

A SOCIO-CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH TO THE TRAINING OF LANGUAGE PRACTITIONERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the training of language practitioners at the University of the Free State in the light of recent developments in Translation Studies, namely the tendency of internationalising ideas about translation, as well as the enlarging of Western Translation Theory by integrating non-Western thought about translation. Starting from earlier ideas of translation training, the move towards socio-constructive approach as proposed by Kiraly (2000) is described. It is indicated how the socio-constructive approach can benefit the training of language practitioners by empowering the learner to act responsibly, autonomously and competently. The socio-constructive approach provides not only an epistemological basis for the development of knowledge-building communities, but also a variety of tools that can be used to promote and pursue learning in such communities.

Key words: Socio-constructive approach; translator training; language practitioners

1. INTRODUCTION

The Language Practice Programme at the University of the Free State offers Translation, Document Design and Language Editing, Interpreting, Language Technology, Lexicography and Terminology, and Language Management. The aim of the Programme is to train practitioners to empower minority languages and facilitate communication. The training must be functional and relevant for Africa, with an emphasis on the users. St Jerome introduced this emphasis by using the military image of the original text being marched into the target language like a prisoner by its conqueror. Our point of departure is multilingualism. "Every language is a temple in which the soul of those who speak it is enshrined ... to lose even one piece of this mosaic is a loss for all of us ... With every language that dies, another precious source of data about the nature of the human language faculty is lost – and we must not forget that there are only about 6000 sources in all ..." (Crystal, 2000:59).

Translation Studies was offered at the UFS since 1976 as part of the Department of Semitic Languages, and focused on Bible Translation. It was stimulated by the work on the New Afrikaans Bible translation that was published in 1983.

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Nida and Taber (1969) was the prescribed textbook. The outcome of this enterprise was the Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar aimed at the needs of Bible translators (Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze, 1996, 1999). The Department of Near Eastern Studies (former Semitic Languages) was invited to offer Translation Studies at the Unit of Language Facilitation and Empowerment (ULFE) in 1997, as part of their qualifications in Language Practice. The functionalist approach of Nord (1997) was implemented as the teaching model for Translation Studies. In 2001, the Programme in Language Practice was approved. Since 2003 it was housed in the Department of Afroasiatic Studies, Sign Language and Language Practice. In 2005, the Programme embarked on a socio-constructive mode of teaching, which was followed by the implementation of Community Service Learning in 2006. The Programme in Language Practice is driven by strategic priorities, which includes quality research and teaching, financial sustainability, equity, community involvement, and national and international cooperation.

On 7 March 2006, a translators' day was held together with the South African Translators' Institute (SATI) to commemorate the 50 years of existence of SATI and 30 years of offering Translation Studies at the UFS. The papers read discussed the developments within the various fields of language practice and were published in *South African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, Volume 25, number 2. The papers show the realisation of the language practitioner as agent and mediator. The internationalisation and nationalisation of the Programme were advanced by a peer review in 2006 by international and national scholars, who rated the Programme as acceptable on international standards. In 2007, the department focused on the African context of Language Practice and the linguistics series and reading group of the Programme (social constructivist training in Language Practice) set the agenda.

More and more voices within the translator-training establishment are calling for a major change in translator education pedagogy. There seems to be an increasing perception that the conventional teacher-centred classroom alone cannot equip translators-in-training with the wide range of professional and interpersonal skills, knowledge and competencies they will need to meet the requirements of an ever more demanding language mediation market. A methodology for the training of translators and translation teachers has not been developed properly yet.

Firstly, the appearance of academic courses dedicated specifically to the study of translation – and especially to translator training – is relatively recent throughout the world and secondly, the translation market is changing rapidly following consolidation of the use of the computer, the Internet and globalisation.

Voices calling for innovation suggest that, at the very least, conventional instruction should be supplemented with authentic, practice-oriented work through which students can come to grips with the types of constraints and expectations they can expect to face once they graduate as language mediation experts. What seem to be lacking are attempts to justify such a change on the fundamental level of educational philosophy and the failure of translation educational institutions to define the principles underlying their teaching methodologies. As stated above, the mode of involvement in the Programme in Language Practice at the UFS is a socio-constructive community approach. The aim of this paper is to explicate this approach.

