



TRANSLATION IN UNIVERSITY FOREIGN-LANGUAGE CURRICULA: AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDES, WITH REFERENCE TO VOCATIONAL AND TRANSFERABILITY CRITERIA

Costanza Peverati

Dipòsit Legal: T 765-2015

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The study focuses on the teaching of translation in university foreign-language curricula. After considering the recent scholarly reappraisal of this language-teaching tool and its attendant reconceptualization, it examines some of the changes and challenges that have ensued at the level of curriculum organization and classroom instruction. The identification of some elements of complexity leads in to a discussion of possible ways to address them, i.e. pedagogies informed by an expansive understanding of translation, which capitalize on the transferability potential of the learning emerging from it. The study proceeds with a follow-up analysis of the data gathered through the international survey Translation and Language Learning, carried out in 2012-2013 for the European Commission's Directorate-General for Translation, and attempts to gain insights into how language teachers formulate the shifting scenario above and whether they are open to issues of skills transferability. The findings point to areas where professional development actions as well as further research are required.

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DOCTORAL THESIS

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Abstract

This study examines the teaching of translation in university foreign-language curricula. It begins by considering the recent scholarly reappraisal of this pedagogical tool and the attendant diversification of identities and functions that have been ascribed to it. Taking the Italian context as an example, it then discusses some of the changes and challenges this shifting scenario has determined at the level of curriculum organization and classroom instruction. The identification of some elements of complexity, based on a problem of how translation is conceptualized, leads in to a discussion of pedagogies informed by an expansive understanding of translation, which capitalize on the wide-ranging transferability of the learning emerging from it. The transfer of translation-related learning inside and outside education is discussed as a possible way to resolve such complexities, in particular a perceived polarization between narrowly philological and narrowly vocational approaches. With respect to the latter, particular emphasis is placed on the concept of “transferable generic skills”.

In light of these premises, the research sets out to investigate how the teaching community has adjusted to the reappraisal of translation in foreign-language education, how it conceptualizes and uses this pedagogical tool, what reasons inform the choice not to incorporate it, and whether there is awareness of, and openness to, notions of transferable skills. Responses to these issues are sought through a follow-up analysis of the international survey *Translation and Language Learning: The Role of Translation in the Teaching of Languages in the European Union*, carried out in 2012-2013 for the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Translation.

The findings suggest a scenario characterized by two main conflicting aspects: a frequent use of translation activities, coupled with generally approving attitudes, exists against a backdrop of latent antagonism and sense of misgiving, largely informed by adherence to monolingual methodologies and by narrow, often misconceived understandings; against a peculiarly broad qualitative variation in the understandings of translation and its roles in foreign-language teaching/learning, and against a large consensus on it being a meaning-based exercise in authentic communication, there is a quantitatively significant concentration of data around a single conception/use, i.e. that of tool for formalistic, contrastive language work. Explicit awareness of translation’s

transferability potential is modest, but inferential analysis of some data point to some degree of acknowledgement of the impact of translation work on various areas of learning and performance. Both the findings of the empirical study and some theoretical and operational issues with the discourse of skills transferability point to areas where future action and research are desirable.



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The research and the thesis fulfill all the conditions for the award of a EUROPEAN DOCTORATE, in accordance with current Spanish legislation.

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Introduction

This study developed out of my personal interest in the teaching of translation in foreign-language degree programs. This area of investigation was brought into focus for me at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore at Brescia (Italy), where I have been teaching for the past seven years. Over this period, I have been mainly assigned general language and LSP courses¹ in the English Department, but on a number of occasions I have also been involved in the teaching of practical translation courses as well as shorter modules and workshops on professional translation. These first-hand experiences, along with my appointment as assistant coordinator of the practical language courses in the department,² offered me a privileged window on prevailing modes of translation instruction and aroused my curiosity about a number of theoretical and methodological issues. These concerned in particular the purposes of translation education in the context of general foreign-language curricula, and the underlying concepts and overall pedagogical orientations shaping it.

These areas of interest introduced me to the field of translation in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning (FLT/L) and its rather long-standing academic tradition. The more I read into this field, the more I became aware of the fact that we are in the midst—perhaps at the peak—of a momentous reappraisal that has been developing over at least the past three decades. This reappraisal has been largely fuelled by two major theoretical shifts, one regarding the process and purpose of learning a new language, the other concerning more the nature of translation itself. The former has been taking place over recent years in a general climate of cautious revision of monolingual policies in favor of the bilingualization of language teaching (Cook 2010: 37-53). More precisely, consensus has been mounting around the belief that languages are more easily learnt in association with one's linguistic substratum rather than separately from it, and that the ultimate goal of learning them is not exclusively or necessarily the acquisition of an ability to perform in monolingual environments with native-like proficiency, but also—and increasingly so in our interconnected world—to participate effectively in

¹ Here and throughout this thesis, the term “courses” is used to refer to cycles of weekly classes spanning over either one or two terms and forming the curricular offer of subject contents in each academic year in a degree program.

² These include courses in practical translation into and out of the foreign language.

multilingual communicative settings, where the ability to move between one's mother tongue (L1) and other languages (L2s) is most important (Butzkamm and Caldwell 2009). It has followed that one of the objectives of FLT/L should be to foster the development of a polyglot mind, able to keep both L1 and L2 simultaneously active, and skilled at switching across them. This clearly entails a form of translation. The latter of the two shifts mentioned above has been underway for a longer period of time, i.e. since the early attempts at rehabilitating the use of translation from the marginal position to which it had been relegated by the communicative approach to FLT/L from the 1970s onwards. These attempts in defense of translation rest on the idea that translating, far from being only a tool for the exploration of L2 structural and stylistic features, is also a meaning-based exercise in authentic and pragmatically adequate communication (Sewell and Higgins 1996). As such, it is not incompatible with communicatively oriented FLT/L methodologies, and in fact it can complement them in many ways. This approach has emphasized the role of translation—or rather the act of translating—as a language ability in its own right, and one with a real-life dimension as well, which can contribute to the development of all-round L2 competence.

These shifts have been recorded in an ever-expanding body of literature, which presents strong theoretical and increasingly evidence-based arguments in favor of translation in language education, along with a wealth of methodological suggestions. Beyond clearly attesting to an impressive change of attitude to this curricular component within the scholarly community, this extensive literature has highlighted major changes in the conceptualization of translation and its relation to foreign-language learning. More precisely, it has cast light on the fact that translation lends itself to being characterized as a multifaceted language activity, whose different identities can be situated along an ideal continuum “between the extremes of hyper-literal, explicative translation [...] and that of communicative translation as it takes place in the professional world”, with the identities at the two extremes being “mutually enhancing rather than exclusive” (Carreres 2006: 14, 15), thus equally legitimate in foreign-language education (Cook 2010).

These considerations bring me back to one of my queries above: unlike what is probably the case for other curricular components, there seems to be a variety of reasons

why translation may be incorporated into tertiary³ foreign-language programs. Some of these may include:

- to develop declarative knowledge of a foreign language as a multi-layered system (morphology, lexis, syntax, grammar, semantics, pragmatics);
- to develop procedural knowledge of a foreign language, i.e. learning to do things with/in a foreign language (e.g. understanding written/oral L2 texts, rephrasing, writing in the L2);
- to foster an understanding of the foreign culture;
- to develop a separate language ability, alongside the traditional ones (reading, writing, listening, speaking);
- to develop an ability to operate in multilingual settings, facilitating mutual understanding;
- to make learners employable;
- to provide a specific job market with trained subjects.

More reasons can be found. This plurality of functions delineates an overall scenario where language learning, translation education, and the training of translators are no longer separated as discrete entities, as was once the case. While certainly stimulating and innovative, this changing situation may also be interpreted as a significant intellectual challenge, which might generate possible methodological disorientation, confusion of purpose, and tensions.

A possible reflection of these shifting conceptual patterns that I perceived in my own teaching environment (with some confirmation from external sources) is that, despite the plurality of purposes and conceptual diversity characterizing recent scholarship on translation in FLT/L, actual instruction seems to be informed by rather narrow understandings of what translation is. In particular, teaching practices seem to be concentrated around the extremes of the continuum mentioned above, with an adherence to traditional, philological approaches at one extreme, and a strong espousal of vocational approaches at the other, in response to pressing calls for more professionally relevant higher education. This is not to say that the approaches, and underlying concepts, at either end are intrinsically negative or entirely unjustified. They simply rest on partial, restrictive understandings of translation and, as such, may risk not realizing

³ Here and throughout this thesis, the term “tertiary” is used to refer to higher education that takes place in a university setting.

its full pedagogical potential or even imparting training whose import is somewhat limited, as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1.

What emerges quite clearly from the foregoing is that at the heart of both the recent reappraisal of translation in FLT/L and the tensions at the level of pedagogical approaches is an underlying issue of conceptualization. Although the considerations above refer to a local context and were formulated in connection to queries that were of interest to me personally, there are more general reasons why the underlying issues can be considered a topic worthy of investigation. These reasons concern the possible ways in which conceptualization-related tensions might be addressed and maybe reduced. The present study focuses in particular on an approach to the teaching of translation in tertiary foreign-language education that is informed by a fine-grained understanding of translation itself and that aims at a broad spectrum of pedagogical goals. Among these goals could feature that of developing a set of skills that represent “transferable and significant knowledge with respect to social needs and real-world applications” (Calvo 2011: unpaginated). This approach rests on a conception of translation as “transferable learning”. Simply put, what this label refers to is a body of knowledge and skills that is expected to extend beyond the initial context of acquisition, to affect new learning or performance in other contexts. This assumption is in turn grounded in a wider discourse of learning transfer.

Transfer of learning has been on the research agenda of educational psychology throughout the 20th century and is now witnessing an unprecedented resurgence of interest. At its core is the idea, or rather the aspiration, that “learning in one context or with one set of materials impacts on performance in another context or with other related materials” (Perkins and Salomon 1994: 6452), both within education—from one task to another within a course, from one year in school to another—and beyond education, in the learners’ professional, personal, and civic lives. A similar expectation could be advanced for translation in tertiary foreign-language education as well: this activity can be expected to support learners in the development of linguistic and communicative skills in an L2 to be applied along the course of their academic careers and in multiple real-world situations of monolingual interaction. It can also be expected to develop the ability to transpose into a language content and messages originally expressed in another language, to be applied in academic tasks but also in a variety of real-world situations of interlingual and crosslingual communication, and not necessarily at the level of competence required from professional translators. Finally,

recent scholarship in Translation Studies (Kelly 2005, 2007) has discussed the possibility that translation education might contribute to the development of a range of not strictly (inter)linguistic and (inter)cultural skills, but rather generic skills and attributes revolving around key human activities like problem-solving, information retrieval and handling, communication, teamwork, and negotiation (Hager and Holland 2006), which are believed to foster employability across different jobs, rather than employment in one particular job sector, and to sustain an individual's successful participation across social settings also outside the occupational domain. These skills, here defined as "transferable generic skills", are the main focus of the argument about transferability-oriented translation pedagogies and are discussed with respect to the vocationalizing impulses that are gaining ground in foreign-language education at university level in certain contexts.

In light of the foregoing observations, the present study sets out to gain deeper insight into how the changing conceptualization of translation in foreign-language education and its possible repercussions on instructional patterns are perceived at the level of the teaching community. In particular, it seeks to investigate the teachers' attitudes towards the rehabilitation movement illustrated above, whether teachers have adjusted to it, and how they have negotiated its messages with the prevailing FLT methodologies and/or with their own habitual teaching practices. More precisely, in view of the diversification of translation concepts and purposes discussed above, the study examines what understandings teachers hold of translation and to what uses they put it. Strictly intertwined with this, it also tries to understand the reasons informing the choice not to incorporate it. Finally, the analysis seeks to ascertain whether the teaching community has acknowledged more broadly conceived identities and purposes of translation, that is what can be seen as situated at intermediary points along the continuum discussed above, and not necessarily at the two extremes. In particular, the focus is on whether teachers are aware of, and open to, notions of skills transferability in relation to translation teaching.

Data addressing these research objectives are obtained through a follow-up analysis of the international survey *Translation and Language Learning: The Role of Translation in the Teaching of Languages in the European Union*, a large-scale investigation carried out in 2012-2013 by the European Society for Translation Studies, the Intercultural Studies Group of the Universitat Rovira i Virgili (Tarragona, Spain), and the University of Leicester (UK), for the European Commission's Directorate-

General for Translation. Based on some conflicting elements emerged from data analysis, implications are discussed in terms of areas where future action—mainly in terms of professional development initiatives—is desirable. Similarly, the identification of some theoretical and operational issues with notions of skills transferability, in particular the discourse of transferable generic skills, points to possible avenues of further research.

As far as the structure of the thesis is concerned, Chapter 1 sets the scene for the entire study by reviewing the recent reappraisal of translation in FLT/L and then moving on to a description of its current teaching in tertiary foreign-language programs, with particular reference to the Italian context. The discussion of some elements of complexity yields broader considerations about possible trajectories for translation education, trajectories informed by a discourse of skills transferability and learning transfer. Chapter 2 presents a critical literature review of the notion of “transferable generic skills” and illustrates the international agenda that has been promoting these learning outcomes in higher education over the past thirty years, with a particular focus on some major conceptual and implementation challenges. Chapter 3 moves on to consider whether and how the issue of transferable and generic learning outcomes has been acknowledged in association with translation in educational contexts. Chapter 4 describes the research design and methodology of the empirical part of this study, i.e. a follow-up analysis of a selection of data from the survey *Translation and Language Learning*, aimed at casting light on (1) prevailing translation understandings and uses informing tertiary translation teaching internationally, (2) reasons for resistance to incorporating translation components, and (3) awareness of transferability issues. In Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, the data addressing these three research objectives are illustrated and discussed in depth. Finally, Chapter 7 provides a synthesis of the main findings and delineates some avenues for future action and research.

Chapter 1. Translation in foreign-language degree courses: Trends, issues, proposals

This chapter provides the general background of the present work as well as its rationale. It begins by addressing its central theme, namely the issue of translation in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning, with particular focus on the tertiary sector. After outlining how thought in the field has evolved in recent history, it moves on to consider current translation education in foreign-language curricula in the specific context of Italian universities. The identification of some elements of complexity leads in to a discussion of possible alternative approaches based on the concepts of skills transferability and social responsiveness, which in turn puts into perspective the research issues that inform the whole study. These will be further explored in the literature review chapters as well as in the empirical part of the thesis.

