

## BUILDING TRANSLATION COMPETENCE THROUGH DIARY STUDIES: AT THE CROSSROADS OF STUDENTS' REFLECTION AND IMAGINATION

Valentina MUREȘAN<sup>1</sup>, Andreea ȘERBAN<sup>2</sup>

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**ABSTRACT.** *Building Translation Competence through Diary Studies: at the Crossroads of Students' Reflection and Imagination.* Our paper tackles a more practical aspect of the translation training process in the context of translation competence acquisition (TCA) by focusing on a group of students of the Applied Modern Languages Programme, who were in the first year when our research was initiated. This study represents the second part of a small-scale qualitative research, which used diaries as a research instrument to investigate the strategies and tools employed by students as they tried to overcome challenges in translation and to develop good practices for their future career as translators. Participants were asked to reflect on register related issues encountered during the process of learning about and doing translation, since in our teaching experience this is one of the most prominent challenges to overcome. By employing this open-ended tool, we wanted to see

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- <sup>1</sup> **Valentina Carina MUREȘAN** is assistant professor of linguistics at the West University of Timișoara, Romania. Additionally, she teaches classes in translation studies and teaching methodology. Her research interests and published papers cover various issues in the field of applied linguistics - corpus linguistics, conversational analysis, ELT pedagogy, translation studies and gender studies. In addition to her publications in the field she has also been involved in postdoctoral research projects in ELT and corpus linguistics, and she is also a member of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies at the university, co-editor of Gender Studies Journal, a yearly open-access Erih+ indexed academic journal. Email: valentina.muresan@e-uvr.ro.
- <sup>2</sup> **Andreea Ioana ȘERBAN** is associate professor of English literature at the West University of Timișoara, Romania. She also teaches British culture and civilisation, gender discourse and its translation. Her research interests cover Anglophone literatures, modern transmediations of William Shakespeare's works (manga in particular), gender and cultural studies. In addition to several books on Margaret Atwood's novels, Shakespeare's plays, the cultural history of England/Britain and the rewritings of Little Red Riding Hood, her publications include book chapters in various thematic volumes and a series of articles in WoS, Scopus and Erih+ indexed academic journals. She is also a member of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies at the university where she currently teaches and co-editor of Gender Studies Journal, a yearly open-access academic journal. Email: andreea.serban@e-uvr.ro.

whether diary keeping increased students' awareness of register related problems and, moreover, whether students integrated reflection as one of the strategies to develop competence in translation. As a follow-up to our initial research, participants (now graduates) were asked to reflect on their study and translation practices and instruments so as to discuss which of these they retained (compared to the first year), what strategies they make use of now both for learning and for doing translation work, and whether they have discovered any new ones that make translator training more effective.

**Keywords:** *translation competence (acquisition), diary studies, instruments, challenges, good practices*

**REZUMAT. Formarea competenței de traducere prin studii de jurnal: la intersecția dintre reflecția și imaginația studenților.** Lucrarea noastră abordează un aspect mai practic al procesului de formare în domeniul traducerii în contextul dobândirii competenței de traducere, concentrându-se asupra unui grup de studenți din programul de Limbi Moderne Aplicate, care se aflau în primul an de studiu atunci când am început cercetarea noastră. Acest studiu reprezintă a doua parte a unei cercetări calitative, la scară redusă, care a folosit jurnalul ca instrument de cercetare pentru a investiga strategiile și instrumentele utilizate de studenți în depășirea provocărilor de traducere și pentru dezvoltarea de bune practici pentru viitoarea lor carieră de traducători. Participanții au fost rugați să reflecteze asupra problemelor legate de registru întâlnite în cadrul procesului de învățare despre traducere și de realizare a acesteia, deoarece, în experiența noastră, aceasta este una dintre cele mai importante provocări ce trebuie depășite. Prin utilizarea acestui instrument deschis, am urmărit să vedem dacă ținerea unui jurnal a crescut gradul de conștientizare a studenților cu privire la problemele legate de registru și, mai mult, dacă studenții au integrat reflecția ca una dintre strategiile de dezvoltare a competențelor în domeniul traducerii. Ca o continuare a cercetării noastre inițiale, participanților (acum absolvenți) li s-a cerut să reflecteze asupra modului actual de învățare și asupra practicilor și instrumentelor de traducere folosite, astfel încât să discute pe care dintre acestea le-au păstrat (în comparație cu primul an), ce strategii folosesc acum atât pentru a învăța, cât și pentru a face traduceri și dacă au descoperit altele noi care să facă mai eficientă formarea traducătorilor.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *(dobândire de) competență de traducere, studii de jurnal, instrumente, provocări, bune practici*