The paper is structured as follows. The next section is an overview of recent theoretical developments in the language practice field and the demands they set for translator training. Such an exposition is necessary as evidence to show that Translation Studies is a highly developed and complicated science which can only be taught by using the best practices available. The teaching practices also follow from these theoretical developments. It is followed by a section on the major successive approaches of the teaching of translator training. It serves as motivation that the socio-constructive community approach is the ultimate approach for translator training. It is followed by an exposition of the socio-constructive community approach. The paper is concluded by some challenges which are still faced in translator training.

2. TRANSLATION STUDIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY AND THE DEMANDS FOR TRANSLATOR TRAINING

The normative approaches to translation (see Fawcett, 1997) dominated translation studies until the beginning of the 1980s. In terms of the normative approaches to translation, equivalence was the prevailing yardstick against which translators were to judge their product. Owing to linguistic and cultural differences between languages, translations inevitably fell short of the equivalence ideal (Heylen, 1993:2). The principal shortcoming of normative translation theories was a lack of sensitivity to the socio-cultural conditions under which translations were produced in order to comply with the requirements of acts of communication in the receiving culture (Bassnett-McGuire, 1991 [1980]; Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990).

In the process two approaches to translation, the functionalist and the descriptive developed independently, but simultaneously (Naudé, 2002:44-69). Both view translation as a new communicative act that is aimed at serving a purpose for the target culture, even if this results in differences from the source text.

In the case of the functionalist approach, the intended function (*skopos*) of the target text determines the translation methods and strategies (Reiss & Vermeer, 1984). The function of the translation in the target culture is decisive as to those aspects of the source text, which should be transferred to the translation (Nord, 1991:6). Bassnett and Lefevere (1990:4), working originally from within the systems theory, dismissed the painstaking comparisons that were made between original texts and translations when the text was not being considered in its cultural environment. Instead, they examined translation as rewriting, while also taking the ideological tensions around the text into account. The move from translation as text, to translation as culture and politics, has been termed by Mary Snell-Hornby (1995:79-86) as *the cultural turn*. Bassnett and Lefevere (1990:11) consider this to be a metaphor for the cultural move beyond language in order to emphasise the interaction between translation and culture, as well as on the way in which culture impacts on and constrains translation, and subsequently to stress the much broader issues of context, history and convention.

Arising from cultural anthropology in the late 1980s and early 1990s, postcolonial translation theory is based on the premise that translation has often served as an important imperialist tool in the colonisation of peoples, the survival of colonial attitudes in the translation marketplace, and in the decolonising of the mind (Robinson, 1997). Europe was perceived as the *original* with the colonies as copies or *translations* of the original (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999:4).

Steiner's approach to language and translation involves that all understanding, whether of spoken or written language, involves interpretation (Steiner, 1998). The interpretative process of determining the full semantic reference of the words is, in essence, translation. In the interaction between language and society, hackneyed usage can impoverish language, while creativity can renew a language and reformulate reality. A process of "original repetition" can take place whereby the interpreter takes possession of and submits to the original meaning through an intense response to the creative impulse of the author/speaker.

Through intralingual, as well as interlingual interpretation, language gains life beyond the moment or place of expression. Steiner (1998) here refers to the early linguistic model of communication: a message from a source language is passed to a receptor by means of a process of transformation. In intralingual interpretation the barrier is time, whereas in interlingual translation the barrier is language. History is recorded in language: to formulate the past, to recreate the past, to transmit culture over generations the transmission of meaning in language takes place not only across time, but also space.

One can get some hint of this challenging aspect of the internationalisation of Translation Studies by examining various non-Western words for “translation” and considering the possible realignments that those words suggest for translation theories (see Tymoczko, 2005). In India, for example, two common words for translation are “rupantar” (change in form) and “anuvad” (speaking after, following). Neither of these terms implies fidelity to the original and that the concept of faithful rendering came to India with Christianity. In the Nigerian language Igbo, the words for translation are “tapia” and “kowa”. “Tapia” comes from the roots “ta” (tell, narrate) and “pia” (destruction, break [it] up), with the overall sense of 'deconstruct it and tell it (in a different form)'. “Kowa” has a similar meaning, deriving from “ko” (narrate, talk about) and “wa” (break in pieces). In Igbo, therefore, translation is an activity that stresses the viability of the communication as narration, allowing for decomposition and a change in form rather than one-to-one reconstruction.