1.1. Translation and language teaching in higher education

In many academic environments around the world, translation has long featured as a tool for foreign-language teaching and testing. Over time it has known alternate fortunes according to changing paradigms in Second Language Acquisition, Foreign Language Teaching and Learning (FLT/L), and Translation Studies. The following sections outline this peculiar evolution over a period ranging from approximately the mid-nineteenth century to the present, with particular focus on the past three decades.

1.1.1. A love-hate relationship

In language-learning environments, translation has traditionally been resorted to as an exercise for the consolidation and assessment of grammatical and lexical knowledge or comprehension skills. This use is heir to conventional FLT methodologies, in particular the Grammar Translation Method, which dominated pre-twentieth-century thinking and practice in the field. This method—first employed in Prussian secondary schools in the mid-1800s—developed as an adjustment of the traditional scholastic method of teaching classical languages to highly educated individuals who would be asked to translate very

complex texts, usually literary or philosophical, by using a reference grammar and a dictionary and by deductively applying syntactic rules and word lists. The Grammar Translation Method became logistically difficult to apply when language education was offered to large groups of students in schools. To adjust to the new classroom context, long texts were replaced with short individual sentences, graded for difficulty and focused on single formal aspects of the language system. These sentences were often nonsensical, artificial, and above all unconnected to each other (Howatt 1984, Richards and Rodgers 1986, Malmkjær 2013).

When FLT/L espoused predominantly monolingual pedagogies based on natural language use and its intrinsic connectivity (i.e. the Direct Method and Communicative Language Teaching) and the reasons for learning a language shifted from reading literary works to interacting with speakers, translation came to be fiercely criticized as old-fashioned and counter-productive to the learning process (Colina 2002). The arguments against it, first voiced at the end of the 19th century and then reiterated with particular bitterness during the 1960s and 1970s, rested upon the evident shortcomings of Grammar Translation and reflected widespread discontent with that instructional pattern. In this regard, Carreres (2006: 5) rightly states that translation can be seen as a victim of the Grammar Translation Method “rather than the source of its evils”. The following assertions featured among the most recurring criticisms (Duff 1989, Malmkjær 1998, Newson 1998, Zojer 2009):

1. Translation is a solitary activity;
2. It is independent of, and radically different from, the four skills defining language competence and should, therefore, not be used to teach any of them;
3. It takes up valuable time, which could be used to teach the four skills;
4. It is unnatural;
5. It misleads students into thinking that expressions in two languages correspond to each other one-to-one;
6. It prevents students from thinking in the foreign language (L2);
7. It produces interferences and negative transfer;
8. It is a bad test of language skills;
9. It restricts the students' free mode of expressing themselves;
10. It hampers the achievement of generally accepted FLT aims, like (1) emphasis on initial fluency in spoken language, (2) progression in the introduction of vocabulary,

grammar, and communicative strategies, (3) use of contextualized language, (4) communicative language use, and (5) learner-centered learning.

As a result of this vocal opposition, both translation and the mother tongue (L1) were widely banished from the language classroom. To a large extent this was the case in primary and secondary education, yet universities were somehow slower to react to the trend and some never fully embraced it, so that translation continued its shadow existence as language teachers' "forbidden friend" (Zojer 2009: 32) long after its rejection. Within institutions less prone to radical change, it survived in its conventional form, probably as "a last attempt [...] to preserve the 'true nature' of university language study" (Conacher 1996: 162). Elsewhere it resisted in more or less modified forms amid mixed attitudes ranging from reluctance to resignation. Carreres (2006: 2) ascribes its unenthusiastic retention to the sole need to prepare students for the translation component of official examinations and also to the fact that teachers with little experience of other methods or a limited command of the L2 may have felt "more comfortable teaching language on the basis of a few passages for translation that they have prepared and used year after year". In Schjoldager's view (2004), the use of translation survived because it actually appeals to more analytically-oriented teachers and, in its traditional form, is relatively undemanding in terms of planning and class management.

In the 1980s, extreme positions gave way to a more balanced assessment of the status and role of translation in FLT/L, which paved the way for its gradual reappraisal (Cook 1998). This evolution coincided, on the one hand, with the rise of Translation Studies as an academic discipline and, on the other, with the acknowledgement of some shortcomings in the most popular 20th-century FLT/L theories. In particular, it became clear that the Direct Method overemphasized and distorted the similarities between natural L1 acquisition and L2 didactic activities, whereas the Communicative Approach often produced students lacking the basics needed to communicate beyond the simplest interaction and heavily impacted on learner psychology: with its emphasis on role-play and simulation, the Communicative Approach tends to create—especially in subjects with introverted personalities—embarrassment and anxiety related to face-threat and infantilization (Conacher 1996, Schjoldager 2004, Sewell 2004).

The decade was marked by a flurry of scholarly publications at international level, all converging on the effort to reassess the pedagogical role of translation in FLT/L (e.g. Bolognesi et al. 1982, Baggio et al. 1984, FIT/UNESCO 1983, Titford and

Hieke 1985, Larsen-Freeman 1986, Ehnert and Schleyer 1987, Hurtado Albir 1988, Duff 1989, Krawutschke 1989). It was stressed that, if used in ways other than Grammar Translation and as a complement to monolingual methods, it could well foster language learning at different levels. Some isolated voices anticipated future developments, stressing the need to link translation teaching to professional practice (e.g. Lavault 1985, Keith and Mason 1987). Among the envisaged benefits, the following were particularly emphasized (Danchev 1983, Schöffner 1998, Zojer 2009):

1. Translation can promote formal accuracy, as opposed to the inaccuracy often resulting from radically communication-oriented approaches;
2. It controls interferences and helps neutralize them;
3. It improves verbal agility, memorization, and linguistic precision;
4. It expands L2 vocabulary and expression as it does not allow avoidance strategies;
5. It develops style;
6. It improves understanding of how languages work, often highlighting subtle differences of grammar and semantics;
7. It consolidates L2 structures for active use (especially translation into the L2);
8. It monitors and improves L2 comprehension, promoting critical reading (especially translation into the L1);
9. It integrates different difficulties in various ways, thus approximating real-life language use more than other carefully selected activities;
10. It can improve L1 competence.

The pros seem to balance, if not outnumber, the cons. Yet, despite this optimistic reassessment, the controversy over the use of translation in FLT/L lingered on, mainly due to a lack of empirical evidence to support either position (Schjoldager 2003). This resulted in the uncritical reiteration of traditional practices (Cardona 2010), considered at best unproductive, boring, and frustrating.

1.1.2. Towards a principled approach

In the 1990s, just as translator trainers were denouncing the “pedagogical gap in translation skill instruction” consisting in a “lack of clear objectives, curricular materials, and teaching methods” (Kiraly 1995: 5), some FLT/L scholars (e.g. Stibbard 1994) were arguing that, without a sound understanding of the principles and purposes that should underlie all translation activity, translation would never be a beneficial tool

for language pedagogy. Much criticism was leveled at misconceived translation concepts and the ensuing classroom practice. It was claimed, for instance, that the view of translation as mainly an end-product was untenable both pedagogically and from the perspective of translation theory: on the one hand, it insisted on the production of error-free texts, disregarding the gradual development of L2 competence and, on the other, it ignored the fact that translation is also a complex process and hence a skill to be developed over time, a “fifth skill” for Freddi (1999: 139), a “fifth macro-skill” for Campbell (2002: 58), an “integrated skill” for Balboni (1998: 14). It was also argued that typical classroom activities gave the false idea of translation as a static, decontextualized, one-to-one replacement of words, whereas it is ultimately “a dynamic process of communication” (Hatim and Mason 1990: 52) in which a sender conveys a message to a receiver, in a real context, for specific purposes. As such, it represents an exercise in authentic language use and hence “a unique form of language acquisition” (Kiraly 1995: 34). In this light, translation for its own sake, with its exclusive focus on structural equivalence, appeared to be an illusory artifice, and increasing attention was drawn to it as a skill with a real-life, professional dimension.

Under the influence of these conceptual shifts, which attest to a greater openness to concurrent developments in TS (i.e. functionalism, process research, communicative-cultural approaches), FLT/L theorists invoked a radical change in conventional translation teaching. There was broad agreement that translation should be taught as a skill in its own right (Siepmann 1996), as witnessed by the rapid proliferation of textbooks focused primarily on the practice of translation, where language learning is not a primary goal, or is merely an incidental goal (e.g., for Italian/English, Ulrych 1992, Taylor 1998, Hervey et al. 2000, Laviosa and Cleverton 2003; see Stewart 2011 on textbooks with this language combination). Many scholars shared this rationale. Among them, Klein-Braley (1996) advocated a methodology consisting of an introduction to isolated but systemic aspects of translating (e.g. use of dictionaries and other documentation resources, contrastive phenomena and false friends, textual and register analysis, culture-specific items), followed by consolidation work on different text-types, which had to be texts likely to be translated in real life (i.e. not journalistic or literary). In order to enable the teaching of translation as an exercise in communicative language use, Boylan (1999) called for a major shift from a *langue*-based to a *parole*-based FLT, with emphasis on the socio-cultural values of the language being learnt. Ulrych (1996), Fraser (1996), and Sewell (1996), for their part, stressed the need to

raise awareness of the pragmatic factors surrounding the target text (i.e. recipients, function, and status) and the role they play in the process of targeting the translation at its intended readership. The latter aspect represents one of the distinctive traits of professional practice, which for several authors (e.g. Sewell and Higgins 1996) were the only sensible objectives of all translation teaching.

The advocates of this approach believed that a process orientation and a reasonably close emulation of translation proper could not only enhance students' language proficiency—by familiarizing them with the ways L1 and L2 fulfill their communicative purposes (Fraser 1996)—but could also provide valuable skills “for possible vocational use” (Klein-Braley 1996: 23). Maintaining that foreign-language departments cannot and should not double up as translator-training institutions, they nonetheless deemed it sensible to introduce students to as many applications of their linguistic skills as possible. There were at least two reasons for this. First, many graduates enter jobs in which they may be asked to translate texts for in-house purposes or to supervise translations for formal purposes, thus an understanding of the process of professional translation, as opposed to academic translation, is certainly useful (Klein-Braley and Franklin 1989, 1998). Second, since the trend in universities is towards early generality with later specialization, it helps if some preparation is offered early on (Malmkjær 1998). Most proponents, however, cautioned that if students wished to translate professionally, they needed further training, since the proposed methodology could offer just “the bare bones and basic techniques” (Klein-Braley 1996: 24, Maier 1998). Yet it was believed to be more beneficial than traditional methods, for both language proficiency and the acquisition of marketable skills.

1.1.3. Twenty-first century perspectives

Although the above assumptions have largely remained untested empirically, they have fuelled the already lively debate over the role and methodology of translation in FLT/L which, since the turn of the century, can be said to have gained greater momentum. The past fifteen years have witnessed a wave of renewed interest in the subject, with views and arguments being overwhelmingly biased in favor of translation, so much so that, as Kerr (2012a) aptly highlights, rejection is virtually non-existent nowadays—at least in the literature.

In Europe, a strong incentive for the rehabilitation of translation in language pedagogy was provided by the publication of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 2001, henceforth CEFR). This highly influential document sets common criteria “for the explicit description of objectives, content and methods” of language education, with a view to supporting the “elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc.” (ibid.: 1) that are transparent and comparable across Europe. Devised to contribute to the greater cause of plurilingualism, the CEFR introduces an “action-oriented” approach to language learning, teaching, and assessment “in so far as it views users and learners of a language primarily as ‘social agents’” (ibid. 8), namely members of society who develop a range of competences, both general and in particular communicative language competences, towards the accomplishment of tasks in specific environments and within particular fields of action. A language learner/user’s communicative language competence is activated and continuously developed through the exercise of various “language activities, involving reception, production, interaction or mediation (in particular interpreting or translating)” (ibid.: 14), all of which being possible in relation to texts in oral or written form, or both. The section of the CEFR that directly addresses translation is the following (ibid., emphasis in the original):

In both the receptive and productive modes, the written and/or oral activities of *mediation* make communication possible between persons who are unable, for whatever reason, to communicate with each other directly. Translation or interpretation, a paraphrase, summary or record, provides for a third party a (re)formulation of a source text to which this third party does not have direct access.

Although the CEFR has failed to provide benchmarked descriptive scales for mediation activities (Alderson 2007, North 2007), it can nonetheless be credited with having mainstreamed translation within language education as an expression of a language user’s communicative competence and, most importantly, as an activity that occupies “an important place in the normal linguistic functioning of our societies” (Council of Europe 2001: 14).

In the wake of the CEFR, an unprecedented body of literature has been published where translation is conceived of as a language skill in its own right and a purposeful communicative activity that can develop socio-pragmatic competence and intercultural awareness (e.g. González Davies 2002, 2007, Laviosa and Cleverton 2006, Van Dyk

2009, Whyatt 2009, Di Sabato 2011a). The majority of these recent contributions still advocate a process orientation but, compared to some works from the 1990s, are much less biased towards professional concerns and more focused on communicative and intercultural gains. The use of translation skills outside the learning environment is certainly envisaged (Carreres 2006) but mostly in para/non-professional contexts as a way of coping in intercultural settings, or for personal and academic purposes (Zanettin 2009). This proliferation of scholarly work has also been accompanied by increasingly frequent scientific and professional development initiatives like conferences and seminars.¹ Further, monographs have begun to appear where the teaching of languages and the teaching of translation are discussed as two complementary wholes with large areas of contact and cross-fertilization (e.g. La Rocca 2012, Di Sabato et al. 2012).

On the methodological level, considerable effort has gone into exploring alternative teaching activities which, more than ever, take on board insights from translator training and theories of learning. Two trends clearly emerge: on the one hand, there has been increasing diversification of instructional activities, which have come to include “new” translation forms like machine-assisted, corpus-based, and especially audiovisual translation as rich sources of communicative practice (Somers 2003, Niño 2008, British Council/BBC 2009, Incalcaterra-McLoughlin 2009, Zanettin 2009, Danan 2010, Caimi 2011). On the other, attention has been drawn to methodologies other than the much criticized conventional translation class (Király 1995, Nord 1996), with emphasis being placed on pedagogical theories like social constructivism and humanism (González Davies 2004, Carreres and Noriega-Sánchez 2011) or innovative modes like blended learning (Di Martino 2009). Moreover, FLT/L theorists have recognized translation practice as being not only fully compatible with communicative approaches to language teaching but also with more recent orientations like lexicogrammar, computer-assisted language learning, and CLIL (Di Sabato 2007). The latter could actually be seen as antithetical to translation since it envisages the teaching of disciplinary contents by means of a foreign language, thus excluding the learners’ mother tongue, in a sort of immersion context. Yet, even in such contexts, Di Sabato (ibid.) sees translation as a possible and necessary meeting point between the respective

¹ E.g. *Translation in Second Language Teaching and Learning, International Conference*, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, March 27-29, 2008. *Subtitles and Language Learning, International Conference*, University of Pavia (Italy), September 13-14, 2012.

competences of the language teacher and the subject-area teacher, who can both be present in the CLIL classroom.