## 1. Introduction: Organisation of Research

Our research began in the academic year 2018-2019 following the first semester evaluation of first year students enrolled in the Applied Modern Languages programme at the West University of Timișoara. The evaluation for

the Introduction to Translation Theory and Practice confronted us with the predicament of a 51% pass rate, which prompted us to investigate the possible causes behind this unprecedented event, as well as to research the strategies that assist students in building and developing their translation competence. (It is important to note here that the class in question lasts for two semesters, the first of which was then taught by Andreea Șerban, while the second by Valentina Mureșan.) As a result, we invited students to participate in a small-scale research by keeping diaries in order to encourage them to reflect on their learning experience. The data collected in early 2019 from the 33 student-participants was then divided into two major parts, the former analysing the students' attitudes towards translation-competence development (cf. Șerban and Mureșan 2019, 213-230), and the latter looking at the strategies and tools that students used for doing translation work or for language learning. In the academic year 2020-2021 we added a third part, aiming to follow up on the development of this group of students, who were going to graduate with only two semesters of face to face learning and most of their BA programme unfolding in an online educational context due to the global Covid-19 pandemic.

The longitudinal research perspective was completely justified in the context of a generation who, because of external circumstances, experienced higher demands on self-regulation, had to manage distractions and academic procrastination (Melgaard et al. 2022), and whose academic success relied on their ability to develop as autonomous learners, diary keeping serving as a possible tool in this sense. Thus, a follow-up questionnaire was distributed to the same students in their third year, asking them to focus on the strategies and tools they had employed in translation work over the previous two years. In short, our purpose in this paper is, on the one hand, to look longitudinally at the learning experience and the use of reflection, and on the other hand, to draw some general conclusions regarding the strategies that future students could apply for better translation competence acquisition. Starting from the data provided by the diaries and the questionnaire we will, therefore, categorise and discuss the strategies that the research participants identified, developed, improved and retained in their training as translators so that they can be fully exploited with future generations of students.

## **2. Theoretical Underpinnings**

Drawing on several models of translation competence acquisition such as those developed by PACTE (1998, amended in 2003), EMT (2009, amended in 2017), PETRA-E (2016), Alves and Gonçalves (2007), Gaballo (2009), Göpferich (2019), Kumpulainen (2018), Pym (2003), we define our approach as bottom-up, since we rely on the data provided by the students' diaries to formulate some micro-theories for building translation competence. Furthermore, it must be

noted that we aim to focus on “the early stages of the translation competence acquisition process in a particular translation situation, which requires task-specific knowledge” (Șerban and Mureșan 2019, 216); in other words, we plan to discuss in this paper the strategies students have developed to build translation competence with a focus on register transformations (formal/informal English) and related translations into Romanian.

In a more recent study analysing the development of translation competence at the crossroads of declarative knowledge (or “knowing what”, i.e. a more theoretical approach to TCA) and procedural knowledge (or “knowing how”, i.e. a more practical approach to TCA), Yang and Li (2021) contrast three of the most influential existing TCA models, namely the ones proposed by PACTE (2000, revised 2005), Göpferich (2019), and Alves and Gonçalves (2007), highlighting that Alves and Gonçalves’ model “diverges significantly from both the PACTE model and the Göpferich model [in that] it highlights the role of conscious meta-cognition, whereas the other two models hold that translation competence is primarily procedural knowledge featuring unconsciousness and spontaneous association” (Yang and Li 2021, 117). Meta-reflection, or “thinking about thinking”, is thus fundamental to and guides “skilled performance in translation” (Yang and Li 2021, 120-21), representing also a key issue in our own study.

