

Distance-learning can be successfully used in T&I education and, in fact, this is an area that we can expect to grow as new technologies develop in translator education not only as an answer to extreme situations. Debbie Folaron observes that "online and on-site learning environments are inherently different mediums when it comes to the design and delivery of the course content. Both can be extremely effective and even complementary" (in Pym 2003: 65). Folaron (ibid.) lists some of the issues that are particularly relevant to OTTEs:

- understanding human interactions with computers and software applications, within the overall context of learning (likewise, understanding 'learning' in the context of an electronic environment)
- incorporating response mechanisms for people's diverse learning styles within the instructional design and delivery of a course
- organizing and articulating clearly the objectives and content of the course (everything has to be spelled out!)
- accommodating for the lack of human visual cues that we all rely on in an onsite classroom (hence, everything must be articulated and made explicit)
- managing the online learning environment in terms of a 'facilitator' creating and promoting interactivity (the term 'interactivity' encompasses many levels)
- facilitating feedback from the students so you assess where they are in terms of understanding the course material
- facilitating conversation so you can understand student backgrounds and integrate their experiences and skills into the classroom learning environment (relevance and motivation)

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- creating and maintaining a dynamic and communicative environment online so that participants do not feel that the class is based solely on downloading required materials and working alone.

The authors of the present article would like to emphasise that particular attention needs to be paid to the multidirectionality of communication channels. The delivery of OTTEs differs all over the world since different regions have adopted different approaches to distance learning depending on the digital capacity of the country, its educational institutions and the availability of technologies. Primarily, a course design needs to make allowances for the difficulty in determining when students are having problems and to adapt the OTTE to accommodate the students' needs. It is, therefore, of prime importance to provide constructive feedback (Kussmaul 1995, Washbourne 2014), but this cannot be limited to teacher-student feedback.

Contrary to a regular classroom, in OTTEs the teacher has little opportunity to notice and interpret non-verbal cues that help to modify instruction where necessary and provide timely feedback to students (Berenson, Boyles and Weaver, 2008). Above all, care should be taken to ensure mutual feedback (see Pietrzak 2016), since in the context of OTTE, it is not only the translation trainee that is in need of feedback but also (more than usual) the trainer. In such a mutual feedback-exchange process, all the participants of the OTTE can air their views and reflect not only on tasks and assignments, but also on the process of learning in the given OTTE. It is not that important whether the feedback is positive or negative; what seems vital here is the reflection involved in the process, which allows for detecting and addressing potential problems. A structured and guided two-way feedback guarantees that the teacher and students truly share the training space and all the related issues.

Particular attention needs to be paid to the roles and responsibilities in OTTE since the relation between the teacher and the student should not be that of a master and apprentice, but a student and supportive facilitator. Although it may seem more difficult (than in a regular T&I classroom) to steer clear of the transmissionist approach, the following practices may ensure a balanced interaction:

- require active participation in all translation tasks and follow-up practice
- avoid lecturing (eg. pause, ask, exemplify, recall etc.)
- encourage collaborative learning (in groups or teams)

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- use inquiry-based instruction
- allow for student choice (e.g. of the content, method, testing, roles)
- ensure mutual feedback on T&I tasks
- encourage reflection on the learning process
- provide formative – not only summative – assessment
- monitor students during translation and interpreting tasks

To recapitulate, although TTE settings can differ significantly in different countries, the trainee must always be at the heart of most successful OTTE solutions. The idea of OTTE as a social interactive space cannot be overestimated. Social interaction is critical to the success of online translator training (see section 1). Whatever the form of OTTE, a shared space is what makes it valuable in terms of interaction and joint construction of knowledge. Students who are active agents in the online learning process stand a chance of improving not only their digital resilience but also their overall learner autonomy. Thanks to sharing the OTTE space (e.g., through interacting, collaborating, reflecting, providing mutual feedback, etc) students – who find themselves active participants in their own learning process – stand a better chance of gaining more confidence and ideally also more digital resilience.

6. Aims and Scope of the Special Issue

With emphasis on the need for learner autonomy in the light of constant changes in TTEs, this special issue offers a series of contributions whose main aim is to contribute to the discussion on student-centred translator education. The idea of a student-centred environment is explored in the article by María del Mar Haro-Soler (University of Granada, Spain). With particular emphasis on the concept of the self-efficacy of translation students and their confidence as translators, the author demonstrates the results of a study on the impact of verbal persuasion on students' self-efficacy beliefs in translator education. In the next article, Urszula Paradowska (The Jacob of Paradies University, Poland) discusses the importance of social experience in collaborative knowledge construction. The article reports on authentic project work conducted in a university setting.

These papers are followed by a series of research letters which, although shorter in form, nevertheless present an interesting approach to the issue of translator and interpreter training in an online setting. In addition to the full-length research articles on TTEs submitted to *New*

Voices in Translation Studies last year, *New Voices* issued a Call for Research Letters on the impact of COVID-19 on translation and interpreting training. The research letters are shorter pieces written specifically in response to the call to give a broad impression of the situation worldwide. This issue includes five submissions which each responded to the call in slightly different, but equally interesting and relevant ways. The research letters give valuable insights into the impact of the pandemic in China, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Poland, Russia and the USA.

From Spencer Hawkins, based in Germershmeim in Germany, we present a research letter entitled 'The Digital Translation Classroom: Another Day at the Computer for the Burgeoning Translator'. The author gives a profoundly insightful and engaging account of the broad issues impinging on translators in training and their teachers. The letter discusses pandemics, inequality, and the university campus; scientific translation with Coronavirus as a reference point; and the impact of digital teaching on Translation Studies as a discipline.

Chuyi Zhang and Shatha Alhawamdeh, based in Ohio, USA, focus on the issue of interpreters' mental well-being. This fascinating submission examines current working conditions, particularly during COVID-19, and the measures being taken to protect interpreters' mental wellness, based on interviews with five interpreters from Jordan, China, Iraq and the US.

Joanna Mirek, based in Poland, presents the preliminary results of introducing online simultaneous interpreting (SI) classes at a university in Lublin in Spring 2020. This meticulously researched case study assesses the usability of online conference platforms for SI online classes. The study also presents both student and teacher reflections on using a virtual platform in SI classes drawing on socio-constructivist principles.

Irina Tivyaeva, based in Russia, presents preliminary results of the pandemic-driven shift to online teaching undertaken at a university in Moscow in the Spring semester 2019/2020. This skilfully crafted article argues convincingly that two key factors contribute to successful student adaptation during the pandemic: motivation and community involvement.

Mehrdad Vasheghani Farahani, based in Germany, and Nematullah Shomoossi, working in Iran, explore the lived experiences of translators turning to teleworking during the Pandemic. Several insightful findings presented here are indirectly relevant to translator training and

reflect the respondents' social and personal experiences during the pandemic. The authors conclude that translator training must empower translators with the psychological capital required to face these challenges.

Drawing on recent theoretical and methodological advances, the principal aim of this collection is to explore student-oriented approaches to translator training. When considered together, the contributions gathered in this special issue provide insights on current research and show recent progress in translator and interpreter training. They all explore student-oriented approaches and enhance understanding of strategies for effective knowledge construction in new TTEs.

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