Besides these developments, what uniquely characterize 21st-century literature in the field are two novel aspects. The first is, without doubt, the higher incidence of empirical contributions that contrast and measure the impact of translation-based and non-translation-based activities on students' performance in different areas of language competence (e.g. writing, vocabulary, grammar). After years of predominantly theoretical work, empirical research is both welcome and illuminating. The findings vary widely, mainly depending on the type of translation involved and student levels. Some studies show no significant enhancement deriving from the use of translation over other monolingual activities, or even negative effects (e.g. Schjoldager 2003, 2004, Källkvist 2004, 2008). In other cases, however, the findings are more encouraging as they show that, compared to non-contrastive tasks, translation tasks generate higher levels of student-initiated vocabulary-related reflection and classroom interaction (e.g. Källkvist 2013), more syntactic accuracy (e.g. Ghia 2011, 2012), as well as more vocabulary retention (e.g. Lertola 2012).

The second novel feature of 21st-century literature on the subject is the unprecedented acknowledgement of translation as an inevitable in the process of L2 learning. Recent developments in the neuro-sciences have shown that, especially at beginner levels, one's L1 is routinely accessed when the L2 is processed, even at subconscious level (Hentschel 2009). This is because the L1 represents not only the basis of all human cognition and reality construction but also the widest store of knowledge that learners bring to class and probably the main component of their selves (Butzkamm 2003). In the learner's mind, L1 dominance automatically activates "increasingly complex processes of interlingual translating" (Witte 2009: 87)—either mental or verbalized—where lexical, morphological, syntactic, phonological and semantic elements in the two languages become interrelated. The claim follows that if these processes are instinctual, it would make sense to exploit them productively rather than imposing a ban on them in the pursuance of monolingual learning environments, which—especially in the early stages—remain largely aspirational.

Some scholars (e.g. González Davies and Scott-Tennent 2009) have nevertheless cautioned against subsuming such use of the L1 under the notion of translation, as each of these represent different activities serving different learning functions: L1 use is best described in terms of code-switching or scaffolding, which is intended to help the

learner understand, contrast, and consolidate new grammar and vocabulary; translation, on the other hand, is a more complex activity that involves specific problem-solving strategies, following criteria of communicative efficacy to the benefit of target recipients. Other scholars tend to reject any rigid dichotomy (Cook 2010) and prefer to see the two activities on a continuum, ranging from more form-focused L1-L2 mapping exercises to increasingly challenging meaning-based activities, with the former leading smoothly into the latter. As such, they can be profitably used across all levels of proficiency, even in communicative and immersion-type classrooms (Butzkamm and Caldwell 2009, Turnbull and Dailey-O'Cain 2009). In this respect, Witte (2009) refers to the two poles in terms of “translating” and “translation” respectively, and claims that the former is the best path towards the latter, i.e. towards a gradual acquisition of contextualized, procedural knowledge of the L2. A similar perspective is taken by Deller and Rinvulcri (2002: 10) who, in one of the first monographs on the subject, argue that the use of the mother tongue “in clearly defined circumstances and in carefully crafted activities” (of which they suggest as many as 115) can help learners observe the L2 and its functioning from up close, eventually liberating them from the literalism and negative transfer that derive from excessive L1 dependence. Salmon (2008) expands on this view by claiming that a constant and progressively complex training in code-switching from the very early stages helps automatize the creation of functional correspondences and favors the development of a bilingual mind, which is being increasingly acknowledged as the ultimate goal of language learning, rather than “monolingualism” and “native-speakerism” (Cook 2010: 8).

In this climate, extensive theoretical and methodological resources have appeared about translating/translation as a tool for both accuracy-driven reflection on structural patterns and fluency-oriented, communicative language practice (e.g. Laviosa 2005, Balboni 2008, 2010, 2012, Rojo 2009, Cook 2010, Leonardi 2010). Surprisingly, much is being undertaken within stubbornly monolingual sectors like EFL, with reference materials for teachers being published and professional development opportunities being increasingly offered (Kerr et al. 2008, Kerr 2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2014, Thornbury 2010).

Despite the fact that the focus has evidently shifted from the question of *whether* translation should be taught in foreign-language curricula to concerns about *how* it is best taught, most contributions still feature lengthy discussions of the well-rehearsed pros and cons, evidence that the longstanding debate is not entirely settled or, most

probably, that there is still plenty of residual resistance among policy-makers and practitioners.

1.2. Translation in foreign-language degree courses: Trends and issues

In recent years, the above pro-translation developments in FLT/L theories, coupled with the increasing communication demands of our multicultural societies, have led to an exponential growth in the teaching of translation at university level. The discussion will hereafter focus on the Italian context, as it is the environment in which I have been working for some years and with which I have developed some familiarity. This analysis will then provide the basis for more general considerations.

In Italy, prior to university reforms that initiated in 1999,² translation played an ancillary role in language pedagogy, which in turn was subordinate to the by far more important study of literature (van Geertruyden 2008). Since the reform, foreign-language curricula have undergone profound changes, resulting in much greater visibility and autonomy for translation, intended both as a viable tool for enhanced language proficiency (i.e. as one among different methods of teaching and learning a language, at the level of classroom dynamics) and as the object of dedicated courses/modules³ at the level of the curricular organization of the program, where it assumes a higher level of centrality. Both delivery formats are intended to contribute to an all-round education in a foreign language, although from different angles and with emphasis on different aspects. These focus areas could ideally be placed on a continuous line ranging from structural features of the language being studied to actions or skills performed with that language.

Chief among the changes that led to the new status of translation was the separation of language and literature, hitherto offered mainly in combination, and the establishment of the new “settore scientifico-disciplinare” (scientific-disciplinary sector) called “Lingua e Traduzione” (Language and Translation). In the Italian system, a scientific-disciplinary sector is a category of academically homogenous disciplines and subjects, defined by the Ministry of Education, University and Research. The sector

² Ministry Decree 3/11/1999 n. 509, published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* n. 2 dated 4/1/2000 – “Regolamento recante norme concernenti l'autonomia didattica degli atenei”. Modified by the Ministry Decree 22/10/2004 n. 270, published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* n. 266 dated 12/11/2004.

³ Here and throughout the thesis, the term “module” is used to refer to a shorter course or to a “package” of a certain number of teaching hours, offered within an academic year in a degree program.

“Language and Translation” groups together all curricular components concerning the analysis of language in its diachronic and synchronic dimensions, at different levels (phonetic, morphological, syntactic, lexical, textual, and pragmatic), as well as the study and practice of translation, oral and written, in its multiple applications, including multimedia translation and interpreting.⁴ Another significant transformation was the establishment of new degree programs that focus on areas other than literary studies or language pedagogy, which were the two almost exclusive areas envisaged prior to the reform. These new programs aim to qualify students for careers in internationalized sectors such as tourism, international trade, arts and culture. Probably the most consequential change, however, was the establishment of a novel “class” of undergraduate degree courses (“classe delle lauree”, i.e. ministry-defined category of academically homogenous degree courses), i.e. “Mediazione Linguistica” (Linguistic Mediation).⁵ The learning objectives of this new class of degree courses largely overlap with those of the other language-related class “Lingue e Culture Moderne” (Modern Languages and Cultures), except for a greater emphasis on the development of skills aimed at “interlingual and intercultural mediation”. The curricula include, among other things, an “introduction to the translation of written and multimedia texts, related to the fields of institutions and business; they can also include a basic training for the development of liaison interpreting skills” (Ministry Decree 4/8/2000).

As a result of these changes, the presence of translation in Italian foreign-language curricula is substantial. An examination of the online informative material from a small sample of universities across Italy⁶ shows that, in 2012, the development of translation-related knowledge and skills features among the learning outcomes of most foreign-language degree programs, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level, independent of degree class. By the same token, translation frequently recurs among the possible career opportunities envisaged on completion of the programs. These data are corroborated by the descriptions of course contents.⁷ These show that the language and linguistics courses taught by tenured staff often contain a translation component or an

⁴ Ministry Decree 4/10/2000, published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* n. 249 dated 24/10/2000 – Ordinary Supplement n. 175, “Settori scientifico-disciplinari”.

⁵ Ministry Decree 4/8/2000, published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* n. 245 dated 19/10/2000 – Ordinary Supplement n. 170, “Determinazione delle classi delle lauree universitarie”.

⁶ Universities of Aosta, Bergamo, Bologna, Cagliari, Chieti, Ferrara, Genoa, IULM (Milan), L’Aquila, Lecce, Macerata, Messina, Milan (Statale), Naples (Federico II), Padua, Perugia, Turin, Udine, Venice, and Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (at Milan and Brescia). Information accessed in March 2012.

⁷ Access to the descriptions of single courses was often limited by the need for student or teaching staff credentials. The observations based on these data are therefore to be taken with many grains of salt.

element of contrastive reflection on languages, especially from the second undergraduate year onwards. Further, translation can often be the main focus of the “Lettorati”, i.e. practical language courses. These are mainly taught by mother-tongue teachers and are dedicated entirely to specific language skills. Other such courses are centered on, for instance, dictation, summary, written composition, spoken language. Finally, translation is also a quite common component of end-of-year examinations.

The above description of current translation pedagogy in Italian foreign-language programs is considerably constrained by the limited and largely random sources of information I have consulted. It is obviously not intended, and not to be taken, as a faithful and detailed account, but rather as a basis for a series of general observations. The first one concerns an overall impression of unevenness and inconsistency. In many contexts, the presence of translation in language classes or in the form of dedicated courses/modules seems largely to be a matter of the teacher’s discretion. Also, the duration of translation-related offerings varies greatly, as does their distribution across the curriculum, even across different language departments within single faculties, which suggests that it is entirely dependent on the instructor’s specialization and/or research interests. Another observation regards the underlying rationale of translation pedagogy and its relation to the format in which it is offered, which conveys a sense of ambiguity of purpose. The following description of an annual course called “Lingua Inglese 2” (English Language 2), taught by an associate professor in the second year of an undergraduate program at the University of Turin, provides a representative example:

Il corso introduce gli strumenti linguistici finalizzati all’analisi contrastiva a livello lessicale, sintattico, pragmatico e testuale per avviare gli studenti alla teoria e pratica della traduzione. Le lezioni, tenute in inglese, forniscono inoltre una breve storia della traduzione. L’attività didattica sarà completata da esercitazioni pratiche, in aula e a casa, su analisi del testo, traduzione e comparazione di testi tradotti. Il lavoro si svolgerà su testi scritti, letterari e non, in modo da identificarne caratteristiche e difficoltà traduttive.⁸

Roughly translated into English, the passage cited above says that this language course focuses on the formal properties of Italian and English at different levels from a contrastive point of view—which implies that translation is a means towards an end—yet with the final aim of introducing students to the practice of translation—which now becomes a goal in itself. The course is taught in English—and one is left wondering

⁸ <http://www.dipartimentolingue.unito.it/OS-ShowProgram.asp?FromPage=Contents/os-strumenti-bozzeguida.asp&ProgSrchFld=&Editing=1097>. Accessed February 2014.

how translation as an end is catered for under these circumstances—and also provides an overview of translation history. The passage further specifies that classroom activities—carried out on written texts, both literary and non-literary—center on practical exercises involving source-text analysis, translation, and critical analysis of existing translated texts, with a focus on textual features and translation difficulties. It is clear that translation is here conceived of as a language-teaching methodology, a skill in itself, as well as an academic discipline with an established tradition. That said, rather than suffering from a putative ambiguity of purpose, this type of course may simply be interpreted as the result of the fact that translation can be many different things. What is possibly questionable is the decision to include them all within the framework of a single course.

On the other hand, in my institution, the practical skill-based course (“Lettorato”) designated “Traduzione Italiano-Inglese” (Italian-English Translation)—a course where translation could be looked at with a focus on its being an authentic form of communication and a skill in itself, contributing to an all-round language education and also transferable outside education—is taught with an exclusive focus on challenging L2 grammatical structures (being studied in parallel in grammar classes), tricky word-order, vocabulary in semantic fields, and other formal aspects. Accordingly, in the end-of-year written exam, only monolingual dictionaries are allowed for the translation task corresponding to these classes.

These observations—based on a limited data-set and lacking the support of direct access to instructors and students—are partially corroborated in contributions by scholars working in Italy. Di Sabato (2007, 2011b), van Geertruyden (2008) and Mazzotta (2010), for instance, report the confusion originating from the different functions translation can serve and the blurry boundaries between them: the new descriptor for the category of language-related curricular components “Language *and* Translation” implies that translation is an independent learning objective, a competence to be acquired as an end in itself, on an equal footing with language, as would be the case for a course in “chemistry *and* biology”. At the same time, the fact that translation is taught in “containers” understood to be “practical *language* classes” (i.e. “Lettorati”) accords it the status of a language-teaching technique. This twofold identity (i.e. as both a means and end of language education) is reported as being the source of much methodological disorientation. Moreover, Di Sabato (2007) claims that even where translation is conceived of as a skill in its own right, the teaching methods are often left

to chance and there is a tendency to reach back to language-testing, error-focused exercises—often with decontextualized, incomplete literary and journalistic materials—thus offering a sort of extension of the grammar classes that students already attend. Along similar lines, Mazzotta (2007) and Brusasco et al. (2011) bemoan the fact that a focus on the translation process is widely assumed to be appropriately catered for through mere practice, with problems and strategies tackled randomly as they arise, without a well-thought-out, systematic methodology. Van Geertruyden (2008) adds that, due to increasing cuts and staff shortages, translation courses are often assigned to literature lecturers or language teachers who, as is often the case, teach translation as they were taught themselves, in ways not dissimilar from Grammar Translation or Ladmiral's (1977) *performance magistrale*.