It is also worth mentioning here that the Chinese researchers conclude their paper by drawing up a model of their own, a translation competence pedagogical model, which focuses on training university students in the art of translation, and which consists of “bilingual competence, transfer competence, strategic competence, pragmatic competence and profession-related competence. From a teaching perspective, [...] the first three competences should be prioritized” (Yang and Li 2021, 143) in order to help students become efficient professional translators. Unlike previous models, which regard bilingual competence as a prerequisite, Yang and Li (2021, 134) consider it a key component in developing TCA, something that our students have also pointed out when discussing their academic translation-related progress (cf. Șerban and Mureșan 2019, 224, 228).

Additionally, Viviana Gaballo’s model also requires a closer look. According to Gaballo, translation is not only a learning tool and a linguistic skill (Gaballo 2009, 46) – alongside reading, writing, speaking and listening – but also a marker of grammatical accuracy and language proficiency, which builds on such related competences as collaboration and reflection (Gaballo 2009, 48-49, 51-52). Since translation is always perfectible, it can benefit a lot from reflective and collaborative work.

As regards our choice of diary studies as a research method, we preferred it because of several reasons. Firstly, the diary has a double function of research tool and learning technique which facilitates reflection and deeper learning, while also helping students develop learner autonomy. Secondly, as a learning tool enhancing reflection, the diary is in alignment with the modern teaching-

learning principles of tertiary education, according to which learning is contextual, collaborative, constructive, self-directed, as well as the effect of teaching and assessment (cf. Devlin and Samarawickrema 2010; Hattie 2009, 2012; Hattie and Yates 2014). In addition to these principles, the four core values of collaboration, reflective thinking, involvement and entrepreneurship represent the foundation of progressive tertiary education, which the West University of Timișoara has adhered to. Thirdly, the diary responds to the current demands of the job market, which treasures such life-long learning competences of employees as adaptability, cross-cultural competence, or virtual collaboration (cf. Davies, Fidler, and Gorbis 2011). Above all, however, we must emphasise the strength of using the diary in language learning research, namely its power to uncover serendipitous findings concerning the diarists' experience of "events, feelings, views [...]" and this can render depth to the study" (Goşa 2014, 83).

### **3. Research Methodology**

Our research, which started as a small-scale qualitative research, has developed along the lines of a longitudinal study. In a nutshell, our research relies on the ethnographic method of investigation and uses the Grounded Theory framework in data analysis. As regards instruments, our research employs both the diary and the online questionnaire, the mixed method of investigation allowing us to follow the progress of TCA and the "routinization" of reflection.

Alongside other instruments such as learning protocols, the learning diary acts as one of the instruments that favours deep learning, that "learners may use [...] to articulate difficulties with comprehending complex concepts, or they may consciously acknowledge which aspects of the learning material they have already understood well" (Nükles et al. 2004, 52). Learner diaries encourage metacognitive strategies, prompting learners to reflect upon the learning process, "to better understand their own learning behaviour and to take responsibility for their learning process", according to Nükles et al. (2004, 52). We opted for an unstructured learner diary in order to collect students' input and yield extensive data, given that this was their first experience with learner diary keeping.

In terms of participants, our research relies on the input of 33 diarists (out of a total number of 79 students enrolled in the first year of the Applied Modern Languages programme in the academic year 2018-2019), who contributed to our initial study focused on attitudes and strategies in building translation competence. For the longitudinal study, there were 25 respondents to the online questionnaire (out of 56 students enrolled in the third year of the same programme), most of whom had participated in our initial research. It is noteworthy that out of the initial 33 participants, 32 completed the Applied Modern Languages programme, with only one student having transferred to a competing programme (Languages and Literatures) within the same faculty.

Due to various constraints, only the most representative quotations from the diaries will be used to illustrate the main findings. In the diarists' responses we chose to include the occasional mistakes, both in order to preserve the authenticity of the data, and to showcase the learner's evolution from the first year of study (the diary entries) to the third year (their responses in the questionnaire), linguistic performance being one of the central sub-competences our students focused on when they discussed about translation competence building. Moreover, the most important words and phrases were italicised in order to highlight the key findings.

#### **4. Findings and Analysis**

As mentioned in the first part of the research (Șerban and Mureșan 2019, 222), the data collected was manually processed by both researchers, who analysed the content individually and established their own data-driven category system. The principal emerging categories being strategies for individual practice and group practice, further divided into subcategories for individual work and group work, emphasised in italics. They all reflect the TCA strategies students applied to a larger or smaller extent in order to cope with transferring source texts (STs) to target texts (TTs) as part of their academic tasks.

