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**Curricula-wise similitudes and discrepancies
between translation competences (TC) across the European Union and in Romania.
A case study on the cultural and linguistic sub-competences.**

Abstract

This study explores the range of similitudes and discrepancies between the level of translation competence (TC) formulated in the ATC-based curricula of specialised EU Translation Studies MA programmes and the range of translation competences (TC) targeted by specialised Romanian Translation Studies MA programmes' ATC-based curricula – primary emphasis to be laid upon the cultural and linguistic sub-competences. This case study is grounded in one primary data mining methodological tool, i.e. a questionnaire disseminated among students enrolled in the Theory and Practice of Translation MA programme (Faculty of Letters, History, and Theology, West University of Timișoara).

It builds on previous research concerning the evolution of translation competence (TC) and the design of ATC-based curricula, attempting to identify the level of translation competence (TC) required at a European level (considering the European Master's In Translation Competence Framework 2017 and PETRA-E Competence Framework, both issued by EU bodies) as compared to the one attained by students enrolled in Romanian MA Translation Studies programmes (Timișoara, Romania).

Keywords: *acquisition of translation competence (ATC), ATC-based curriculum, cultural sub-competence, EMT Competence Framework, linguistic sub-competence, PETRA-E Competence Framework, Romanian Translation Studies MA Programmes,*

1. Introduction

In the translation industry, technological change has had an ever-increasing impact on how translation services are offered. However, human intelligence, knowledge, and skills are still key factors in delivering high-quality translations. Translation competences (TC) that can only be displayed by professional translators and neither by machine translation applications are still extremely important nowadays and have a major impact on the production of an accurate piece of

translation. Translation competence (TC) is a superordinate concept or macro-competence/super-competence that integrates a wide range of sub-competences within its spectrum.

The following sub-competences, both listed in the EMT Competence Framework and PETRA-E Competence Framework, could be defined as belonging to the academic training of a professional translator – the *cultural competence* (being able to identify and deal with lexis-based difficulties and differences between the source culture and the target culture, troubleshoot cultural gaps and find the best strategies and procedures in order to render them in the target language in a way that must be easily accessible to the target readership), *personal and interpersonal competence* known as “soft skills” (the ability to perform the job of a professional translator in a multitude of working formats, to comply with deadlines and to effectively adapt to the working schedule) and *evaluative competence* (being able to justify the core strategy of translation methods and procedures applied in order to render the text in the target language and to assess one’s own translations by contrasting them to other people’s solutions).

Considering the fact that these competences are key factors in producing an effective and accurate piece of translation, it is essential to see to what extent specialized Translation Studies MA programmes (taught at the West University of Timișoara), such as the *Theory and Practice of Translation MA Programme*, focus on getting their students equipped with these sub-competences both theoretically and practically-wise. The present article will limit its scope to discussing the **cultural** and **linguistic** sub-competences.

2. Competence vs. skill in Translation Studies

According to the EMT group, the concept of competence could be defined as the “proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/ or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development” (EMT FRAMEWORK 2017:3), while Lasnier (2000) describes it as “a complex know-how to act resulting from integration, mobilization and organization of a combination of capabilities and skills [...] and knowledge [...] used efficiently in situations with common characteristics” (LASNIER 2000, cited in REZA ESFANDIARI ET AL. 2015:45), with Gonzalez and Wagenaar (2003) defining it as “a combination of set skills, knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes and [...] disposition to learn as well as know-how” (GONZALEZ, WAGENAAR 2003:10, cited in REZA ESFANDIARI ET AL. 2015:45). Edwards and Csizer (2004) point out the fact that competences are “a type of knowledge that learners possess, develop, acquire, use

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or lose" (EDWARDS, CSIZER 2004, cited in KAMINSKIENE, KAVALIAUSKIENE 2012:139), while Kasper (1997) states that competence "cannot be taught, but students should be provided with opportunities to develop their pragmatic competence" (KASPER 1997, cited in KAMINSKIENE, KAVALIAUSKIENE 2012:139). Furthermore, by drawing parallels to other concepts denoting the same reality, *competence* has also been used by some scholars "as a (near) synonym to expertise" (SCHWIETER, FERREIRA 2014:6), which has been defined as "the bulk of cognitive resources and skills leading to [...] superior performance" (SCHWIETER, FERREIRA 2014:3). This analogy has been pointed out by authors like Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey, Gopferich (2013) and PACTE (2003) (SCHWIETER, FERREIRA 2014:6).