On the other hand, both the descriptions of curricular contents and the employability information provided in university promotional materials point to the fact that translation teaching in Italian foreign-language curricula is dominated by conspicuous vocational impulses. This can be taken to testify to the shrinking divide between foreign-language programs and translator-training programs highlighted by some scholars working in Italy (Ulrych 2005, Blini 2008, Stewart 2008).⁹ Two possible explanations for this phenomenon can be identified: on the one hand, there is growing academic consensus in some FLT/L environments around the importance of the process of translating and its communicative dimension to achieving an all-round communicative competence (Balboni 2010). This brings translation as a means and translation as an end very close to each other, and the activities of the foreign-language classroom very close to those of the translator-training classroom. To be sure, as pointed out by various scholars and practitioners (e.g. Abi Aad 2005, Stewart 2008, Zanettin 2009), there are some differences between the ways in which this convergent approach informs practice in language-learning environments and in translator-training environments. For example, real-world factors may be perceived as being less crucial in the former than in the latter, not to mention translation-related technologies or the “nuts and bolts” of the profession. Yet it may be argued that the two fields are also likely to present considerable overlaps. Examples could be the treatment of culture-specific items, idioms, curse and taboo words, and proper names, or the adaptation to target-

⁹ This phenomenon is epitomized by the fact that even the undergraduate programs in Translation and Interpreting are subsumed under the degree class in Linguistic Mediation, together with “general” foreign-language programs.

language stylistic conventions, for which it can be assumed that students from both camps will mobilize the same reasoning and action. This assumption finds confirmation in some of the Italian literature on pedagogical translation in foreign-language courses (e.g. Balboni 2010, 2012), where activities deemed beneficial for communicative proficiency (e.g. subtitling) are presented in ways that involve language students in the same procedures that translator trainees and professionals would have to consider as well (e.g. socio-pragmatic and cultural adaptation, attention to space constraints).

The second factor explaining the gradual curricular convergence of foreign-language programs and translator-training programs in Italy is the enhanced professionalizing character the former have been given since the university reforms (Boarini 2005). Their mission is to prepare future multilingual professionals, able to operate as communicators in various sectors, notably tourism, sales and marketing, media and advertising, publishing, public administration, and international relations. In these contexts, graduates may well be asked to translate informative and promotional materials, written correspondence, official documents, speeches, and the like, with a view to facilitating interactions between parties unable to communicate with each other directly. While this is simply implied in the official career prospects of the degree class, “Modern Languages and Cultures”, the focus on translation skills with an overt professional relevance is more explicit in the other language-related degree class specifically designated “Linguistic Mediation”. Against this backdrop, vocationally-oriented approaches to translation teaching would appear to be justified.

As a consequence, translation courses/modules are likely to become sites of translator training, where instructors may take the opportunity to introduce professionalizing elements along the lines of what constitutes Colina’s (2003: 24-26) “communicative translational competence”, as a further step along the continuum of all the possible manifestations of translation in educational contexts. With a view to offering highly professionally-relevant contents, aligned with the employability prospects envisaged by the different curricula, this type of translation teaching is likely to contain elements of extreme vocationalization (Gouadec 2007). This is what Hager and Hyland (2003: 274) refer to as “front-end loading”, understood as forms of training designed to prepare students to fit into specific jobs and, as such, focused almost exclusively on the development of technical vocational skills. Based on personal experience (Lombardi and Peverati 2008, Peverati 2009) and on information from colleagues in other universities, these offerings can take the form of introductory

modules to the translation profession, workshops organized around the undertaking of authentic commissions, visits from professional translators, training in translation technologies, internships at translation agencies, and the like. Beyond the practical translation work in the classroom—sometimes with modified schedules to accommodate real deadlines—the focus is on aspects of a typical translation workflow, project-management, familiarization with translation memories, subscription to and participation in translators' fora and newsletters, job-hunting skills in the translation industry, etc.

Although this type of vocational training can be expected to enrich classroom activities in different ways—not least developing a greater awareness of some good practices—some manifestations of it may at the same time conceal a number of pitfalls that risk undermining its appropriateness and utility. This is particularly the case of those initiatives that simulate or replicate in the classroom real-world professional scenarios, what Bernardini (2004: 23) calls “replication activities”. Among the most conspicuous weaknesses is their contextualization at the level of wider curriculum. In translator-training programs, or in more structured degree courses in languages and translation, entire curricula are designed to prepare and support the training of the translation profession. To these purposes, specific components are included, like translation-relevant language and subject-areas, terminology management, translation technologies, and translation theory. In foreign-language programs, however, this “consistency of intents” (ibid.: 26) is not necessarily respected. As a result, the vocationalized initiatives discussed here tend to be offered in a “curricular void”, as it were, often with language-focused translation classes being the only related contents, and in a general context of predominantly theoretical courses in linguistics or in other program-specific disciplines (e.g. economics, marketing, international law, media studies, literary criticism). Given this background, one might agree with Carreres (2006) that caution is needed when drawing close parallels between foreign-language faculties and translator-training institutions because, although the purposes underpinning translation courses in the two environments have been gradually converging and language lecturers/academics are not necessarily unsuitable translation teachers (Pym 2001), what is undoubtedly different is the curriculum composition. Personal experience has shown that the not always optimal curricular contextualization of the type of vocational training discussed here can turn it into an over-challenging experience with respect to both the translation and linguistic skills required and the expected quality

standards: students often bring with them the imprints of formalistic translation activities and, even at advanced stages, are often still in the process of honing their linguistic knowledge. The challenges intensify with the particular directionality and text-type that often characterize these initiatives—especially authentic-commission-based workshops—i.e. translation into L2 and persuasive, promotional texts for local commissioners. Finally, the type of vocational training discussed here tends to fuel unrealistic expectations. Despite the fact that it is often presented as offering “*minimal* basic competencies useful to operate in the translation market” (Brusasco et al. 2011: unpaginated, emphasis added, English mine here and throughout), it is not unlikely that students—still at the stage of “unconscious incompetence” (González Davies 2004: 40)—may believe that what they are receiving is a sufficient toolkit to enter the translation profession. And although proponents do stress that students must be encouraged to seek further training should they wish to work as translators, such steps are not always easy to monitor.

One final aspect of translation teaching in Italian foreign-language curricula is that, although all language and linguistics offerings are grouped under the official descriptor “Language and Translation”, quite a number of them do *not* feature any translation component in any of the undergraduate or postgraduate years. This absence may be attributed to different logistical factors, but also to the persistence of hostility, misgivings, and ignorance among practitioners and curriculum developers about this teaching practice and the multiple benefits it can bring to an all-round language education.

One thus suspects that translation education in Italian foreign-language programs is characterized by a sort of polarization, with traditional philological orientations at one pole, often excessive profession-based approaches at the opposite pole, and a gray area somewhere in between, where translation is largely ignored or rejected. In turn, this polarization—to a certain extent akin to what Kearns (2008: 186) describes in terms of an “academic/vocational dichotomy”—points to rather narrow understandings of what translation is and how it can be used in the context of linguistic and cultural education. The first pole, so to speak, reflects a concept of translation as a predominantly linguistic type of learning, a form-focused exercise heir to a Saussurean structuralist-systemic approach to language studies, with much emphasis being placed on its testing of language-related declarative knowledge. Needless to say, this view is rather restrictive as it is limited to only one dimension and use of translation, namely that of form-

focused contrastive practice. This view is not negative or superfluous in itself (see Witte on “translating” in section 1.1.3), but just partial. It becomes less valuable when it dominates translation education throughout the whole curriculum and when it determines uses of translation as decontextualized exercises testing tricky language (journalese, literary narrative), along the lines of old-time prose and version tasks, curtailing the time that could be devoted to more markedly communication-oriented work. This approach neglects the communicative, authentic, goal-driven essence of translation and the access it provides to the socio-cultural and interactional dimension of language. In this way, this curriculum component largely fails to meet the educational objectives and the overall mission of most contemporary language education.

At the opposite pole, vocationalizing trends reflect a narrow concept of translation as well, in as much as it is taken to be a predominantly professional skill-set modeled after what translators do for a living in the language-services industry. The underlying curricular ideology here features at least three interrelated shortcomings: first, vocational courses pursue the acquisition of technical knowledge and skills specific to one single occupational profile, the professional translator. As such, their application field is quite restricted. Moreover, the skill-set they aim to develop is unlikely to be realistically usable for large groups of students: as is largely the case in the humanities, language graduates enter a wide range of multi-faceted jobs, where professional translation skills—at times even language skills—are not necessarily required. And even if translating can be expected to constitute part of a language graduate’s job, it is likely to be for internal purposes in non-professionalized sectors, namely for situations that vocational offerings do not address. Second, vocational courses tend to regard and present translation only as a skill characterized by a high level of expertise. In so doing, they ignore the fact that translation is a skill that, as discussed by Calvo (2011) and Whyatt (2012), can be acquired at different levels of development and competence, allowing for a wide spectrum of linguistic and communicative behaviors, some mandatory in translator-training environments, others fully acceptable in other curricula. Third, and more problematic, is the concept of the “translation profession” itself. It may legitimately be wondered whether there is such a thing as a clear-cut translator profile that curriculum design and pedagogical practice should target. The answer is far from straightforward, especially in times when translators are often required to do much more than mere translating, including post-editing, documentation, technical writing, desktop publishing, product engineering to

name but a few (Pym 2003, Pym in Yanchun et al. 2012). Alternatively, guiding principles for curriculum development may be provided by translator competence models (e.g. PACTE 2003, Kelly 2005). Yet, despite the substantial scholarly work on the subject, comparatively less effort has gone into making them workable reference tools for teaching practice (Morón 2009 in Calvo 2011). In this respect, Kearns (2006: 140) observes how the establishment of teaching objectives based on competence models, with their typically fine articulation in countless components, risks becoming “a hindrance rather than a help to the trainer”, as it imposes too many aspects to attend to simultaneously. More guiding criteria may be derived from an analysis of the translation needs in a specific market, similar to what Li (2001) advocates. The problem with such measurements, however, is that translation markets are anything but steady. The same applies to a concept that is much invoked in vocational translator training, i.e. quality. The question is what or whose quality should be taken as reference point. Moreover, quality is not a straightforward notion. Jääskeläinen et al. (2011) find it useful to distinguish between product, process, and social quality, each with its own features and requirements. In light of these problematic aspects, profession-based translator-training initiatives in foreign-language curricula, especially those with a more generalist composition, appear to be assuming a highly complex, if not questionable, pedagogical pursuit.

Finally, the gray area between the philological and vocational poles, the area in which translation is not envisaged in any specific way in the curriculum, is indicative of yet another narrow perception of this component, possibly the most extreme. The curricular choice of not incorporating it points to the underlying contention that translation activities are harmful and useless. In other words, it suggests an espousal of the arguments, listed at the beginning of this chapter, that were used at the end of the 1800s and during the communicative turn in FLT/L as a justification for rejecting translation. It is also indicative of a failure to acknowledge its usefulness in the communicative dynamics of contemporary societies. All this mirrors an FLT/L environment that has remained impermeable both to the rehabilitation movement that has developed over the past thirty years and to the arguments underpinning it.

As described at the beginning of this section, over the past decade translation education in Italian foreign-language curricula has undergone a number of systemic changes, by virtue of which it is going through a complex period of redefinition and adjustment, what Pym (personal communication, March 2014) defines in terms of

“transitory confusion”. Part of this confusion may be read in connection with the reconceptualization of translation in FLT/L, and with the existence of restricted and partial notions of what translation is and what roles it can play in linguistic and cultural education, which in turn may be seen as informing the philologic vs. vocational polarization discussed above. In what follows, I put forward some tentative suggestions for how to address these polarized impulses, arguing that some direction might derive from a more expansive conceptualization of translation in terms of “transferable learning”, inscribed in turn in a wider discourse of social responsiveness.

1.3. Addressing the issues: A focus on transferability and social responsiveness

The notion of translation as “transferable learning” rests on the concept of learning transfer. This concept has not been univocally defined and agreed upon, which in and of itself provides some indication of how contentious a subject it has been in education sciences. Some attempts at pinning down its nature are the following definitions: learning transfer is “the process of applying knowledge acquired in one situation in some new or novel situation” (Alexander and Murphy 1999: 561), or the process by which “prior learning affect[s] new learning or performance” (Marini and Genereux 1995: 2). A somewhat clearer and concrete explanation of what is meant in the above definitions is provided by Perkins (2010: 13): “Transfer of learning refers to learners acquiring knowledge, skills or even wisdom in one context, for instance coursework, and activating and applying it in others, for instance in another course, a professional setting or a non-standard problem”.

The concept of learning transfer has attracted the attention of educationalists for well over a century and is now enjoying an unprecedented resurgence of interest and research. The reason for this is the centrality of transfer to the success of the entire educational enterprise, as cogently argued by Perkins and Salomon (1992: 201) in the following passage:

We do not teach students arithmetic in school so that they can apply it on school quizzes and exams; we want them to put arithmetic to work in the world, making wise purchases in the supermarket, understanding their mortgages, keeping track of household expenses, and of course entering careers where arithmetic and more complex kinds of mathematics play key roles. We do not teach students history in school so that they can pass the exam at the end of the term. Rather, we want

them to understand the world they live in from an historical perspective. We want the newspaper headlines to make sense in comparison and contrast with the past. We do not teach students reading and writing in schools so that they can go to the encyclopedia and produce schoolish essays to satisfy the teacher. We want them to be intelligent readers and practical, effective writers in their lives.

The target of these pedagogical ambitions is for learners to be able to use the knowledge and skills they acquire inside the classroom in learning contexts other than those of initial acquisition and testing, as well as outside the institution's four walls, in their personal, professional, and civic lives. Similar arguments could also be made for translation as a component of linguistic and cultural education. In other words, its inclusion at the level of both classroom and curricula could take stock of the transferability potential of translation-related learning, in terms of its usability in multiple situations and its contribution to further learning and performance on a larger scale. The transferability of translation-related learning can be articulated at three different, increasingly wide-ranging levels, which largely depend on the way translation is conceptualized and taught:

1. Transferability of translation skills to employment settings;
2. Transferability of mediation skills to settings including but transcending employment, to embrace the private, public, and educational domains;
3. Transferability of translation-related generic skills to the broadest range of settings.

These different transferability levels are here discussed as possible routes via which the polarized approaches to translation education discussed in the previous section might be addressed.

The particular type of vocational translator training discussed here rests on the partial understanding of translation as a preeminently specialized and technical skill-set used by professional translators, and seems to be premised on the assumption that if translation teaching is not primarily for language learning, then it must be for training professional translators, in ways similar to what happens in institutions that train translators and interpreters. Some translator training may be justified in foreign-language curricula, especially those informed by a "technological" educational philosophy (Allen 1984 in Cook 2010: 105), i.e. geared towards providing skills needed by both individuals and society. Yet, instead of organizing it around the concept of translation as a "professional type of knowledge", this training might be best organized around the concept of translation as a "transferable type of knowledge" in the terms

discussed by Calvo (2011: unpaginated). With the latter notion, Calvo refers to an adaptable, multi-purpose ability, that is deployed by, among others, “intercultural mediators, foreign trade experts, international marketing professionals, global content managers, multilingual secretaries or diplomats” (ibid.), as a more or less frequent component of their tasks and duties in the workplace (transferability level 1). From this perspective, translation corresponds to the ability to communicate interlingually in a variety of employment settings, at various levels of competence and acceptability, and not necessarily to the specialized activity performed by professional translators. This ability, Calvo claims, is required in many more contemporary jobs than was the case in the past. She goes on to argue that translation skills “at different expertise levels” (ibid.) can be required in a range of curricula that are not devised for the professional translation market as such. This is the case of foreign-language curricula, like for example those discussed with reference to the Italian university system. In these contexts, the design of a mode of translation pedagogy that is responsive to employability issues and social demands should adopt a flexible approach, which “responds to the question of who needs or will be likely to need translation skills, apart from professional translators” (ibid.), in what situations, and of course what their educational needs might be.