In our analysis, we understand "learning strategy" according to Mariani's definition, namely that it is "any action which you may have to take to solve a problem in learning, to help you make the most of your learning process, to speed up and optimize your cognitive, affective or social behaviour." Mariani (2002, 45) sees learning strategies as belonging to the learner, different from teaching strategies, unstandardised and discovered by the learner. By "tools"/ "instruments", we refer to any resource such as dictionaries, apps, etc. which the students make use of in their learning strategy.

##### ***4.1. Strategies for independent practice***

As mentioned in our previous research (Șerban and Mureșan 2019, 222), the diarists found the class on Introduction to Translation Theory and Practice one of the most difficult in their academic experience and most of them wrote about three main types of strategies they applied: firstly, paying more attention in class; secondly, redoing exercises from class, rereading their notes and doing exercises regularly; and finally, reading formal texts in order to build parallel corpora for English and Romanian.

As regards the first strategy, a few diarists mention that *focusing more during class* facilitates the understanding of explanations and enhances performance in classroom activities, becoming very useful in the long run.

I consider that there are two main steps related to learning new things. The first one is *concentrate as much as it is possible during the courses at university*. I tried this method and *it really helped me*, making it easier to understand. (D11)

Several diarists report on *rereading the notes* taken during class and *redoing the exercises* either on the same day or at the weekend to allow for some time in between so that the new information can be absorbed and refreshed during exercise revision.

Of course, at home to make sure that I understand, *I did again the exercises*. (D12)

This semester I tried to do it differently. *Every weekend I resumed the lessons* so I would not be back when the exam arrives. (D16)

Other diarists write about *doing homework regularly*, as it helps with the acquisition of new vocabulary and the development of basic research skills such as working with dictionaries. It is significant to point out that Diarist 11 mentions the urgency of perfect timing for such additional practice, namely as soon as possible, on the day of the class.

... the homeworks helped me a lot because *I researched and looked for new words or new expressions during the homework*. (D8)

*I translate almost three times a week* a different types of text alone or with my group. (D10)

...the work from home, which is the second important step. *The secret is to do the extra practice right after the course*, when the information is fresh. (D11)

Still other diarists report on *memorising practices* such as learning lists of words in order to reinforce and expand the vocabulary discussed in class. Diarist 5 writes about creating a list of formal and informal synonyms and memorising it, while Diarist 18 mentions watching videos on YouTube with the new vocabulary from school and learning it by heart.

*I've created my own list of words* that are formal with their informal equivalence and I've learned it. (D5)

I learned a lot of new words [...] I started to repeat all these words and also I watched a video on YouTube with these words. (D18)

Concerning the third main type of strategy, some diarists write about investing in books to show their *commitment to learning*, reading books, online articles as well as formal texts in order to build parallel corpora and identify formal structures in English, which would then help with register transformation exercises.

I have never read a book in English so *I might buy one soon and, once I'm starting it, I'll definitely continue* to do it. (D2)

The first thing I did...was *reading formal texts both in english and romanian* so I could *get used with some grammatical and vocabulary specialized structures*. I usually found these types of texts online. (D3)

Other strategies applied by a limited number of diarists include actively watching videos online in order to improve their vocabulary and pronunciation in English (three diarists), using various apps (three diarists), and working with dictionaries to expand their vocabulary (two diarists).

I tried [...] of course to *watch English serials and films with Romanian subtitle*, because to be honest I didn't use to do this before I started faculty. *I can say this has helped me a lot...*in the collection of as many new words as I could and expressions. (D9)

In this week, for the first time, I had the courage to *watch a movie in English without subtitles; the words I did not know I searched for*. (D18)

I like so much *listening to Jordan Peterson's speeches on Youtube*. (D21)

In terms of applications, two diarists mention apps like Johnny G (Diarist 18) and Reverso Context, the latter of which is identified as the student's "friend" (Diarist 4), while the third (Diarist 20) refers to downloading such an application but without naming it or stating how it was further used.

I help myself with Oxford dictionary but also with *Reverso app... 'my friend' Reverso*. (D4)

I discovered an application 'Johnny G'. (D18)

As for dictionaries, two diarists write about the fact that they were not accustomed to working with such instruments before their admission to university; their investment in such instruments is acknowledged to be part of their serious, formal training as future translators.