On a more particular note, several authors have attempted to define the concept of translation competence (TC) over the years, most notably the members of the PACTE research group (2000, 2003) – "the underlying system of knowledge and skills needed to be able to translate" (PACTE 2000:100, cited in REZA ESFANDIARI ET AL. 2015:45), Kelly (2005) – "the macro-competence that comprises the different capacities, skills, knowledge and even attitudes that professional translators possess and which are involved in translation as an expert activity" (KELLY 2005:14-15, cited in REZA ESFANDIARI ET AL. 2015:46) and Schaffner (2000) – "a complex notion which involves an awareness of and conscious reflection on all the relevant factors for the production of a target text (TT) that appropriately fulfils its specified function for its target addressees" (SCHAFFNER 2000:146, cited in ZOU 2015:788).

Broadly speaking, it must be noted that almost all the existent definitions of competence feature the term *skill* within their content – it can, hence, be inferred that, at least in a translational context, a skill is an integrated part of the competence, or, to put it another way, a subordinate concept to the superordinate concept *competence*.

3. Translation competence (TC) – macro-competence vs. sub-competence

Generally speaking, *translation competence (TC)* may be analysed on a dual level – on a *macro-level*, as a superordinate concept, *macro-competence* (KELLY 2005:14, cited in REZA ESFANDIARI ET AL. 2015:46) or *super-competence*, comprising many other sub-competences within its spectrum - since the beginning of the 1990s, translation competence (TC) has been described as "a multi-componential competence which comprises of sets of technological, cultural or linguistic skills"

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(REZA ESFANDIARI ET AL. 2015:45) - and, on a *micro-level*, as a subordinate concept, overlapping with the concept of sub-competence, component or skill.

Two translation sub-competences of paramount importance – the cultural and linguistic sub-competences

Starting with the 1970s, many translation scholars have investigated the components that lie behind the concept of translation competence (TC) – for instance, the decade of the 1970s features some scholars pointing out three major competences that they consider mandatory in the professional translator's training schemata: *source language receptive competence*, *target language reproductive competence* and *super-competence* (HURTADO ALBIR 2017:19). While the SL receptive competence refers to the ability of decoding and understanding source texts, the TL reproductive competence refers to the ability of using linguistic and textual resources in the target language. The *super-competence* could, however, be considered the result of combining these two competences and the ability to transfer messages between the source and target culture linguistic and text systems (HURTADO ALBIR 2017:19).

The 1980s and the 1990s bring along new reflections on the sub-competences that make up the superordinate notion of translation competence – e.g. according to Wilss (1982:58, cited in REZA ESFANDIARI ET AL. 2015:45), translation competence requires “an interlingual supercompetence”, while Bell claims that translation competence “includes the set of knowledge and skills possessed by the translator so as to perform a translation” (BELL 1991:43, cited in REZA ESFANDIARI ET AL. 2015:45). Delisle, on the other hand, suggests four competences required in order to translate – *linguistic competence*, *encyclopaedic competence*, *comprehension competence* and *reformulation competence* (DELISLE 1980:235, cited in HURTADO ALBIR 2017:19). Roberts (1984) expands this number to five, listing the following competences as mandatory when translating – *linguistic competence*, *transfer competence*, *methodological competence*, *thematic competence* and *technical competence* (HURTADO ALBIR 2017:19). Nord (1988/1991, 1992) emphasizes three primary components in translation competence – *transfer competence*, *linguistic competence* and *cultural competence* – mastering these feats on a bilingual level, i.e. source and target language (NORD 1992:47, cited in HURTADO ALBIR 2017:19). On his turn, Neubert also mentions linguistic and transfer competences, adding the *subject competence* to the last two (NEUBERT 1994:412, cited in HURTADO ALBIR 2017:20). Hurtado Albir highlights five key-competences in her studies –

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linguistic competence, extralinguistic competence, transfer competence, professional competence and strategic competence (HURTADO ALBIR 1996, cited in HURTADO ALBIR 2017:20). Risku (1998) suggests four sub-competences that are required in the translation process – “setting a macro-strategy, integrating information, planning and decision-making and self-organisation” (HURTADO ALBIR 2017:21).

It can, hence, be concluded that almost all translation scholars have agreed upon two primary sub-competences or components required when translating – *linguistic competence*, understood as the ability to comprehend the SL and to produce an equivalent of the original message in a TL (HURTADO ALBIR 2017:20) and *transfer competence*, defined as the overall understanding of the original text and its reformulation in the target language based on the “purpose of the translation and characteristics of the target reader” (HURTADO ALBIR 2017:20).