Pertinent to the present concerns though it may be, Calvo’s argument may leave one wondering what exactly distinguishes translation as a “transferable type of knowledge” from translation as a “professional type of knowledge” (ibid.). Blini (2008: 136), for example, quite rightly asks “why call ‘linguistic mediator’ the person who translates the webpage of a small business, who helps draw up a report at the police station, who writes in different languages an informative notice in a hospital?”, where his concept of “linguistic mediator” can be seen as approximating the idea of a person who translates “at a transferable level”. He suggests that this person should be called “translator” and should be formed as such. Calvo’s (ibid.) answer to this question is the following:

[w]hile the common core of skills at the different levels of translation expertise can be considered to be the same (interlinguistics, interculturality), there is a clear distance between intercultural translational performance in general and the skills needed to produce high-quality 350-word technical translations, within an hour and with a specific translation memory.

It can thus be assumed that the design of translator education in foreign-language programs should focus on the “core” of translator skills, what is thought to be common to all translator activity, from a basic to a top level of expertise. Possible blueprints might be found in works similar to Colina’s (2003) handbook—possibly deprived of profession-based components, such as translator’s discussion groups or MT tools (*ibid.*: 56, 66)—which offers sample activities and methodological guidelines grounded in Skopos theory and functionalism. This type of resource may be expected to provide the essentials of competent translation performance, in terms of general approach and basic procedures. In a sense, this approach can be seen as conceptually analogous to the basic training that Mossop (2003: 20) advocates as a sort of springboard for future training in translator-training institutions, an approach that focuses on “general abilities [...] which take a very long time to learn: text interpretation, research, and checking/correcting”.

Mossop’s approach embodies a more humanistic interpretation of translator training, one that leans more towards “education” than vocational “training”. The type of skills transferability suggested by Calvo actually comes close to the concept of vocationality, as it implies the relevance of the skills acquired to one’s functioning in the occupational domain. However, it can be interpreted as a “milder”, orientative form of vocationality—not “front-end loading” to use Hager and Hyland’s terminology (2003: 274)—which conveys a flexible idea of the links between skills learnt in education and career paths, links that are not governed by a logic of professional predetermination, or “professional typecasting”, as Calvo (2011: unpaginated) calls it.

At the philological end of the polarization, the understandings and related uses of translation in tertiary language education seem to have been frozen in time, so to speak, and to have lagged behind the major theoretical shifts registered in the voluminous literature that has recently addressed the subject. This points to the need for teaching approaches and instructional activities to be refreshed and updated in line with the plentiful suggestions informed by broader understandings and applications of this curricular component. In particular, this renewal process should be underpinned by a concept of translation as a vehicle for enhanced communicative competence in the language being learnt and also, in compliance with the CEFR, as an ability that has currency in the social domain, as part of the ordinary behavior of foreign-language users (Council of Europe 2001). More precisely, translation should be conceived of not only as an exercise for gaining accurate (meta)linguistic knowledge of a foreign language but also as a tool for the development of an all-round communicative competence, also

comprised of sociolinguistic and pragmatic components, whose transferability potential manifests itself when learners/users actually *use* that language for authentic communication with other users of the same language inside and outside the classroom. At the same time, translation work should also be intended as laying the foundations for—or complementing—the training of a particular language activity that does not only entail receptive, productive, and interactive activities in monolingual mode, but rather in interlingual and crosslingual mode. This activity, which aims to make information expressed in one language accessible to speakers of another language in response to concrete communication needs, can be applied outside the language classroom in a range of situations that may include but also go *beyond* employment alone, to encompass the private, public, and educational domains as well (transferability level 2). These transfer settings beyond the workplace can be as varied as formal and non-formal education, continuing education, family and community, up to the whole of one's personal life sphere.

The understanding of translation envisaged at this second level of transferability is more inclusive and diverse than the one discussed at the previous level. It can be assimilated to the recently conceptualized notion of “mediation”¹⁰ as postulated by, among others, Dendrinos (2006). The author conceives of mediation as an “everyday social practice” (ibid.: 16), whose aim is to work against communication breakdowns, to fill information gaps and/or to interpret meanings for others who may not have understood what has been said or written. She goes on to describe it as a spoken, written, and interactive activity, generally interlinguistic—although in certain circumstances it can also occur intralingually—that envisages both immediate and delayed response. Mediation tasks may demand that the person relaying the message use a different register, style, or level of specialization than that in the source text (paraphrasing or explaining in simpler or more specialized words). Also, they generally aim at the transfer of salient information, relevant to the communicative situation at hand. As such, they envisage a flexible approach to textual make-up, length, and contents, thus assuming the form of summaries, reports, abstracts, or notes. Finally, they may involve a change of communication channel (from spoken to written and vice

¹⁰ A concept similar to that of mediation as discussed here has been acknowledged in Translation Studies since at least André Lefevere's 1992 volume *Translation, Rewriting and Manipulation of Literary Fame*, which introduced the idea of translation as re-creation and re-formulation, involving different meta-textual interventions on the source text, which is dethroned from the position of absolute authority it used to have. The concept of mediation in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning, on the contrary, has gained ground only in more recent years.

versa, from visual—pie chart, graph, table, map, photograph—to written/spoken). In the following excerpt, Dendrinos (ibid.: 13) provides a short exemplification of what she means by this everyday social practice of mediation (using Greek and English as the languages involved):

[A] Greek speaker of English is very likely to be asked by another Greek speaker, who has minimal or no English, what was just said by an English speaker—say, on a flight, in a film, an email or phone message, during a personal or professional conversation. A non Greek speaker, using English as a contact language with his/her Greek friend or colleague, is very likely to ask, while in Greece, what something that draws his/her attention means: a poster, an advertisement, an article, a leaflet, instructions, etc. The employer is very likely to request that the English speaker s/he has hired write a letter in English about a situation that they discuss in Greek, or to write in Greek a summary of a report in English.

As this passage indicates, mediation can also be used in employment settings. Yet Dendrinos and others (De Florio-Hansen 2008, Pfeiffer 2013) emphasize that it is distinguished from professional, or traditional, translation and interpretation in as far as translators and interpreters are—theoretically—not expected to intervene on the source text nor to participate as interlocutors in the communicative exchange. By contrast, as partly described above, mediators engage in a more flexible text-processing operation, selecting significant information to the task at hand and relaying it in ways adequate to the addressees. In so doing, they become active communication participants, no longer in a two-way but in a “three-way exchange” (Dendrinos 2006: 17). Moreover, mediation is generally conceptualized as different by virtue of its higher degree of informality and frequency of use by all language users in everyday social settings (Reimann and Rössler 2013).

In his insightful book *Translation in Language Teaching*, Cook (2010: 109-124) acknowledges a similar concept of translation as a transferable, socially relevant language ability, and does so in a wider discussion of the compatibility of translation in language education with all the major curriculum ideologies, i.e. “technological, social reformist, humanistic, and academic” (Allen 1984 in Cook ibid.: 105). In particular, Cook challenges the traditional assumption held in many FLT/L quarters that translation is either a language-teaching tool or a skill in its own right, needed only by a select minority of learners going on to be translators and interpreters. He deems this distinction not valid because, in a world of ever-growing crosslinguistic and

crosscultural global communication, it can be safely assumed that translation is widely needed in everyday situations, “and not as a specialized activity at all” (Cook *ibid.*: 109). Interestingly, he claims that this is true across the broad spectrum of translation manifestations, whether we take it in its more restricted, Catfordian sense of replacing “textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language” (Catford 1965: 20) or in the more wide-ranging sense of producing a functional rendition of a source-text in a target language to enable understanding between monolingual communication participants in different language communities. Cook exemplifies his claim by mentioning numerous situations that—in reverse order from the one presented here—go from the most personal sphere of family, relationships, and community, to professional life, to international relations. Although sticking to the term “translation” throughout his argument, Cook seems to delineate a concept that partially overlaps with that of mediation discussed above. For most of his discussion, he refers to both the spoken and the written communication channel.

As to the first domain, Cook argues that translation is needed in cases of mixed-language couples, whenever one partner is confronted with unfamiliar words/phrases in the language of the other, as well as in encounters between family members from the two sides. The same applies to parent-children communication in immigrant families and to the exchanges between such families and the wider community (e.g. in schools, work environments). Still in the personal domain, but within a wider perimeter, increased travel, Internet use, and mobility require extensive resort to translation, from making sense of a menu for somebody else to making the content of an email accessible or reporting what the news says and so on. Cook sees the skills involved in this type of translation activity as important for society at large, and therefore considers it to be a legitimate objective of curricula informed by a technological approach to education. At the same time, these skills may be seen as contributing to a greater ethical cause, that of plurilingualism as espoused by the CEFR (Council of Europe 2001: 4), i.e. the acquisition of different languages and cultures that are not kept “in strictly separated mental compartments, but build up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact”. Translation skills at this level of transferability can be seen as a vehicle for a pluralistic view of language learning, whose aim is the development of individuals who are able to mediate between different languages and cultures. As such, translation skills are also justified within a social reformist educational perspective.

The next area of transferability Cook envisages for translation skills regards employment, here presented at the first level of transferability. He claims that, in the occupational domain, one's use of foreign languages is more likely to be for crosslingual communicative needs than for intralingual ones in monolingual settings (e.g. assistance in negotiations with, correspondence between monolingual business partners), and thus requires translation. After a short digression on the professional relevance of translation skills and thus their justification also from a humanistic educational perspective, with employment regarded as an important part of personal fulfillment, Cook points out that these skills are frequent and useful not only in trade and business but also in work related to international communications per se and, at a still broader level (his third), in institutional international communication. In the former category, he includes fields like "news reporting, computer programming and mobile technologies, international marketing, film subtitling, and translating books", whereas in the latter, he lists "diplomacy, trade and treaty organizations, and negotiations of all kinds" (2010: 111-112) and concludes by mentioning the massive translation demand in international organizations such as the UN, the EU, the World Health Organization, and the World Bank.

Cook's argument above lends support to the claim put forward here of a potential transferability of broadly conceived translation skills to different areas of an individual's life. It is nevertheless open to debate, especially as regards some of the final assertions about the labor market, which would require substantiation through empirical data. In the absence of such data, Cook's views are here acknowledged with the benefit of the doubt. A slightly more critical approach may instead be needed when analyzing another aspect of Cook's argument: the author claims that translation is "a necessary skill and a frequent activity in the personal and professional lives of many individuals, essential for the economic survival of many organizations and for engagement in international affairs" (ibid.: 109). This is indisputable. What may be questionable is the fact that Cook advocates an idea of translation as "not a specialized activity at all" (ibid.) and a necessary outcome of all language education, and then he appears to assume that such non-specialized training will be sufficient to prepare graduates to work in highly specialized translation environments, such as the UN. In other words, he seems to treat *all* manifestations of translation as if they were the same and as if they did not require specific training paths. A position similar to Cook's is to be found in the

CEFR (Council of Europe 2001: 87), where mediating language activities are broken down as follows:

4.4.4.1 oral mediation:

- simultaneous interpretation (conferences, meetings, formal speeches, etc.);
- consecutive interpretation (speeches of welcome, guided tours, etc.);
- informal interpretation:
 - of foreign visitors in own country
 - of native speakers when abroad
 - in social and transactional situations for friends, family, clients, foreign guests, etc.
 - of signs, menus, notices, etc.

4.4.4.2 written mediation:

- exact translation (e.g. of contracts, legal and scientific texts, etc.);
- literary translation (novels, drama, poetry, libretti, etc.);
- summarising gist (newspaper and magazine articles, etc.) within L2 or between L1 and L2;
- paraphrasing (specialised texts for lay persons, etc.).

All these mediating activities are presented as “occupy[ing] an important place in the normal linguistic functioning of our societies” (ibid.: 14). This is certainly a fact. What may make the CEFR construal of mediation a little contentious is that these activities are all presented as aims of general language education, without mention of the specific training required by simultaneous/consecutive interpreting on the one hand and technical/literary translation on the other.

It may be the case that Cook, and possibly the CEFR as well, are running up against current assumptions and aspirations concerning the professionalization of translation and interpreting in top-end sectors (Pym, personal communication, March 2014) and are trying to argue in favor of an idea of translation as a less exclusive and protected job. Further, they may also be interpreting the recent scenario in which translation is becoming increasingly non-professional, with free-access and interactive website technologies allowing untrained subjects to produce translations for free before the official ones are released (Pym in Yanchun et al. 2012). Notwithstanding these possible justifications, the concerns expressed above still remain.

In the face of an activity that is rapidly changing in response to an evolving world order, the crux of the matter seems to remain that of defining concepts and boundaries, i.e. what general/informal mediating activities are and to what extent they differ from specialized ones, what situations require which, and above all what pedagogies are necessary in each case. Some recent work, especially in some FLT/L cultures (notably

Germany), has been devoted to exploring this broader concept of translation that goes under the name of mediation, and to devising instructional activities that integrate it into learning and testing material, in form of simulations of everyday scenarios where interlingual transposition between texts is required (e.g. De Arriba García and Cantero Serena 2004, Dendrinos 2006, Bohle 2012, Reimann and Rössler 2013). It is still, however, a nascent field of FLT/L, with still very little or no pedagogical tradition in some languages (Italian being one), which calls for considerable further research, in terms of both conceptualization and methodological operationalization.