Until then [the 1<sup>st</sup> semester], *I was not used to use dictionaries for proper translations* that would suit the best in a text. (D14)

*I bought 2 dictionaries, bought some books and I downloaded an application*. (D20)

In addition to these, three diarists report on still *other – customised – strategies* such as taking online tests and tutorials (Diarist 1) or doing translations via another language (Diarist 9). It should be mentioned here that Diarist 9 had lived for many years in Greece and, as she herself mentions, "Greek words came a lot easier."

Finally and most significantly, for the purpose of our research, the serendipitous finding of using diary as a research tool stems from the fact that several diarists reported on the actual activity of *diary writing*, emphasising its advantages not only for focusing better but also for keeping track of their work and progress.

The writing of this journal/diary helped me a lot. *I focused more* on what I have to do. (D18)

I liked this idea to write our own “diary” because in this way *you can see how your work is progressing* and where have you been at the beginning and where are you now. (D19)

#### **4.2. Strategies for group practice**

A number of strategies that were mentioned in the diaries referred to working in groups mostly in order to develop the students' linguistic skills. This practice is an extremely valuable learning experience especially in the Romanian educational context, where learning with others is not a popular practice, if not prompted by teachers.

In discussing deliberate efforts to enhance their linguistic performance, two of the participants mentioned the issue of *self-selected learning environments*, using English in speaking with friends, whose first language is either Romanian, or a different one (“...I started to initiate short conversations in English with my friends.” (D1)). Another strategy mentioned by several diarists could be labelled as *study sessions* with colleagues, to focus together on completing translation tasks.

I spent some “romantic evenings” in Tucano café with a friend, working on the process of transforming texts from one language register to another. (D1)

...we decided to practice in advance and to look after the best way of translating, such as sharing the tasks for each member, according to our abilities. (D11)

Very many diarists commented on the *usefulness of certain group activities* during classwork. Such was a self-correction activity, assigned by the teacher at the beginning of the second semester, when students had to identify and explain mistakes from their own first semester exam papers.

We discussed some of the issues we've had and the mistranslations we've made in the exam...There were lots of things that I didn't even notice were incorrect. (D2)

We analysed the mistakes from last exam. It was helpful but also very funny! The translations of some of our classmates caused laughs. (D4)

One diarist also mentioned that s/he appreciated the working method, as the teacher created many learning opportunities for group work and peer evaluation.

My favourite part this semester is that we had the possibility to work in groups with some colleagues to solve the translations. (D19)

Additionally, diarists identified some *creative solutions* for improving their translation competence, and especially their language proficiency. There was a great number of strategies that were mentioned, from seeking external help (tutors and online classes) to asking family members to quiz the learner, or doing translation work as additional language practice, or translations via another language.

The first time [I sat the exam] I used an English-Romanian dictionary but the second time I used a pretty good dictionary with detailed explanations plus an English-Greek dictionary, because knowing Greek words came a lot easier. (D9)

As I am married, I asked my husband to help me, by asking me words from informal to formal, out of order... (D4)

I started a blog. I already had one in Romanian [martiealb], so I decide to translate everything I had into English, and also to continue writing in English (D14)

One diarist also talks favourably about taking advantage of a *real life opportunity*, when her little sister had spilt water on the computer and she resorted to instructions in English in order to disassemble the keyboard (Diarist 20). Moreover, another diarist mentions a learning strategy emphasizing that, when learners were made aware of their most vulnerable competence areas, they displayed greater autonomy in regulating the situation.

I have begun to highlight them [previous mistakes] and I've been thinking about writing all errors in a notebook as I could avoid to repeat them again. (D11)

### **4.3. Questionnaire analysis**

Moving on to the perspective of the third year student, the questionnaire mainly invited respondents to reflect on their academic evolution since the first year, the strategies and tools they discovered and developed in order to achieve greater translation competence, and to recall which of these they retained. Interestingly, when asked to evaluate and comment on their translation work in relation to their first-year experience, the majority of respondents (18 out of 25) assessed the quality of their work as four (out of a maximum five), but their brief, rather evasive comments were limited to basic declarative knowledge, only occasionally mentioning specific strategies or tools.