4. Research methodology

Sampling method

The research detailed on in this article is a case study based on the design, administration, and analysis of one questionnaire distributed among second-year students enrolled in the *Theory and Practice of Translation MA Programme* (Faculty of Letters, History, and Theology, West University of Timișoara) during the 2018/2019 academic year, seeking to get an overview of the level of acquired translation competence (ATC) during the two-year span of the master’s programme – it must be reiterated that the questions based on the two translation sub-competences under scrutiny, i.e. the cultural and linguistic ones, are exclusively based on *written translation* and not *interpreting*, primarily due to the fact that the latter might involve additional skill-specific tasks that do not fall within the scope of this study.

It must be noted that a similar study was carried out three years ago (2016/2017) by two professors delivering lectures at the same master’s programme and attempted to explore the applicability of PETRA-E Framework (PUNGĂ, PERCEC 2017:146) based on a wide range of translation tasks targeting several sub-competences, most notably the cultural, heuristic, linguistic, textual, and transfer sub-competences. Although their study focused largely on PETRA-E Framework (my research also considered the EMT Framework) and resorted to a text as the primary data mining tool (the tasks included in my questionnaire were generalised), *The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry, on which first-year MA students were invited to work, results of their research concerning the

cultural and linguistic sub-competences will be briefly mentioned when analysing the ones based on this questionnaire.

Method-based frameworks

As the purpose of this study is investigating whether or not Romanian *Translation Studies* MA Programmes' ATC-based curricula such as the *Theory and Practice of Translation Programme* comply with the EU standardised levels of translation competence (TC), I will primarily look at two recently-launched translation competence framework projects designed by European Union bodies – *The European Master's in Translation Competence Framework* (2017), commonly referred to as the *EMT Framework*, and *PETRA-E Competence Framework*. The main reason for resorting to these two frameworks is the exhaustive skill-specific items that surround the *cultural* and *linguistic* sub-competences.

The *European Master's in Translation Competence Framework* (2017) is undoubtedly one of the most ambitious and comprehensive outlines of its kind in the field of *Translation Studies*, targeting and analysing the range of translation competences (TC) that a professional translator to be should possess upon completing his/her MA programme. It is extremely useful for MA programmes focusing on *competence-based training* (CBT) as it provides competences related to five main fields – the core, *translation*, as well as four related fields – language and culture, technology, personal and interpersonal skills, and service provision.

As discussed before, *translation competence (TC)* must be observed at a dual level: at a micro-level, as a *task-specific competence* or sub-competence and at a macro-level, as a *macro-competence* or *super-competence*, comprising all the task-specific competences or sub-competences, skills and knowledge required when rendering the message from the source language into the target language. The EMT Framework follows this principle and lists competences that are further subdivided into sub-competences.

The first field emerging from the translational process and developed within the EMT Framework is represented by *language and culture*, described as “all the general or language-specific linguistic, sociolinguistic, cultural and transcultural knowledge and skills that constitute the basis for advanced translation competence” and it could be considered “the driving force behind all the other competences described in this reference framework” (EMT FRAMEWORK 2017:6).

Language generates the linguistic or bilingual sub-competence, while *culture* embodies the field in which the extra-linguistic or cultural sub-competence are grounded – these two areas, mandatory when constituting the translation macro-competence spectrum, have been adjoined within a single section in the EMT Framework, which could, naturally, be interpreted as an emphatic way of highlighting the key-connection between the two fields when employed in the translation process. However, the EMT Framework stresses the paramount importance of the linguistic sub-competence when stating that an applicant should possess a certificate testifying his/her level in the working foreign languages and it must unveil a “CEFR level C1 and above or an equivalent level in comparable reference systems”, hence constituting a “prerequisite for access to any EMT Master’s degree course in translation” (EMT FRAMEWORK 2017:6).

The second framework considered when designing the two questionnaires that constitute the core of this study is the *PETRA-E Competence Framework*, available in nine languages – Dutch, English, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Bulgarian. Similarly to the *European Master’s in Translation Competence Framework*, it has been created by the *European Commission*, thus unveiling all the translation competences (TC) and the derived task-specific skills that a successful professional translator must possess. It is to be mentioned, however, that the *PETRA-E Competence Framework* is the specialised counterpart of the *EMT* framework in the sense that it refers to task-specific skills connected to literary translation and much less to the translation of pragmatic texts. The main reason for resorting to this framework, although literary-texts-oriented, is the fact that its listed translation competences (TC) may be applied to all domains of activity and have been included in most of the TC models. In order to make it suitable for all text types, I preserved most of the range of translation competences and I only adapted its task-specific skills schemata so as to fit both literary and specialised/pragmatic text types.