Finally, the transferability of translation-related activities in language education can also be articulated at a third, yet broader level of transferability, and it is this that I explore in greater detail in this thesis. At this level, translation is conceived of as a multi-faceted, integrated language ability that is governed and informed by an array of higher-order cognitive processes, general skills, and dispositions that in turn govern and inform thought and performance of several kinds in a wide spectrum of different professional and social settings. For present purposes, I have labeled these skills and attributes “transferable generic skills” (Peverati 2013). As discussed in greater depth in the literature review in Chapter 2, typical examples revolve around key human activities like problem-solving, information retrieval and handling, teamwork, communication, and negotiation (Hager and Holland 2006). These skills and attributes are assumed not to be exclusive to translation or to any particular discipline, but rather to be inherent in academic study at large and to support it. Since the late 1980s, they have come to be highly valued by employers as indicators of mature, active, and adaptable individuals. As such, they may prove more useful to language graduates when it comes to gaining and retaining jobs, or moving between them, than those acquired in strictly vocational translation courses. Moreover, since these skills have been acknowledged as playing an essential role in fostering an individual’s personal development, in terms of, for example, social participation or aptitude to continuing education, they may be considered to be learning objectives whose import go well beyond short-term employment concerns to involve long-term benefits in much broader life areas. A focus on these skills would serve a different logic of social responsiveness, one that is not solely focused on the development of specific market or societal needs, as discussed at the two transferability levels above, but rather on a larger notion of learner (and future graduate) empowerment. This consideration coheres with and draws on Ulrych’s (2005) advocacy of a mode of translator education geared to the development of enabling,

metacognitive, transferable skills that, in the face of the increasing diversity and flexibility of today's translation world, should place graduates in a position to further develop their competence, monitor their performance throughout their careers, and deal confidently with any translation task. Although Ulrych's argument and the argument put forward here both rest on an idea of education that nurtures general principles, strategic skills, and widely applicable learning, Ulrych restricts the empowerment to the students' future career in the translation profession. However, it is also possible to see the impact of transferable generic skills as reaching a much wider area, inside and outside the language services industry, within and beyond employment.

At this third level of transferability—the most extensive of the three as it subsumes and extends upon the other two, including elements of broadly conceived vocationality and social usability—translation is understood as a language and communication activity, an object of targeted work in tertiary language-learning environments that provides access to, and possibly develops, not only strictly (inter)linguistic and (inter)cultural skills but also a body of learning with a far-reaching, long-term remit. Here, what is expected to be transferred are not interlingual and intercultural skills per se, but rather the generic skills that are required when translating but are not specific to translation. And while, at the two transferability levels above, transfer involves the direct application of skills more or less unchanged across situations, at this level it may be that transfer implies processes of adaptation, transformation, or generalization. In other words, the skills to be transferred are not carried over wholesale but are expected to be mobilized to support new learning and performance in new situations.

These three levels of transferability may be seen as routes via which the polarized trends in translation pedagogy discussed above could be addressed. Each of these levels, albeit to different extents, envisages an expansive understanding and use of translation, which leads to broader and more broadly applicable learning than is the case with either narrowly philological or front-end loading vocational approaches. These expansive, transferable, and socially responsive conceptualizations can provide direction for curriculum planning in an area where, as discussed above, there is considerable confusion of purpose as well as old-fashioned practices.

My research interest here concerns in particular the third level, as it represents a rather novel perspective on the roles translation can play in linguistic and cultural education at tertiary level, and because it may be seen as compatible with more recent

approaches to curriculum design, which prioritize knowledge transferability and employability criteria over skill “superspecialization” (Calvo 2011, Jonnaert et al. 2006). In particular, the notion of translation as pedagogical tool for the development of skills widely applicable in multiple professional and social settings appears to be an additional, alternative way of conceiving of translation as a vocational skill-set, as fundamentally learning transfer can be seen to sit at the heart of any notion of vocational training. Whereas recent scholarship on teaching and learning in higher education in general or in single disciplines has witnessed a growing interest in transferable generic skills, Translation Studies as well as FLT/L has devoted only limited attention to the subject. This is rather lamentable if we consider that close parallels have been identified between these skills and translation-related skills, as discussed in the literature review in Chapter 3.

1.4. Statement of purpose and research questions

The description of translation education in foreign-language degree courses in section 1.2 above is based on the sole analysis of institutional informative material, literature sources, and personal experience related to Italy. Although the ensuing discussion is informed by international perspectives on translator training and language pedagogy, the phenomena identified are restricted to a limited focus area. The purpose of the present research is therefore to obtain a broader, more comprehensive picture, thus establishing whether the issues highlighted here are common to other contexts as well, or whether different phenomena emerge. Another important objective is to access richer and less “mediated” data than those derived from my initial analysis, namely data drawn directly from language teachers in higher education. In particular, this study aims to enrich the discussion of some central issues presented in the preceding sections, with a special focus on translation concepts, translation activities, reasons for resistance to using translation in tertiary language education, and above all on whether recent theories of transferability in general and specifically of transferable generic skills have in any way trickled down to the practice of translation teaching in FLT/L. The findings are expected to form the basis for a discussion of the possible ways in which curriculum development in foreign-language programs as well as teacher training initiatives might benefit from recent scholarship in translation pedagogy as well as in education sciences.

Drawing directly on the purposes listed above, the study presented in this thesis sets out to address the following specific research questions:

1. What understandings and uses of translation are to be found among language teachers working at university level internationally?
2. What are the reasons for not including translation in tertiary language education?
3. Is there an awareness of other functions of translation education beyond those more traditionally related to language skills enhancement, in terms of transferable applications of translation skills and especially of transferable generic skills?

As described in greater detail in Chapter 4, responses to these questions will be looked for through a follow-up analysis of a selection of the data from the international survey *Translation and Language Teaching*, a large-scale study conducted in 2012-2013 by the European Society for Translations Studies, the Intercultural Studies Group of the Universitat Rovira i Virgili (Tarragona, Spain), and the University of Leicester (UK) for the European Commission's Directorate-General for Translation.

1.5. Conclusion

This chapter has set the scene for the entire study. After documenting the rehabilitation of translation as a language-teaching and language-learning tool over the past three decades, it has discussed its enhanced independent status in current language education at university level, taking as an example the case of Italy, not as much for its being in any way paradigmatic but simply because it is a context I have been observing for some time and where I have identified some confusion of purpose, largely resting on restricted and partial understandings of translation. This situation has been discussed in terms of an academic (or philological)/vocational dichotomy, which sees rather traditional, formalistic approaches to translation teaching on the one hand and vocational impulses aimed at providing more professionally relevant higher education on the other. In the subsequent discussion, some possible actions to reduce the confusion of purpose have been put forward. At the core of these actions is the mainstreaming of far wider concepts of what translation is, how it can be used, and what type of learning it can generate, in terms of communicative abilities, transferable interlinguistic skills, and transferable generic skills. Finally, the chapter has introduced the study that will be reported on in the empirical part of this thesis and that aims to

gather more information on three main areas of interest: (1) the concepts and uses of translation among tertiary language teachers, (2) the reasons for not incorporating translation activities, and (3) the awareness of transferability issues. Since the notion of transferable generic skills, central to the third research concern, is relatively novel in Translation Studies and in the field of translation in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning, the remainder of this theoretical premise will be devoted to a detailed literature review designed to provide relevant background knowledge on the subject. In particular, the issue of transferable generic skills in higher education in general will be described in Chapter 2, whereas Chapter 3 will address it with particular reference to translation education.

Chapter 2. Transferable generic skills in higher education

In the preceding chapter, I proposed skills transferability as a principle that might inform translation pedagogy in foreign-language degree programs. Among the different transferability levels of translation-related learning that have been discussed, the main focus of this study lies in the level involving the learning outcomes here referred to as “transferable generic skills”. This chapter examines in greater depth what lies behind this concept. After outlining the various forces that led to, and later fuelled, the transferable generic skills agenda in higher education, it illustrates the conceptual underpinnings of these learning outcomes and a selection of inventories. It then goes on to consider some contested aspects that have surrounded the international debate over these skills, and closes with a discussion of ongoing challenges impacting on the implementation of policies that promote their embedding in university study programs.

2.1. Origins and rationale of the transferable generic skills agenda

Since the late 1980s, increasing attention has been directed to the generic abilities and attributes that all graduate students need to develop in order to succeed in their academic and post-academic lives and to contribute positively to their community. Referred to in this study as “transferable generic skills” (henceforth TGS), these desirable outcomes of higher education typically “cluster around key human activities such as communication, working with others, gathering and ordering information, and problem solving” (Hager and Holland 2006: 2) and are distinct from the discipline-specific knowledge and related technical abilities that are traditionally associated with different university degrees. The recent emphasis on their development within higher education is the result of several factors, as discussed in the following sections.

2.1.1. *Economic factors: The employability agenda*

The most consequential driving force behind the focus on transferable generic skills—especially in countries like the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia—was preeminently economic and can be associated with the so-called “employability agenda”

(Bridgstock 2009: 32). This largely arose in response to public concerns over quality in higher education and employers' dissatisfaction with the yawning gap between graduate profiles and job requirements. A number of surveys mainly conducted during the 1990s (e.g. Harvey et al. 1997, Hesketh 2000) showed indeed that, whereas the world of employment was relatively satisfied with the subject-related knowledge of graduate recruits, it lamented a severe shortage of those attributes "deemed necessary for effective performance at entry-level, and also for future success in the workplace" (Holland 2006: 271). Dissatisfaction was voiced by graduates as well, who felt that their academic experience left them short of this type of skills (Leon 2002).

This much lamented education-job mismatch was largely due to major structural changes in the economy and in graduate employment patterns: an economy increasingly driven by globalization and internationalization needed individuals capable of successfully interacting with people from a broad range of backgrounds, thus showing finely-tuned communication and interpersonal skills. The rise in competition and mobility required the capacity to learn, to move within and between sectors, to adapt to the needs of the market, and to self-regulate. The shift to a service and knowledge-based economy meant new demands in terms of social and information management skills. The pervasive diffusion of new technologies made traditional jobs and established practice obsolete, bringing about entirely new requirements in terms of digital and technological literacy. This complex scenario, characterized by increased uncertainty and exclusion prospects for the less skilled, brought to the fore the urgent need for the population to be flexible and prepared for a lifetime of change and personal development. Murnane and Levy (1996), among others, affirmed that thriving in this changed job market would increasingly require skills that had not been deemed so vital previously, i.e. collaboration, communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, and creativity. In sum, it was felt that higher education, solely centered on subject-specific knowledge, was no longer sufficient to meet the new educational needs. As a result, academic institutions were put under intense pressure by governments—in turn pressurized from industry and lobby groups—to renew curricula allowing for a more explicit focus on these skills.

In this climate, a number of factors contributed to the consolidation of an employability-led TGS agenda. Chief among them was a mode of quality assessment that particularly valorized the notion of TGS and, especially in certain contexts (e.g. Australia), took indicators of TGS development as condition for government funding

(Barrie 2005). Similarly, employers' organizations and professional bodies began to include such skills as a criterion for recruitment and accreditation of degree courses (Drummond et al. 1998). They argued that generic skills, rather than technical skills defined within narrow occupational ranges, were to form the "stabilizing characteristic of work" and the "common denominator of highly qualified manpower" (Bennett et al. 1999: 72).

The promotion of TGS was also boosted by a series of ad hoc reports commissioned by employers' associations, academic organizations, and governmental agencies (e.g. CBI 1989, 1994; AGR 1993, 1995; CIHE 1996; CVCP 1998). These documents urged universities to strengthen their links with the working world and identified a varying number of generic skills to be included in academic programs for the immediate and long-term economic benefit of the respective countries. Most influential in the British context was the document known as Dearing Report (NCIHE 1997) and in Australia the Mayer Report (Mayer 1992).

Stimulated by these developments on the international scene, Italy also addressed the issue of employability skills. A major contribution came from the Istituto per lo Sviluppo e la Formazione dei Lavoratori (Institute Workers Development and Training) which, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Research, devised a model of the competences needed to access and succeed in the labor market (Di Francesco 1994). Besides basic and technical-professional competences, this model included so-called "competenze trasversali" (transversal competences), deemed generalizable across different occupational contexts.

In sum, the focus on TGS in higher education was initially fuelled by external pressures to enhance graduate employability, intended as the production of work-ready individuals who are competent within their disciplinary fields and have the skills needed to successfully face a working world in constant flux and eventually to make productive contributions to the economy at large. These factors were concurrent and intertwined with others, as illustrated in the next section.

2.1.2. Wider socio-economic factors: The lifelong learning agenda

The move to foster transferable generic skills in higher education also gained momentum as a result of a broader socio-economic agenda grounded in the philosophy of lifelong learning. This approach to education, advocating quality learning

opportunities for all throughout life (OECD 1996), was accorded particular significance in the 1990s in the wake of the major socio-economic changes described above, whose demands strongly impacted upon countries' and individuals' capacity to achieve and contribute to economic growth and increased the risk of social exclusion for large parts of the population (Chapman and Aspin 1997). Against this backdrop, education and training—especially at post-compulsory level—were seen as having an enormous potential to curb these problems through the cultivation of human capital, as key towards sustained growth but above all towards personal fulfillment and successful participation in the new society. Within this framework, the concept of employability acquired a meaning that goes beyond short-term employment outcomes and encompasses more holistic dimensions connected to knowledge, the world, and the self (Barrie 2004, Bridgstock 2009).

In many countries, higher education institutions have found themselves increasingly pressured to demonstrate commitment to the lifelong learning agenda. Beyond embarking in considerable restructuring aimed to guarantee unrestricted access to continuing education opportunities, they have sought to demonstrate a range of benefits delivered to their students that would position them as important agents in the by now necessary dimension of lifelong learning (Pitman and Broomhall 2009). Central among these benefits has been the development of TGS, widely presented as supporting ongoing engagement with learning and upskilling (Candy et al. 1994). To this respect, Hager (2006: 43) points out that these skills are typically thought of in terms of university and work alone, but should be understood more broadly because they “represent a basis for lifelong learning in all kinds of life situations”. The relationship is actually two-way and interdependent, because it is only in an ongoing and lifelong perspective that the development of TGS can be conceived of and should be fostered.

Gradually the concept of a set of generic skills that support lifelong learning has become firmly placed on the higher education agenda of many countries. A major stimulus to its dissemination came from international bodies. Among the examples most worth mentioning is the project coordinated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) called *Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations* (henceforth DeSeCo Project). Carried out between 1997 and 2003, the DeSeCo Project was set up to devise a conceptual frame of reference relevant to the development and assessment of generic abilities—referred to as “key competencies”—in a lifelong learning perspective. Chief

among its accomplishments are the unparalleled work on the theoretical foundations of the notion of key competencies and the introduction of a more inclusive notion of these learning outcomes: departing from previous interpretations fixed on economy/productivity-oriented concerns alone, the DeSeCo Project dealt with key competencies from the perspective of “a successful life and a well-functioning society” (Rychen et al. 2003, Rychen and Salganik 2001, 2003), as illustrated in greater detail below (see 2.2.2).