I learned so many things about how to translate different texts and how to apply translation Methods. (R8)

I've learned a lot of new things, how to use dictionaries and a lot of other things. (R25)

Consistent with the first part of our research, most respondents record a certain improvement – although not always to their full satisfaction – at the level of language:

*For me the vocabulary is the most important* because the theory that I have learned I always forget it. (R14)

I think I evolved quite a lot, but *it was possible even more*. (R16)

The quality of my translation has improved since the 1st year on a vocabulary and grammatical level. (R22)

Secondly, many students mention working with various text types and domains, and with specific terminology, writing:

Definitely, I became a better translator through the past years, because I did many translations from different types of domains. That makes me understand more about how translation works and the different approach every type of text needs. (R2)

In comparison to the first year, I encountered more and more types of texts from different areas, learned more and more terminology which helped me understand notions of translation. (R12)

Only two respondents (R7 and R25) refer to tools in the form of dictionaries, but only one respondent gives specific examples:

My translation skills have improved because at university I was advised to use really good dictionaries, like Oxford Collocation, Word Reference, Hallo, or Thesaurus, which made it easier to find equivalents and therefore to do a better translation. (R7)

Quite a few students refer to improving their work, learning techniques and “tricks” with the help or advice they received from teachers via the classes taught:

*Thanks to such objects as* LEC [Contemporary English Language] and The Methodology of Translation, *I've learned a lot of techniques and tricks* on how to better translate a text depending on its function and type, techniques I did not know before. (R11)

I do see an improvement on the quality of my translation given by the hours of work I've done *with the help of the teachers*. (R24)

When asked to comment on the changes in terms of learning strategies and tools used since the first year, almost half of the students refer to a certain level of language improvement, with one respondent (R18) commenting on this development as being prompted by an Erasmus+ scholarship experience. Only a few respondents mention reading more (R3, R17), doing all the assignments set by the teachers (R7), using specific online dictionaries (R13), or creating a work routine (R20):

I worked almost every day translating texts, learning new words and their meaning, and I consider that *this repetitive exercise* helped me in a measure to improve my vocabulary. (R20)

When prompted to comment on whether they retained any learning strategies or tools developed in the first year, only 72% of the respondents answered affirmatively and briefly mentioned small routines such as reading and researching (including in corpora), doing what teachers require, rewriting the context, or using reliable dictionaries:

Yes, *I have always double searched* for a word to make sure that it fits; also I have always try to find context on the internet, phrases and sentences that may contain a specific item. (R3)

*I still read out loud* the theoretical parts in order to understand the meaning better. (R5)

Most of the time, when I want to learn something even in English, *I rewrite the context briefly* and use highlights to evidence what is important. (R8)

For example, *I keep using a dictionary* that I discovered in an English class. (R25)

A serendipitous (albeit rather pessimistic) finding was that several students responded they did not remember using any specific strategy or tool, as if the experience had been completely erased from their memory:

I don't recall learning English through a specific strategy. (R2)

I don't really remember. (R4)

No because I don't remember any strategies. (R10)

In the following section of the questionnaire we invited participants to focus more on the TCA learning strategies and tools than on English language learning in general, and overall the majority (72%) reported an improvement in learning strategy in comparison with their first year performance. To justify this claim, some of the students mentioned that they had limited use of tools, with no variation and relied heavily on tools such as "Google translate" and "Reverso context" (R1), while in their third year they were more selective when it came to the dictionaries used, looking for "trustworthy" resources (R3, R6,

R8, R12, R13, R14, R20, R23) and employing additional ones, such as parallel texts (R8) or Trados (R14). A few students referred to the realisation that translation work implied several clear stages moving from text type identification and close reading to translation and final editing (R2, R13). However, there were a few respondents who claimed there was not much improvement (R17 – “I can't see any changes to be honest”).

Exploring in greater detail various aspects of TCA, the student participants were asked whether they used any particular strategy to organise their work as translators and, while there were five negative answers, many discussed the taught steps in translation work - such as close reading, identification of unknown words, rough translation and revision of translation (R2, R3, R4, R5). There were also some responses that showed a higher level of expertise, such as several editing stages, loud reading of the translation, or improving text layout in order to see the source text and the target text simultaneously.