The *PETRA-E Competence Framework* brings along a more minutely organised level-wise layout, highlighting several levels ranging from beginner (LT1), advanced learner (LT2), early career professional (LT3), advanced professional (LT4) to the top-qualified expert (LT5). Each of these levels displays several descriptors or skill-specific tasks characteristic of each translation competence (TC) listed within the framework. Considering the fact that the questionnaire used as the research instrument in this case-study is aimed at second-year MA students, on the point of graduating and looking for jobs, the most realistic option would be targeting the *early career professional (LT3)* level criteria. The set of translation competences (TC) is extremely comprehensive, encompassing almost all the sub-competences suggested by scholars when

attempting a definition of the superordinate concept of translation macro-competence or super-competence, i.e. transfer competence, language competence, textual competence, heuristic competence, literary-cultural competence, professional competence, evaluative competence and research competence.

The second translation competence displayed in the framework is the *language competence*, defined as the “grammatical, stylistic and pragmatic mastering of the source language and the target language especially in the domains of reading and writing” (PETRA-E FRAMEWORK). Its task-specific skills or descriptors particular of the *early career professional (LT3)* level involve the adoption of an appropriate style and language variety – features of the bilingual or linguistic sub-competence.

The fifth translation competence (TC) listed in this framework is the *literary-cultural competence* or, broadly speaking, the *cultural competence*, defined as the “ability to apply knowledge about the source and target [...] culture while making a [...] translation; [...] the ability to handle cultural differences” (PETRA-E FRAMEWORK). Its task-specific skills or descriptors characteristic of the early career professional (LT3) level involve situating the translation in the target culture, effectively dealing with culture-specific elements, differences between source and target culture, and intertextual references.

Due to its nature, this case study is mainly of a *qualitative nature*, i.e. a data-driven investigation presupposing a worm’s eye view approach, seeking to explore, name, and define the strengths and shortcomings of specialized *Translation Studies* MA programmes’ curricula, particularly those connected to the cultural and linguistic sub-competences. Nevertheless, *quantitative data* analyses - theory-driven and presupposing a bird’s eye view - will also be employed when dealing with certain sections of the questionnaire, such as testing the students’ ability to deal with different translation tasks meant to test the use of specific translation competences.

The questionnaire comprises three main components – the *personal component*, i.e. personal details of the participants related to their academic background (Section I); the *testing component*, i.e. purposefully designed questions meant to observe the efficiency of the MA programme’s theory-based and practice-based curricula by considering the participants’ answers (Section II); the *evaluative component*, i.e. the participants’ wide-ranging review of the classes provided during the *Theory and Practice of Translation MA Programme* (Section III). The emphasis will be laid primarily upon the cultural and linguistic sub-competences belonging to the testing component.

Section II, the body of the questionnaire and the main area of data mining, focuses on the range of translation competences (TC) and fields mentioned in the *European Master's in Translation Competence Framework* (EMT) and *PETRA-E Competence Framework*. It contains questions based on task-specific translation sub-competences and skills required at the level of *early career professional (LT3)* – as referenced in PETRA-E Framework.