Shortly after the inception of the DeSeCo Project, the EU followed suit by launching the Lisbon Strategy. The Lisbon European Council of March 2000 is famous for setting a new strategic goal for the European Union: “to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” (European Parliament 2000: par. 5). It was widely agreed that education and training had to play a crucial role in the attainment of this ambitious objective and that lifelong learning represented the fundamental framework within which all concrete steps towards it had to be taken. Central among these was the promotion of generic skills, here called “new basic skills” (ibid.: par. 25, 26), for which the Member States, the Council, and the Commission were invited to establish a common European framework. The result of this mandate was the document *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Reference Framework* (European Parliament and Council 2006) (see 2.2.2), which represented the first European-level reference tool in this field and was expected to be applied across the full range of education and training as appropriate to national contexts. In a similar vein to the DeSeCo Project, the envisaged benefits were meant to involve aspects of life wider than employability, namely personal fulfillment, active citizenship, and social inclusion (ibid.: 13).

Although the wide-ranging commitment of the educational sector to equip individuals with the necessary tools to succeed in the new socio-economic order has provided a major impetus for the focus on TGS in higher education, other strictly intertwined factors have significantly contributed to it, as illustrated in the next section.

2.1.3. Pedagogical factors: Student-centered learning and learning for transfer

In addition to the socio-economic, and ultimately political, factors described above, the growing emphasis on transferable generic skills in tertiary education can be seen as

resting on pedagogical grounds as well. In particular, educationalists have directed their attention to TGS because these skills are acknowledged to be strictly linked to more effective teaching and learning in general (Hodgkinson 1996, Bennett et al. 2000, Yanming 2011), more precisely to a student-centered approach to education. Developed to overcome the drawbacks of the transmissionist, teacher-centered paradigm, student-centered education aims to place the learners' needs and processes at the center of all pedagogical efforts. It seeks to promote innovative teaching methods geared towards the achievement of deep learning through a meaningful interaction with teachers, peers and tasks. All this involves an enhanced activation of reflection and critical thinking, interpersonal skills, and self-regulation on the students' part (Barr and Tagg 1995, Lea et al. 2003). As highlighted by Hager and Holland (2006: 7), these strategies “characteristically require learners to deploy some combination of generic skills if they are to be successful”. The two scholars thus maintain that, by explicitly embedding TGS in instructional practices and actively seeking to promote their development, teachers can improve learning overall.

Strictly connected to the above, TGS have also gained momentum among educationalists because these skills, especially their analytical/reasoning components, have sometimes been perceived as the meta-competences that “enable one to select, adapt, adjust and apply one's other skills to different situations, across different social contexts and perhaps similarly across different cognitive domains” (Bridges 1993: 50). The process described here is commonly known as “transfer of learning”, a phenomenon briefly touched upon in section 1.3 and further discussed below. What informs this view of TGS—surfaced with more vigor in recent years (NRC 2012)—is the idea that these skills not only support the process of learning but would also contribute to the process of analyzing and interpreting old and new scenarios, and adapting acquired knowledge and skills to engage successfully with new situations. From this perspective, TGS are presented not so much as what gets transferred but as what *supports* the transfer of prior learning.

This overview has tried to show how the recent focus on TGS in higher education has resulted from the interplay of various economic, social, and pedagogical factors. More to the point, Hager and Holland (2006: 4) see the growing interest for these learning outcomes as “part of a bigger, as yet unresolved, debate about the purpose of university education and how to develop well educated persons who are both employable and capable of contributing to civil society”. Although the concepts of

employable graduates and responsible citizenship have been relatively stable and clear-cut, the definition of the skills that—among other things—are ascribed the potential to bring about these conditions has been more problematic. The next section will attempt an analysis of the conceptual underpinnings of the TGS construct and will provide an exemplification of some representative inventories.

2.2. Conceptual underpinnings and TGS repertoires

It is clear from the foregoing that an international consensus has emerged—at least in certain environments—with regard to the desirability of students acquiring transferable generic skills. Yet this agenda seems to have been more concerned with prescription than conceptualization, especially in its early stages (Bennett et al. 2000, Barrie 2006). Although in recent years more scholarly work has gone into the definition of the theoretical bases underpinning the construct of TGS, thus creating some shared ground and more semantic clarity, the concept has long been shrouded in conceptual ambiguity, mostly due to terminological proliferation, inconsistent usage, as well as definitional vagueness. The problem of proliferation can be seen in relation not only to terminology but also to the actual TGS inventories that have been devised and advocated as basis for curriculum reform initiatives, especially at the level of single academic institutions. The following sections discuss these issues in some detail.

2.2.1. Terminology and central meanings

Affirming that the terminology related to TGS is a tangled wood can sound like an understatement. The concept has been referred to with a bewildering array of descriptors, comprised of adjectives as varied as “cross-curricular”, “core”, “key”, “generic”, and “transferable” coupled with nouns like “skills”, “competencies” and “attributes”, often used interchangeably and in free combination. Overall, the basic meaning attached to these labels is that of abilities and dispositions which are “both, or either, desirable and/or transferable across a broad range of discipline areas and/or contexts” (Chapman and O’Neill 2010: 108). To draw distinctions in any hard and fast way between the different terms being used would be complex. Yet some differences in emphasis can be highlighted.

The adjective “cross-curricular” tends to emphasize the notion of applicability across disciplinary domains, i.e. within education environments. Examples could be IT literacy or information retrieval skills. In the early 1990s, especially in the British context, this type of skills were also described as “core”. Proponents of this label, such as the British National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ), promoted the notion of core skills as separate from any particular discipline or occupation, thus suggesting that they could be identified and taught almost as a curriculum in their own right, “independent from syllabus or subject” (Wolf 1991: 192). As further discussed below, this interpretation engendered much debate, as did also the very semantics of this label: employers have used “core” to refer to the range of generic skills they deemed desirable in graduates from any discipline, whereas in the field of education it has often been taken to refer to the fundamental contents, proper to a particular discipline. Further, even among educationalists and instructors there has been little consensus because, as Bennett et al. (2000: 23) report, the same skills have been taught “as core in one discipline but as generic in another”. For example, communication and presentation skills have been seen as disciplinary (read “core”) in departments like drama and law, whereas these same skills have been considered generic in other departments, say chemistry.

With the publication of the Dearing Report in 1996, the NCVQ notion of “core skills” was re-designed in terms of “key skills”, thus keeping the connotation of centrality and importance characterizing the former label as well. Within the OECD DeSeCo Project (see 2.1.2), the adjective “key” is used to characterize those competencies that (1) are of particular value because of the benefits they bring to both economic and social purposes, (2) apply to multiple areas of life, and (3) are needed by all individuals. Fallows and Steven (2000: 8) focus instead on the metaphorical component of this adjective and imply a meaning of instrumentality, interpreting key skills as useful tools “to unlock the doors to employment”.

Other recurrent adjectives are “generic” and “transferable”, each carrying absolutely distinguishing—as well as much contested—semantic traits of the skills discussed here. As reported in Bridges (1993: 46), the adjective “generic” has often been used to refer to higher-order, meta-cognitive skills. Such use, however, is informed by two distinct views of the relationship between these skills and disciplinary-specific knowledge: according to one view, the term “generic” refers to universal, super-disciplinary abilities that exist separately from content and can be applied as sets of

cognitive processes to any subject (Ennis 1997); by contrast, the other view is based on the notion that the very existence of generic skills and the form they assume in each particular instance are significantly shaped by the disciplinary contents and situation within which they are deployed, and may therefore be somewhat different in different contexts (Jones 2009). From the latter perspective, which seems to be more widely shared, the adjective “generic” loses its conventional meaning of “not specific” and acquires that of “transversal” or “common” to all disciplines and degree courses—to use other typical descriptors. It thus denotes skills that, as clearly described by Barrie (2004: 262-263), “are developed *regardless* of the field of study and domain of knowledge”, but by no means *in a vacuum*, which “can be reasonably expected from the usual higher education experience”. In a similar shade of meaning, the term “generic” has been used to emphasize the general utility of TGS across a large number of contexts. For instance, Bennett et al. (1999: 77) describe generic skills as skills that “can potentially be applied to any discipline, to any course in higher education, to the workplace or indeed to any other context”. In other cases, the term is used to refer to skills that are generalizable from one context to another (Chapman and O’Neill 2010).

The latter connotation brings the semantics of the term “generic” very close to that of “transferable”. The basic meaning attached to the (highly debated) notion of “transferable skills” is that of abilities which, acquired in one situation, can be applied in another situation. As specified by Bridges (1993: 45), this term tends to be preferred when people are talking about skills that can be applied “across different social contexts”, notably from education to the workplace. Chapman and O’Neill (2010: 110) point out that most of the research in this field has focused on identifying abilities that are generally useful across different situations, whereas “very little has appeared which specifically identifies skills that are both useful and likely to transfer well across contexts”. This is because, as discussed below, transfer is a highly complex phenomenon, both theoretically and empirically. Against this background, Bridges (1993: 50) and Green (1994: 40) put forward an interesting distinction between “transferable skills” and “transferring/transfer skills”. The former are equated with context-independent abilities, which can be applied in a variety of different settings with little or no adaptation (e.g. word processing). The latter refer instead to the processes used in modifying, extending, or adapting a skill so that it may be used in other situations. These are the meta-cognitive skills that govern the selection and organization mechanisms involved in using the acquired knowledge and skills. From this perspective,

Green (*ibid.*) claims, transfer skills are superordinate to transferable skills. Similarly, Bridges (*ibid.*: 51) argues that the former are very sophisticated personal/intellectual achievements “which should receive our fuller attention” rather than the latter, which he defines as “atomistic list of ‘competencies’ towards which we are sometimes invited to direct our enthusiasm”.

Other adjectives often found in discussions of TGS are the already mentioned “common” and “transversal”, along with yet others such as “non-technical” (Jackson and Hancock 2010), “employability” (Jackson 2012) and “21st-century” (NRC 2012), but these have a more limited currency than those discussed in detail above. All these adjectives are variously attached to terms like “skills”, “competencies”, and “attributes”. Although their use seems to be regulated by subjective preferences or passing trends, some semantic specificities can be identified. One traditional way of interpreting the word “skill” is in terms of “something relatively routinisable, low in cognitive content, typically learned through rehearsal” (Bridges 1993: 44), in other words discrete, high-qualified operations, relatively independent of context, like “dribbling a ball, conjuring, and planing a piece of wood” (Barrow 1987: 190-191). From this perspective—grounded in behaviorist theories of learning—skills have come to be associated with vocational training and relatively low-level cognition. This view has come in for considerable criticism on the grounds that the concept of skill is as inextricably linked with practical action as with reflection and thought (Griffiths 1987). Others have added that skills are far from the isolatable, discrete abilities implied by theorists like Barrow. Hinchliffe (2002: 190), for instance, convincingly argues that “the ability to dribble a ball is only of real use if taken together with other footballing abilities—passing ability, the ability to read a game, to anticipate, to adjust one’s style to the physical conditions or to one’s opponents”. In his view, skills are a combination of technique, intelligence, awareness of the context in which they are performed and are likely to impact, awareness of their overall purpose, an ability to adjust them in the process of doing, as well as to select from a variety of techniques. To some extent, this expanded concept of skill (Payne 2000) coheres with Schön’s theory of reflective practice (1983), according to which the performance of a skill heavily depends on contextual understanding combined with the willingness to experiment using a repertoire of previously assimilated processes and theories in order to find the best fit for the problem at hand.

Skill talk has been paralleled, and at a certain point absorbed, by the discourse of “competence”.¹ Over the last few decades, the term “competence” has become a powerful buzzword with a highly complex meaning, mainly due to its “unclear logical status” (Ashworth and Saxton 1990: 9) and to what Weinert (2001: 45) calls “conceptual inflation”, i.e. the lack of a theoretically grounded definition, compensated for by considerable surplus meanings. As was the case with skills, the notion of competence has been interpreted through various theoretical lenses, ranging from behaviorist (McClelland 1973), to cognitivist (Le Boterf 1994), to socio-constructivist ones (Jonnaert et al. 2005). Since the 1990s, special focus has been placed on holistic and multi-componential views (Cheetham and Chivers 1996, Rychen and Salganik 2003), which were deemed better able to capture the complex nature of human functioning and to accommodate the impact of the large-scale transformations of work in the globalized information society. In this light, the notion of competence has come to cover a broader referential area than skills, incorporating the latter in a combination of knowledge, abilities, and attitudes. An example of this conception is the DeSeCo Project’s (OECD 2005: 4, emphasis added) definition:

[a] competency is more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilising psychosocial resources (*including skills* and attitudes) in a particular context. For example, the ability to communicate effectively is a competency that may draw on an individual’s knowledge of language, practical IT skills and attitudes towards those with whom he or she is communicating.

Since the mid 1990s, alongside skills and competence, another discourse has gradually gained ground within the TGS agenda, especially in Australia and New Zealand: that of “attributes”, more precisely “graduate attributes” or “generic graduate attributes”. This terminology has mostly been found in institutional policy documents and mission statements. Considering the definition by Bowden et al. (2000: unpaginated, emphasis added), the term “attribute” seems to be the broadest within the set:

Graduate attributes are the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students would desirably develop during their time at the institution and, consequently, shape the contribution they are able to make to their profession and as a citizen. [...] These attributes *include but go beyond* the

¹ Some authors (e.g. Chapman and O’Neill 2010) use the term “competency” to mean the same concept.

disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge that has traditionally formed the core of most university courses. They are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future.

The other descriptor, “generic graduate attributes”, has been defined instead as “the skills, knowledge and qualities of university graduates, *beyond disciplinary content knowledge*, which are applicable to a range of contexts” (Barrie 2004: 262, emphasis added).

An interesting aspect of Bowden et al.’s definition is the inclusion of subject-specific knowledge in the semantic scope of graduate attributes. This seems justifiable in light of the fact that these attributes are viewed as descriptions of the abilities and values a university community agrees all its graduates should develop as a result of successfully completing their university studies. This clearly encompasses a body of disciplinary contents as well. Such inclusion can also be read in the face of the arguments in favor of the significant context-dependency of generic skills, as discussed above. Pitman and Broomhall (2009: 443) further specify that, since such body of knowledge cannot, in most cases, be acquired outside higher education, the specific choice of “graduate attributes” in place of “generic skills” represents an attempt by higher education to position itself as unique provider of highly desirable, lifelong learning skill-sets “not to be developed in other post-secondary educational settings”. In contrast, the term “generic” suggests “many kinds of, and for a, learning” (ibid.: 447), including those not attending academic institutions.