To summarise, it is necessary to be sensitive to the evolution of the profession in order to determine an adequate weight for topics such as translator tools or the ability to work in groups within the syllabus of translator training courses. Translators have witnessed a dramatic change in the parameters and praxis of their trade during the past 10 or 15 years. Translating was indeed a solitary activity, but nowadays even the practice of strict “literary” translation has lost its character of isolation: with new media, new tools and new resources, the four walls has become the world. New translation tasks involve versatility in satisfying a number of requirements extrinsic to translation per se, among which collaboration and proficient use of state-of-the-art hardware and software rate as strategic in terms of professional survival.

Translator competence consists of the developing of a personal approach toward translation; strategies for dealing with translation problems; understanding of the norms and conventions that apply to the translator's work; and constant reminders of the myriad real-world constraints on the translator's work. Factors important for the development of translator competence include firstly, feedback from clients, authors and readers, both positive and negative; secondly, advice from and collaboration with more experienced translators; and finally, the fact that all translation work has been embedded in a real and social matrix.

3. MAJOR APPROACHES TO TRANSLATOR TRAINING

Firstly, I would like to describe a conventional translation practice classroom. The division offered by Kelly (2005:11-18) served to expose the approaches to translator training.

3.1 The teacher-centred transmissionist approach

In a prototypical teacher-centred environment, the instructor assumes responsibility for virtually everything in the classroom – except for learning itself. He/she is at the front of the class, facing rows of generally passive students who are (hopefully) hanging on to every word and in some sense ingesting knowledge about how to translate. The teacher prepares the syllabus, chooses the texts to be translated, organises all of the in-class activities and homework, and dominates the classroom discourse. The assessment of student performance and learning is the teacher's responsibility. The conventional teacher-centred classroom is grounded in a positivist epistemology, the dominant, “scientific” perspective that is pervasive in the social sciences and that acknowledges a universal reality that we can come to know objectively. From such a perspective, learning logically entails the reproduction of objective truth in the mind of the individual learner. The teacher, having acquired expert knowledge through training, education and experience, is expected to “transmit” that knowledge to students.

Students produce sample translations in a social vacuum, translations that have no intended audience other than the teacher, that were commissioned by the teacher, and that will be assessed and corrected by the teacher. The active participation of students in this process might be seen as disruptive or even counterproductive, as it interferes with the efficient transmission of knowledge from the more knowledgeable teacher to the less knowledgeable students. The teacher is the controlling factor in the learning situation, packaging knowledge as neatly as possible to make it digestible for the students and ensuring that disruptions to the efficient transmission of knowledge are kept to a minimum.

According to this view, there is little place (if any) for designing courses that are based on the specific needs and characteristics of the main stakeholders in the process: on the one hand potential clients and on the other, the students themselves. The underlying assumption in this view – i.e. that students are not subjects, but objects of their own learning – has harmful effects on their critical spirit, learning autonomy, and professional competence.

3.2 Establishing teaching objectives/outcomes

The implementation of Outcomes Based Education on tertiary level in South Africa results in the creation of learning programmes with clear objectives for any teaching process. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) identifies inter alia, Critical Cross-field Outcomes for development in learners within the education and training system, regardless of the specific area or content of learning. They are:

- Problem solving: Identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made;
- Team work: Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation or community;
- Self-organisation and self-management: Organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively;
- Information evaluation: Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;
- Communication: Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentation;
- Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others;
- Interrelatedness of systems: Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

In addition, it must be the intention underlying any programme of learning to make an individual aware of the importance of:

- Reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn more effectively;
- Participating as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities;
- Being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts;
- Exploring education and career opportunities;
- Developing entrepreneurial opportunities.

A further development is the task-based approach of González Davies (2004) which is based on designing a series of activities with the same global aim and a final product. The students are actively involved in their learning process by making decisions and interacting with each other in a classroom setting that is a discussion forum and hands-on workshop. On the way, both procedural and declarative knowledge are practised and explored. Clear aims are specified for the activities, which move from the most rudimentary level of the word, to the more complicated issues of syntax and, finally, to those of cultural difference. This approach advocates an overall curricular design based on learning outcomes.