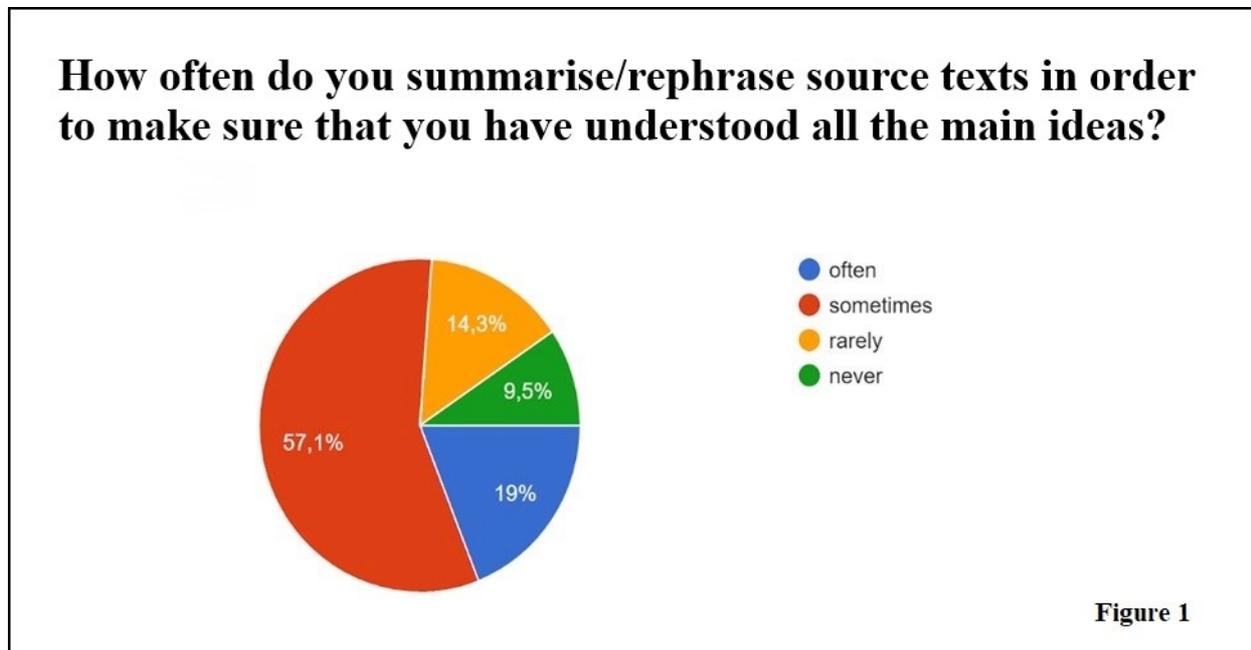
Of the range of translation sub-competences, two of the most extensive in terms of question variety are to be analysed in what follows, i.e. the cultural and linguistic/language sub-competences. They comprise issues arising from the differences between the source language culture and the target language culture. Among these questions, there can be mentioned – *How often do you summarise/rephrase source texts in order to make sure that you have understood all the main ideas?; Choose the way in which you deal with the language variety (e.g. a translation task involving a literary source text, written in the 19th century or earlier), in order to render the source text in the target language; Choose the way in which you deal with the language variety (e.g. a source text featuring dialectal lexis - e.g. Scottish, Welsh, Irish, etc.) in order to render the source text in the target language; Did you have to deal with texts involving cultural differences between the source language and target language when translating?*

5. Data collection and analysis

As the bilingual/linguistic and the cultural sub-competences are the two components that primarily fall within the scope of this study, the analysis will particularly be targeted towards them and less towards their remaining counterparts. By analysing the data collected, a correlation between the tasks given during the practical classes of the MA programme and the students' level of confidence and self-assessment when dealing with certain text types and translation directions was explored.

Task-specific questions comprise issues arising from the differences between the source language culture and the target language culture and are inspired by the descriptors emerging from the LT3 level of competence within PETRA-E Framework and by the “transcultural and sociolinguistic awareness and communicative skills” pointed out in the EMT Framework 2017. It must be noted, however, that all translation sub-competences are interconnected and cannot function properly without resorting to other counterparts. For instance, the first question to be analysed in the

following simultaneously targets the linguistic and textual sub-competences, as pre-translational stages, while preparing the ground for the transfer counterpart.



There were 21 participants who answered the close-ended question *How often do you summarise/rephrase source texts in order to make sure that you have understood all the main ideas?*, representing 100% of the total number of respondents. 12 of them (57,1%) opted for “sometimes”, 4 (19%) said “often”, 3 (14,3%) answered “rarely” and 2 (9,5%) opted for “never”. Constituting major pre-translational phases, rephrasing and summarizing source texts are undoubtedly two-key actions when it comes to textual comprehension and must be paired with the translation textual sub-competence for a proper performance of the translator. They enhance a systematic analysis of the source text and prepare the ground for the next translation sub-competence to be activated – the transfer competence. While rephrasing and summarizing, students can easily detect vocabulary-connected issues that might impede the proper functioning of the transfer competence later on. The percentages mentioned above display generally positive levels regarding the students’ pre-translational awareness as a substantial majority of them have pointed out that they use these techniques “often” or “sometimes” – i.e. some of them *summarize* and *rephrase* prior to proceeding to render the message in the target language text.

Choose the way in which you deal with the language variety (e.g. a translation task involving a literary source text written in the 19th century or earlier), in order to render the source text in the target language. Tick only one option.