I usually translate a rough draft, then I go in and keep changing the translation *until I'm satisfied*. (R4)

I read the text several times, then I find the proper terms for my translation. After it is ready, I *read it out loud* and I start correcting it. (R5)

I've recently started *to make a table with two columns*. On one column I add the source language text, on the other I add the target language text. This makes it easier to translate and to review the translation. (R7)

I always keep *both texts open*, so I can go back and forth in rereading them, I search for all the words that were difficult (which I previously underlined), I use different dictionaries and compare the results. (R22)

Asked to discuss any strategies employed concerning learning from past mistakes, half of the respondents seem not to have employed any such strategy, while the others mentioned revising notes or the teacher's feedback. A few respondents appear to have developed greater learning autonomy and discussed the salient practice of an error inventory, analysis and periodical revision, although sometimes the students do not see these actions as a “strategy” to deal with errors.

I *write down* everything I did wrong and for example I *reread* if I come across a wrongly translated term. (R16)

I *don't think so*. I *mark the parts* in which I made mistakes and *reread them and try to understand* why I made a mistake, if I do, I'll remember it. (R22)

I *write down* what kind of mistakes I've made and I try to *explain to myself* why it was a mistake while understanding the right choice and *compare* the two. (R23)

Further on, the respondents were asked to discuss whether or not they reflected on their translation work, and the majority of them (64%) answered positively, while the remaining 36% opted for “maybe”. As justification for this answer a number of very good habits emerged, such as revisiting older translations in order to improve them, or even reading the translation by putting themselves in the intended reader’s shoes (R2).

In the last part of the questionnaire we focused on an overall view of lessons learnt by the respondents concerning their translator training; the responses indicated two opposing categories: a good number of students mention practices which highlight their development towards becoming more competent translators, but there were also some practices which are evidence of no improvement.

Discussing habits formed over the course of the three-year BA programme, R12 mentioned adding synonyms next to difficult words in order to make selection easier, R17 commented on double-/ triple-checking words in the dictionary, R22 compared ST and TT, R17 translated into more languages, and R23 claimed to make glossaries/ word lists. Unfortunately, R7 reported that his/her “habits are the following: reading the text, *pasting the text in Google Translate* (if it's compatible to it), edit it, and then reviewing it.”

At a more general level, when discussing lessons learnt many of the respondents mentioned that they followed the proper steps in translation work, that they did more research, that they paid greater attention to details (R13, R8 “false friends, culturemes”, R15 “idioms and phrases”) and that they spent more time proofreading.

Finally, the students were again asked whether they had made use of a diary in their work as translators and with only one exception, they all denied it. The one affirmative answer (R16) was from someone who commented that “I write everything down in a notebook (observations, remarks),” which is evidence of record keeping practice, but this does not exactly constitute a diary.

## 5. Final Remarks

Although attractive and with potential benefits, the use of diaries did not become a desirable habit for our research participants. Reflection as a strategy and diaries as a learning tool may be seen as examples of good practice but they are not consistently put to use. Moreover, some students do not even remember ever using them as learning tools, probably on account of a singular use and not part of a frequent teaching/learning practice.

Overall, the respondents’ comments point to rather basic levels of both declarative and procedural knowledge, while also being more descriptive than analytical, which shows that they still lack the metalanguage to review and

discuss TCA strategies. Only half of participants seem to have internalised some working strategies such as not skipping steps in performing translation tasks, being aware of translation procedures and specific difficulties. Participants in our research still seem to regard translation as a linguistic sub-competence, or – to paraphrase Gaballo (2009) – they see translation as a fifth skill, complementing reading, writing, speaking and listening. Furthermore, although specifically designed to stimulate the respondents' reflection, the findings of the questionnaire revealed a limited usage of customised tools and strategies preserved from the first year and a greater acknowledgement of those often targeted by teaching activities throughout the BA programme. One possible reason for this is the interference of the pandemic, which kept students away from a formal learning environment and brought on difficulties that many of them could not control or cope with.

Most importantly, we believe there is a need for new research to be conducted in order to further explore the outcomes of learning diary keeping as a consistent and even standardised practice employed by several teachers. We posit that deliberate reflection as part of teaching/ learning activities will increase learner autonomy, and will consequently lead to a larger variety of learning idiosyncrasies, and implicitly the best learning outcomes.

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