3.3 The profession-based learner-centred approach

The implementation of the functionalist approach of Nord (1991; 1997; 2005) in translation education in South Africa is based on the premise that training should simulate professional practice, that is, it should never involve translating without a meaningful realistic purpose. The intended function (*skopos*) of the target text, and not the function of the source text, determines the translation methods and strategies. The function of the translation in the target culture is decisive as to those aspects of the source text, which should be transferred to the translation (Nord, 1991:6). Her approach is a clear move towards student-centred teaching/learning, and towards professional realism in the classroom. The situational approach to translator training, advocated by Vienne (1994), is based on the idea that class activity should be made up of a series of translation tasks already carried out by teachers professionally, which means that they can play the role of initiator in the translation process in a more realistic way.

A further version of this proposal is that of Gouadec (2003) who proposed incorporating real translation commissions for real clients into training programmes. According to Gile (1995) the idea of the process-centred approach is to focus in the classroom not on results, that is, not on the end product of the translation process, but on the process itself. More specifically, rather than simply giving students texts to translate, commenting on them by saying what is “right” and what is “wrong” in the target language versions produced, the process-oriented approach indicates to the student good translation principles, methods, and procedures.

4. THE SOCIO-CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH

4.1 Epistemological premises

The research on the sources of knowledge has always been one of the most important topics of epistemology. In the course of time, two main theories have emerged. Rationalism names reason as the only source of knowledge. This implies that reality can be captured in principle and that we have the mental capacity to do so. Empiricism, in contrast, maintains that sensual perceptions are the only source and the ultimate touchstone of knowledge. Sceptics doubt that we are able to acquire knowledge of truth and reality at all. They argue that there is always a difference between outer reality and our sensual perceptions. As a result, one cannot verify claims made on these perceptions. Sceptics do not question knowledge, they only question the claim that knowledge in this sense is possible (Dewey, 1938; Rorty, 1979).

Constructivists deal with how conceptions of reality come into being. Radical constructivists and social constructivists assume that people cannot directly perceive the objective reality, but that they rather construct their view of the world based on knowledge they already possess. Radical constructivists claim that people develop their individual view of the world. Social constructivists, however, state that people only attain knowledge of their surroundings by dealing with others, that is, in social discourse. For both schools of constructivism, the criterion of viability plays the decisive role, which means that it is not “truth as such” that matters, but usefulness (Duffy & Jonassen, 1992).

Learners do not have direct access to reality, because the brain only processes electronic signals. Reality is constructed based on these signals. Constructivists have abandoned the concept that knowledge is a kind of substance that can be transferred from the head of the teacher to the head of the learner. Learning is regarded as a creative, inventive act performed by the individual. If every learner has his/her own way of processing learning material, there have to exist as many individual and unpredictable ways of learning as there are learners. Von Glasersfeld (1988) demands that each learner should be treated as an intelligent, independently thinking individual.

In a class, which is run according to constructivist guidelines, the teacher does not act as a pure knowledge transmitter who only accepts one true answer to his/her problem, but as a coach or facilitator offering thought provoking suggestions for solving the tasks given. Students are expected to use their own experiences to solve a problem as a group, using different ways and methods. In constructivism, there is not a one and only true way to solve a task. The solution of a problem rather depends upon individual experiences and thoughts. As already mentioned above, most of the time students work together in groups, exchanging their suggestions and thoughts in discussions to reach one or more solutions. The teacher judges and evaluates the skills and deficiencies of each individual student, for example, in the course of a discussion. Teachers are more flexible because they cannot expect only one correct answer to their questions.

Intuitions are dynamically constructed impressions distilled from countless occurrences of action and interaction with the world and from the myriad dialogues that people are engaged in as they go about life in the various communities of which they are members. Knowledge construction is an internal, cognitive process and an external, social phenomenon. The development of true expertise can only be developed on the basis of authentic situated action, the collaborative construction of knowledge, and personal experience. The implications of these epistemological premises for the translator education classroom are far-reaching.

They include a radical reassessment of the following aspects: a reorientation of the very goals and techniques of the educational programme; a radical reassessment of teachers' and students' roles in the classroom; a shift of authority, responsibility and control in the educational process away from the teacher, and towards the learner; and a new perspective on the function and nature of testing.