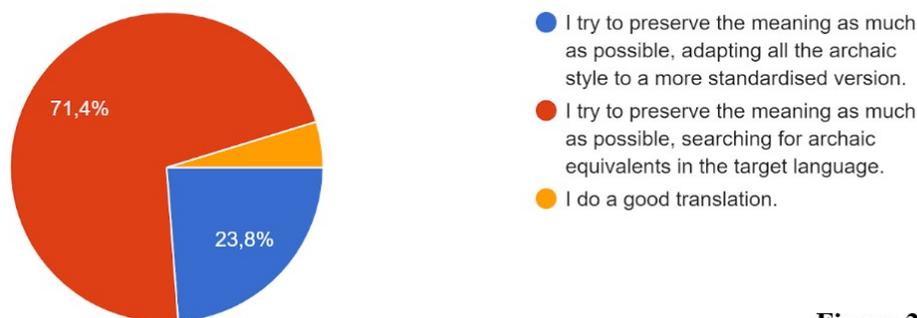
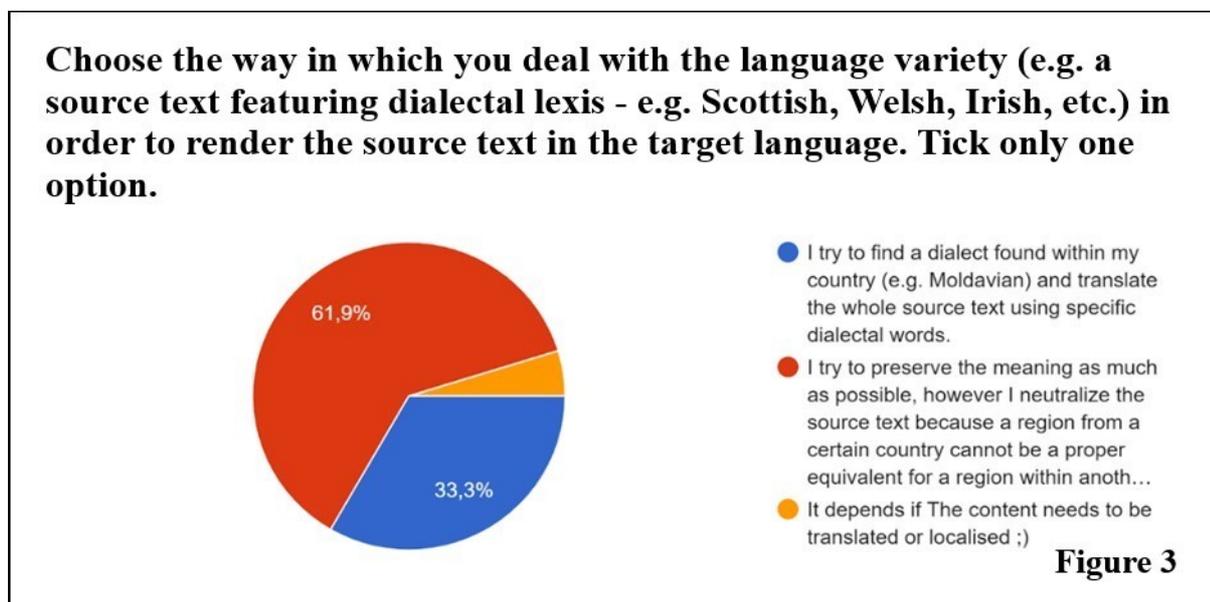


Figure 2

Transitioning to the cultural sub-competence and testing-component of this sub-section, all participants (21) answered the semi-closed question *Choose the way in which you deal with the language variety (e.g. a translation task involving a literary source text written in the 19th century or earlier), in order to render the source text in the target language. Tick only one option.* 15 (71,4%) of the respondents opted for “I try to preserve the meaning as much as possible, searching for archaic equivalents in the target language”, 5 (23,8%) for “I try to preserve the meaning as much as possible, adapting all the archaic style to a more standardised version”, while 1 participant (4,8%) answered “I do a good translation”. According to Meshalkina (2008:206, cited in ANDRIENKO 2016), there are three types of archaic texts – “archaic texts that were created in the contemporary language but aged over time; their translation is termed as diachronic”; “modern archaized texts which have been deliberately stylized to depict situations remote in time (artistic past), where synchronic translation is required”, and “archaized archaic texts that were created with the illusion of the past artistic time but are also remote in real time; the translation of such texts is described as diachronic translation of archaized texts”. The question whose answer-distribution is represented in *Figure 2* could be categorized as being related to the first type of archaic text - “created in the contemporary language but aged over time”. Lexis, one of the key cultural components, is exploited in this particular context, i.e. in the case of a literary-text translation, the students having been asked to choose the linguistic and culture-wise solution they considered the best. The two options they were offered to make a choice from were either to preserve the archaic source vocabulary – *archaisation / archaising* or to adapt it to a more contemporary version in the target text – *modernisation / modernising*. An overwhelming majority