4.2 Design

The socio-constructive approach can best be described as learning centred. This perspective sees learning as an interactive, socio-personal process. Truth is viewed essentially as a social construction, and the learning process is a matter of collaboratively acquiring (and co-creating) the language and behaviour of a social group, in this case that of professional translators. The key implication of this basic principle for translator education is that learning to be a professional translator means learning to act like one. Seen this way, the teacher has no knowledge that the students must or even can acquire. The students will instead have to construct their own knowledge of the profession and their own understandings of their responsibilities and rights as professionals through experience, by collaboratively participating in the authentic activities of professional translators. From such a perspective, the teacher must step down from the distribution pedestal. Rather than sending students off to discover truth for themselves, he or she will assume the role of a guide or assistant who helps the students move from the periphery of the community of professional translators into a position of full membership in that community (Kiraly, 2000:34-50).

The approach tries to make learning a situated experience, i.e. related both to the students' previous knowledge and to the targeted professional behaviour. The best way to achieve this is to make the publishable translation project the mainstay of classroom practice, immediately after an introduction to translation studies in which students raise their level of awareness of the nature of translator competence, understood as a complex linguistic interaction that is highly individualised and dependent on social and cultural contexts, as well as cognitive and intuitive processes. When criticism, discussion, negotiation and collaboration become the main ingredients in the appropriation of knowledge in all sub domains of translator education (including the linguistic component), apprentices are more likely to have confidence in what they say and how they say it, which is a prerequisite for the production of professional quality texts in any area (Kiraly, 2000:51-74).

In brief, the principles of the design are as follows: Since the most valuable learning experiences are also authentic, it is crucial to situate them. Learning experiences are always imbued by multiple perspectives. Truly collaborative work is an essential part of every learning experience.

The aim of each class should be elaborating multiple and viable solutions to problems that emerge naturally from authentic projects (instead of a correct solution). Instead of teaching students the correct answers (the truth), the teachers should make it their pedagogical task to create a basis (scaffold) for learning from the beginning of the course and then gradually release control over the learning environment to the students themselves. Classes should be thought of as workshops for social and cognitive learning so that the students, who are on the periphery of the translator community, can gradually appropriate this community's discourse until they become full-fledged, competent members of the same community.

Since one of the main tasks of the social constructivist teacher is to represent the community in which the apprentices wish to take part, translator trainers should be active translators or, at least, have ample professional experience in the area. This way, it will also be easier to take real projects to the classroom (with the clients' approval) or help students get such projects, enabling them to do just what professionals do: translate real texts, for real clients and real readers/users. Given the persistent distance between academy and the larger community, the implications are considerable.

To summarise: Attaining competence in a professional domain means acquiring the expertise and thus the authority to make professional decisions, i.e. assuming responsibility for one's actions; and achieving autonomy to follow a path of lifelong learning. This is empowerment. Teachers then become guides, consultants, and facilitators, paving the way for learning events that allow students to become full-fledged translators. Such events involve presenting students with translation activities that are real – or at least realistic – so that an autonomy that is both an individual and a group phenomenon can be fostered.

4.3 Implementation of the socio-constructive approach in the Language Practice Programme

The MA study of Susan Lombaard (2006) aimed to prove that Biblical texts in South African Sign Language are more accessible than written or printed Biblical texts for Deaf born people in South Africa who use South African Sign Language (SASL) as their first language. As her supervisor I had no personal experience of SASL, while the student had no experience of Bible translation. The tasks that emerged for me, as supervisor over the project, were complementary but not hierarchically superior to those of the student. The first stage of the project involved the acquisition of basic principles and norms of Bible translation and the knowledge needed to handle SASL. This happened by way of a workshop.

Even during this initial workshop phase, social constructivist learning was readily apparent as common understandings of the mechanics and conventions of Bible translation in SASL were created. Together with the translation teams we were engaged in an interactive process of developing heuristics for ourselves that we actually could use to begin the translation work. The study made use of the functionalist approach in translation to translate six Biblical parts into SASL. Mother tongue speakers were used as translators with the assistance of hearing specialists in the fields of Theology and Translation Studies. Translation was done from the original Hebrew and Greek texts into SASL. Personal reflective work clearly proceeded, with the student gradually developing a feel for the often contradictory constraints involved in creating a Bible translation in SASL.

Discussions were lively and insightful as this phase of the work got under way. The supervisor continued to offer assistance, but the student had already moved on to a rather autonomous stage of social and personal knowledge construction. She clearly preferred resolving problems within the translation groups by herself rather than deferring to the tutor. Halfway through, a trial video was shown to the Deaf persons. A back translation of the SASL translations was offered to the hearing specialists in the fields of Theology and Translation Studies to point out discrepancies. As the translation was, for the most part, in line with acceptable professional practice, the student is viewed as an emerging, professional translator. After production of the video with the Biblical parts in SASL, the content of the video, as well as the level of understanding of the texts, were evaluated in the Deaf community of South Africa by means of an empirical study done in the Western Cape, Kwazulu/Natal, Gauteng, Northern Cape and the Free State.