went for the option of preserving the literary archaic lexis in the target text, choosing to pay attention to the source style instead of adapting it to a contemporary version, which may be interpreted in two ways, as follows: a) possibly dealing with many classes of literary translation during the MA programme, students could have been advised by teachers to pay particular attention to *style*, and to do their best to stick to it in case they are set a translation task involving style problems; or b) they intuitively declared themselves in favour of preserving the archaic style, a less plausible scenario, however, as the percentages representing the answers would not have been so uneven - percentages showed an overwhelming majority opting for preserving *archaisation* in the production of the target text, this indicating a strong probability of skill-achievement heavily relying on the teachers' theoretical guidance and hence, through correlations with previous cognitive experiences rather than by means of intuitive assumptions.



Going on with the cultural sub-competence skill-related tasks, there were 21 participants answering the semi-closed question *Choose the way in which you deal with the language variety (e.g. a source text featuring dialectal lexis - e.g. Scottish, Welsh, Irish, etc.) in order to render the source text in the target language. Tick only one option*, representing 100% of the total number of respondents. Out of 21 participants (100%), 13 opted for the “I try to preserve the meaning as much as possible, however I neutralize the source text because a region from a certain country cannot be a proper equivalent for a region within another country” answer (representing 61,9%), 7 for the “I try to find a dialect within my country (e.g. Moldavian) and translate the whole source text using specific dialectal words” answer (representing 33,3%), while 1 participant originally responded “It depends if the context needs to be translated or localised” (representing 4,8%). By

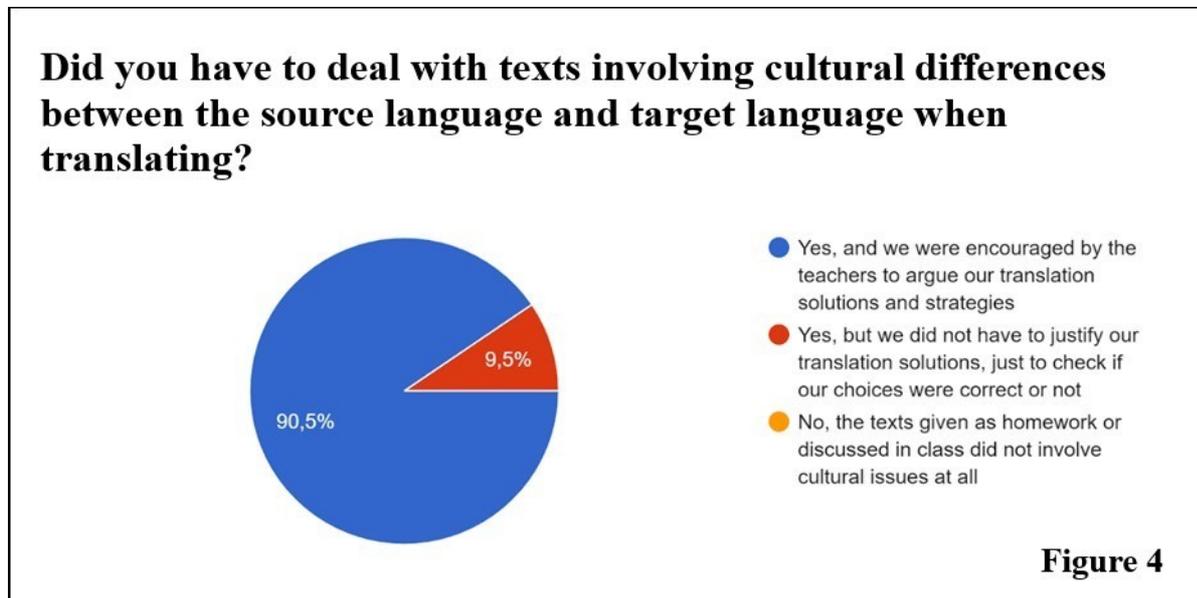
far one of the most complex and challenging tasks for a professional translator is to faithfully render the message of a source text written in a specific dialect that pertains to a certain country's region in the target language while preserving the dialect-specific style. As with the previous question depicted in *Figure 2*, whose primary two style-troubleshooting solutions were either preserving the archaic style or modernising it, this question – depicted in *Figure 3*, unveils two major possibilities – either searching for an adequate dialectal counterpart within the country of origin of the target language or neutralising the dialectal lexis – the preferred solution targeted by many scholars including Peter Newmark (1988) - with standardised counterparts, faithfully rendering the message in the target language, yet missing on the stylistic component.

Notwithstanding, both options bring along pros and cons – the first scenario, although preferable in terms of stylistic features, raises the question of the best dialectal target version equivalent – theoretically speaking, one cannot be 100% sure of the complete overlap of two different-country regions such as, for instance, of the Welsh dialect pertaining to the UK and the Moldavian dialect pertaining to Romania – “there is no need to replace a coalminer's dialect in Zola with, say, a Welsh coalminer's dialect, and this would only be appropriate, if you yourself were completely at home in Welsh dialect” (NEWMARK 1988:195). While both illustrate dialect-specific features, they could not be culturally overlapped and the translator, although gaining on the overall stylistic effect of the target text, would probably lose on what concerns the transmission of the original message. Cultural allusions implicitly or explicitly present in the source text are in danger of being lost in the target text – e.g. idioms, proverbs, puns, etc.

Conversely, the second scenario contrasts with the first one in that it gains in terms of faithfulness of the message rendered by using neutral lexis that would be more easily accessible to the target readership, yet it would compromise on the stylistic component, not rendering the shades of meaning that the author of the source text applied to his/her text. Most second-year MA students have opted for gaining in terms of *communicative* purpose – attempting to “render the [...] meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership” (NEWMARK 1988:47) and therefore losing in the stylistic department, choosing *neutralisation* over *dialectisation*.

As with the previous question depicted in *Figure 2*, this result can be interpreted dually, i.e. as a correlation with previous cognitive experiences of this particular task, when students could have been assisted by teachers who might have encouraged them to perform this methodological action

or as an intuitive approach. However, this latter assumption is less credible than the first one considering that a vast majority of the participants come from Letters-related BA programmes and have dealt at least tangentially with the process of translation in terms of practical activities.



Staying within the area concerning the cultural spectrum, there were 21 participants answering the close-ended question *Did you have to deal with texts involving cultural differences between the source language and target language when translating?*, representing 100% of the total number of respondents. Out of 21 participants (100%), 19 opted for the “yes, and we were encouraged by the teachers to argue our translation solutions and strategies” answer (representing 90,5%), while 2 participants chose the “yes, but we did not have to justify our translation solutions, just to check if our choices were correct or not” answer (representing 9,5%). The unanimous positive answer shows a significant provision of classes in terms of translating documents featuring cultural issues, resulting in the students’ familiarization with the cultural issues and possible ways to troubleshoot them. For instance, an overwhelming majority of 19 students have stated that they had been asked by their teachers to justify their options, indicating an optimal format of the class – on the one hand, by correcting inaccurate answers and, on the other hand, by reactivating the cognitive processes that have led to the students’ translation solutions when troubleshooting cultural issues such as cultural gaps.

6. Conclusion

Matters surrounding the *cultural* and *linguistic* sub-competences - two major pre-requisites when rendering a message from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL) - have been inserted in the questionnaire, both on a theoretical and practical level (e.g. dealing with language variety in terms of dialectal and diachronic issues). Similarly to the pilot study conducted by professors L. Pungă and D. Percec (Faculty of Letters, West University of Timișoara) that indicated that, in terms of linguistic elements, first-year (2016/2017) Translation Studies MA students "had the ability to choose equivalents appropriately" (PUNGĂ, PERCEC 2017:149), the second-year (2018/2019) MA students completing this questionnaire have also managed extraordinarily well in troubleshooting cultural issues in the most accurate way possible according to various scholars' criteria.

Although the number of questions and participants is by no means exhaustive, it could be concluded that the already existent ATC-based curriculum of the *Theory and Practice of Translation MA Programme* (Faculty of Letters, West University of Timișoara, Romania) fulfils to a satisfactory extent the level of translation competence (TC) targeted in the two frameworks issued by EU bodies, at least on a cultural and linguistic level. This study could be significantly expanded to analysing other translation sub-competences, while the sampling method could be redesigned in order to be applicable to several generations of alumni of the Translation Studies MA programme (Faculty of Letters, West University of Timisoara).

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