It was at this point that the co-emergent nature of the learning enterprise became particularly apparent. As it turned out, it was the student who wound up teaching the filmmaker how to produce the final video with his own hardware and software. The results of the empirical study proved that the signed Biblical parts were more accessible for mother tongue Deaf people than the written counterparts. Results from the study also indicated how a signed Bible should look. Conclusions can also be drawn from the study that a Bible in Sign Language is needed for use in the Deaf community of South Africa. The project became a multi-directional and multi-facetted process of knowledge acquisition, individual and social knowledge creation, and the development of a learning community that functioned as a microcosm of real-world Bible translation.

Another example of the implementation of the socio-constructive approach in Language Practice is the MA Study of Marlie van Rooyen (2005) that aimed to describe how news texts are translated from one medium (print) to another (radio) in newsrooms (and specifically at OFM) to meet the language requirements of the target audience.

The student was herself a bulletin producer (which includes the task of translating) at OFM, a commercial radio station, and from her experience brought her knowledge to discussions on this topic. I, as supervisor guided her through the theory of Translation Studies. The student had first-hand knowledge of receiving, editing and translating English texts from the South African Press Association (SAPA) into Afrikaans for OFM. These texts undergo severe editing during the translation process to meet the requirements of radio news. The study describes the processes followed to edit and translate the English texts, the translation problems, and appropriate translation strategies. The study shows how the functionalist approach is applied in this process as the function (*skopos*) of the target text (OFM) differs drastically from that of the source text (SAPA). The student was also able to construct an explicit translation brief that could be implemented in the day-to-day training of beginner journalists and bulletin producers at OFM.

5. CONCLUSION AND CHALLENGES

The focus of this paper is to describe the training of language practitioners at the University of the Free State in the light of recent developments in Translation Studies. It is shown that the time has come to challenge the so-called Eurocentric bias and metalanguage of Translation Studies by exploring the diversity of “non-Western” discourses on and practices of translation.

Concerning the nature of translation, it is necessary to operate with Gideon Toury's definition of translation, “any target language text which is presented or regarded as such within the target system itself, on whatever grounds”. One way to view translation is an activity that stresses the viability of the communication as narration, allowing for decomposition and a change in form rather than one-to-one reconstruction.

A socio-constructive community approach to teaching/learning of translation provides the means to accommodate the challenges set to be relevant for the African context. From a socio-constructive perspective, learners create or construct meanings and knowledge through participation in the interpersonal, intersubjective interaction. In recent years, it has become generally accepted in educational psychology that knowledge is constructed by learners, rather than simply being transmitted to them by their teachers. It urges us to reorganise the conventional teacher-centred classroom into a forum for authentic and interactive learning.

An assumption to challenge is for example the language combination of language practitioners. Translating into the translator's mother tongue/home language has long been regarded as superior to translating into the translator's second language by researchers and practitioners (Baker, 1992; Kelly, 1979; Newmark, 1988; Nida & Taber, 1969).

The view of native supremacy is, however, increasingly being challenged by studies in translation and closely related fields, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) and Writing in a Second Language (Alptekin, 2002; Bowker, 2000; Kramsch, 1997; Widdowson, 1994; Zaid, 1999). As a result Campbell (2000), Grosman (2000), Lonsdale (2001) and Snell-Hornby (2000) argue for translating into the translator's second language, English, especially in China. In South Africa this is very relevant. Joe Thloloe, South Africa's Press Ombudsman, operates in nine South African languages. Some South Africans operate in three to four languages on several levels. It is necessary to rethink our training of a two language combination.

As regards specialisation, the question is not so much mastering a given area of knowledge before starting to work, as being able to gather the necessary knowledge in different areas as the need arises, along with developing an acute sensitivity to textual types and norms. Since apprentices are no longer able to predict the areas in which they will be working after they graduate, it becomes crucial for them to adapt to the demands of an ever-changing market. Thus, the ability to detect new themes and learn how and where to research them quickly and efficiently becomes an essential asset for professionals, whether they are translators or not. This is the heart of the socio-constructive community approach.

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