A further feature worth mentioning about the discourse of “(generic) graduate attributes” is the wider referential scope ascribed to the term “attributes”, which for some theorists makes it more semantically appropriate than other terms. Hager and Holland (2006), for instance, claim that “attributes” better accommodates the very diverse range of items contained in common inventories of so-called “generic *skills*”, some of which, in their view, cannot be remotely defined as skills and are better conceived of as dispositions (e.g. initiative, ethical commitment). Pitman and Broomhall (2009) argue that the discourse of attributes points to the attempt of higher education providers to pursue a broader, socially-focused lifelong learning agenda than that encapsulated in the label “generic skills” as used by governments and industries. In other words, this terminological shift has been functional in supporting the move from an educational agenda geared towards employability to one inspired by lifelong learning (see 2.1.1 and 2.1.2).

At the end of this overview of TGS-related descriptors, it can be concluded that terminological proliferation and semantic ambiguity are probably endemic to TGS discourse, especially due to the remarkably short shelf-life of most labels and to a certain degree of arbitrariness always involved in the use of any label. Over time, these constraints have posed some challenges to the attempts at univocally defining TGS as a concept and at identifying what actually lies behind this designation. These issues will be addressed in more detail in the next section. Before moving on to it, however, it may be worth explaining the reasons informing my choice of the label “transferable generic skills” for the present study. As to the term “skills”, I preferred it over “attributes” because it has wider currency both in popular usage and in the literature and because it is comparatively less clichéd and “polluted” (Pym 2013) than “competence/competency”. By adopting it, I reject narrow conceptions depicting skills as measurable, work-related, economically exploitable techniques, and advocate a wider interpretation of the kind discussed by Hinchliffe (2002) above. Regarding the two modifiers, despite the theoretical problems involved in the adjective “transferable”, I have decided to retain it for the potential envisaged by wider interpretations of the concept of transfer put forward in recent theories (see 2.3.3). As to “generic”, I interpret it in terms of “inherent in all academic study”, “common to and useful in a wide range of disciplinary domains and social settings”. Overall, these two adjectives appear to well suit my argument for an alternative approach to the training of strictly vocational translation skills in foreign-language degree courses, an approach that stresses the wide utility and applicability of the learning developed through this curricular component or instructional activity (see 1.3).

2.2.2. Definitions and repertoires

Most contributions on transferable generic skills feature rather nebulous definitions of their object of study. Given the complexity of what is being referred to in short-hand as TGS, this probably cannot be helped and maybe we should just accept that the meaning of this concept will always be nebulous and will always depend on the author who is suggesting it and on what it is being used for. So “rather than bemoaning this as a problem or an example of slapdash academic discourse” (Kearns, personal communication, February 2012), we should look at it as a distinctive trait of the discourse field, and possibly an interesting one in its own right.

Yet the fact remains that much definitional work as it is reported on in the literature seems to rest on rather thin theoretical bases, and for this reason it has come in for extensive criticism. Especially in the early stages of the TGS agenda, it was limited to the account of perception-based surveys conducted with graduate employers. These have represented a privileged research tool aimed at deriving lists of desirable skills, accompanied by very little description of what the items on these lists are. In his criticism of this methodology, Holmes (2000: 205) questions the conceptual validity of such surveys, claiming that they are often carried out on the basis of preformed lists of purported skills, drawn up by academic staff engaged in “nothing more rigorous than a form of brainstorming”. Also, he argues that compilers and respondents do not necessarily share the same meanings and employers do not even use the language of skills to articulate their expectations of prospective recruits, as this is often an “artificial vocabulary of analysis, superimposed on discussions about the education-employment relationship” (ibid.: 204). Bennett et al. (2000: 21), among others, add that many repertoires derived from consultations with representatives of the professions are examples of unachievable “wish lists”. Clanchy and Ballard (1995: 157) argue along similar lines, claiming that many (early) lists contained in university mission statements show a “hodge-podge of general desiderata”, with technical competencies (notably in computing) lumped indiscriminately together with higher-order intellectual skills (e.g. logical thinking) and broad “motherhood claims” about ethical behaviors. In the wake of these criticisms, the authenticity and implementation of these tools have often been disputed, causing hostility among some academics and a breakdown in genuine efforts to further explore TGS and their contribution to learning (Jackson and Hancock 2010). On the other hand, this state of affairs has prompted rigorous and concerted actions aimed at underpinning TGS discourse with solid theoretical foundations. The definitions and repertoires discussed in this section are limited to studies emerging from such research initiatives.

An example that can serve as a useful starting point is the DeSeCo Project on “key competencies” already discussed in section 2.1.2. The DeSeCo researchers define this concept—here treated as an equivalent to TGS—as “a combination of interrelated cognitive skills, attitudes, motivation and emotion, and other social components” (Rychen and Salganik 2003: 54) that have to meet the following criteria (Rychen 2003: 66-67):

- Contribute to highly valued outcomes at the individual and societal levels in terms of an overall successful life and a well-functioning society.
- Be instrumental for meeting important, complex demands and challenges in a wide spectrum of contexts.
- Be important for all individuals.

The first criterion stresses the central commitment of the whole DeSeCo endeavor, i.e. the identification of competencies that play a critical role (hence “key”) not only in one’s access to gainful employment or contribution to productivity but also in the attainment of broader, immaterial benefits. These—established on the basis of existing quality-of-life and societal development models—include areas as varied as improved well-being, increased community engagement, and value orientation, which in turn flow into yet larger outcomes such as democratic processes and social cohesion (Gilomen 2003). The second criterion implies that key competencies are not limited to one domain but are transversal to multiple areas of private and public life, whereas the last one posits that they are not intended as confined to an elite.

The result of the DeSeCo Project is the following model of key competencies, classified in three interrelated categories (Rychen 2003):

- 1 INTERACTING IN HETEROGENEOUS GROUPS
 - 1a. The ability to relate well to others
 - 1b. The ability to cooperate
 - 1c. The ability to manage and resolve conflicts
- 2 ACTING AUTONOMOUSLY
 - 2a. The ability to act within the big picture
 - 2b. The ability to form and conduct life plans and personal projects
 - 2c. The ability to assert rights, interests, limits and needs
- 3 USING TOOLS INTERACTIVELY
 - 3a. The ability to use language, symbols and text interactively
 - 3b. The ability to use knowledge and information interactively
 - 3c. The ability to use technology interactively

Each category and its constituent items—not all of which are immediately intelligible—are thoroughly explained by Rychen (2003), one of the leading researchers. The salient traits of her detailed description are summarized as follows. The first, relatively self-explanatory, category covers the sphere of relationship management. The first item (1a) is the ability to initiate and maintain productive interpersonal relationships, whose prerequisites are empathy and appreciation of the values and opinions of others. The second (1b) concerns the abilities to function in a group, i.e. presenting one’s ideas and listening to those of others and most importantly negotiating. The last item (1c) refers to

constructive ways of approaching conflict, especially analyzing the issues and interests at stake, identifying areas of agreement, reframing the problem, and prioritizing needs and goals.

The second category (acting autonomously) is not synonymous with acting independently or in self-interest. Rather, it refers to the ability to inhabit the social space and to manage one's life in meaningful and responsible ways by exercising control over one's living and working conditions. The first key competency (2a) is best explained through the slogan "think globally, act locally" (ibid.: 92). It requires individuals to understand the wider—normative, socioeconomic, and historical—context they live in and to choose between different courses of action by reflecting on their potential impact on individual and shared goals. The second one (2b) applies the concept of project management to individuals' lives. It concerns setting goals and defining projects, evaluating resources, monitoring progress, and making necessary adjustments as the project unfolds. This category's last item (2c) stresses the importance of personal commitment in the assertion of one's rights, even though many such rights are already regulated in laws and contracts. It implies the ability to understand one's interests, construct arguments in order to have needs and rights recognized, and suggest arrangements or alternative solutions.

Finally, the last category (using tools interactively) refers to the mastery of both physical and socio-cultural tools, like computers and machines as well as language, numbers, and knowledge. The adverb "interactively" stresses that this competence, far from envisaging only access to these tools and technical know-how to use them, also requires an understanding of how they can be used to accomplish broader goals. The first item (3a) refers to an effective use of communication and computation skills, while the second (3b) is the ability to recognize what is not known, identify information independently, critically evaluate its quality and appropriateness, and finally incorporate it in one's knowledge base. This competence is essential for understanding options, forming opinions, taking decisions, and overall for carrying out responsible actions. The last item (3c) stresses the importance of familiarizing oneself with technologies, seeing their potential to transform the way individuals work, access information, and interact with others, and finally relate the opportunities such tools offer to one's needs.

Another model worth mentioning is the one elaborated within the European Commission project *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe* (henceforth Tuning Project) (González and Wagenaar 2003), coordinated by the universities of Deusto

(Spain) and Groningen (the Netherlands). Developed as a tool for the implementation of the Bologna process, this project saw 101 European university departments engaged in a five-year project (2001-2005) aimed at providing reference points for the development of study programs that are comparable, compatible, and transparent in terms of contents, learning outcomes, and pedagogies. The work was articulated in five lines of research, the first being on “generic competences or transferable skills”.

The Tuning Project understands competences as “a dynamic combination of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills, knowledge and understanding, interpersonal, intellectual and practical skills, and ethical values” (Tuning Management Committee 2008: 9). These are meant to be always developed in connection with learning in some field or discipline. Generic competences and transferable skills are treated as synonyms and are defined as those competences “which are common and can be identified in different degree programs at a certain level” (Villa Sánchez et al. 2008: 28). Work on this subject went through an initial literature review phase, followed by the identification of eighty-five competences regarded as relevant by academic institutions and employers. These were then assigned to the following three categories (González and Wagenaar 2003: 70-71):

1 INSTRUMENTAL COMPETENCES: Those having an instrumental function. They include:

- Cognitive abilities, capacity to understand and manipulate ideas and thoughts.
- Methodological capacities to manipulate the environment: organising time and strategies of learning, making decisions or solving problems.
- Technological skills related to use of technological devices, computing and information management skills.
- Linguistic skills such as oral and written communication or knowledge of a second language.

2 INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCES: Individual abilities relating to the capacity to express one’s own feelings, critical and self-critical abilities. Social skills relating to interpersonal skills or team-work or the expression of social or ethical commitment. These tend to favour processes of social interaction and of co-operation.

3 SYSTEMIC COMPETENCES: Those skills and abilities concerning whole systems. They suppose a combination of understanding, sensibility and knowledge that allows one to see how the parts of a whole relate and come together. These capacities include the ability to plan changes so as to make improvements in whole systems and to design new systems. Systemic competences require as a base the prior acquisition of instrumental and interpersonal competences.

The eighty-five initial competences were further distilled into the following thirty-item inventory (*ibid.*: 72-73):

1 INSTRUMENTAL COMPETENCES:

- Capacity for analysis and synthesis
- Capacity for organisation and planning
- Basic general knowledge
- Grounding in basic knowledge of the profession
- Oral and written communication in your native language
- Knowledge of a second language
- Elementary computing skills
- Information management skills (ability to retrieve and analyse information from different sources)
- Problem solving
- Decision-making

2 INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCES:

- Critical and self-critical abilities
- Teamwork
- Interpersonal skills
- Ability to work in an interdisciplinary team
- Ability to communicate with experts in other fields
- Appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism
- Ability to work in an international context
- Ethical commitment

3 SYSTEMIC COMPETENCES:

- Capacity for applying knowledge in practice
- Research skills
- Capacity to learn
- Capacity to adapt to new situations
- Capacity for generating new ideas (creativity)
- Leadership
- Understanding of cultures and customs of other countries
- Ability to work autonomously
- Project design and management
- Initiative and entrepreneurial spirit
- Concern for quality
- Will to succeed

In the first report on this line of research (González and Wagenaar 2003), no detailed theoretical contextualization was provided for the identified generic/transferable competences. Subsequent work carried out by a group of academics from the University of Deusto (Villa Sánchez and Poblete Ruiz 2008) resulted in an implementation-oriented tool in which all items in the list are thoroughly described and some general guidelines are provided on ways of incorporating them in the curriculum and assessing them. Since an account of that work cannot be pursued fully here, the reader is directed to this work for details.

Over the years, the Tuning Project and its curriculum development methodology has spread to other parts of the world, including Latin America (2003), Russia (2006),

the United States (2009), Africa and Australia (2010), and is currently under way in central Asia. This worldwide movement attests, among other things, to a widely felt interest in the potential of generic competences for the enhancement of higher education as a whole. Yet it must be pointed out that most recent efforts seem to have gone more into profiling subject-specific competences in a wide number of disciplines,² whereas generic competences have received comparatively less attention, probably due to the number of questions that still remain open on this front. In Villa Sánchez et al.'s view (2008), these include issues like whether there is a core of generic skills which may be identified as essential for each level, how many can be developed in a degree program, what methods are most adequate for developing them through curricula, etc.

A further repertoire developed at a European level is the *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Reference Framework*, briefly mentioned in section 2.1.2. The term accorded preference here is “key competences”, defined as “a transferable, multifunctional package of knowledge, skills and attitudes that all individuals need for personal fulfillment and development, inclusion and employment” (European Commission 2004: 6). The adjective “transferable” is further explained as “applicable in many situations and contexts”, whereas “multifunctional” is intended as useful “to achieve several objectives, to solve different kinds of problems and to accomplish different kinds of tasks” (ibid.). The reference framework sets out eight key competences. For each of them, it provides a general definition, followed by a description of the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to it. For a comprehensive picture of this model, the reader is referred to the official text (European Commission 2007). Due to space constraints, an abridged version is reported here:

- 1 COMMUNICATION IN THE MOTHER TONGUE: the ability to express and interpret thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural contexts; in education and training, work, home and leisure.
- 2 COMMUNICATION IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: it broadly shares the main skill dimensions of communication in the mother tongue. In addition, it calls for skills such as mediation and intercultural understanding.
- 3 MATHEMATICAL LITERACY AND BASIC COMPETENCE IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: the former is the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking in order to solve a range of problems in everyday situations. The latter refers to the ability to use the body of knowledge and methodology employed to

² See www.unideusto.org/tuningeu/. Accessed February 2014.

explain the natural world, in order to identify questions and to draw evidence-based conclusions.

- 4 **DIGITAL COMPETENCE:** it involves the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology (IST) electronic media for work, leisure and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet.
- 5 **LEARNING-TO-LEARN:** it is the ability to pursue and persist in learning, to organise one's own learning, including through effective management of time and information, both individually and in groups. This competence includes awareness of one's learning process and needs, identifying available opportunities, and the ability to overcome obstacles in order to learn successfully. This competence means gaining, processing and assimilating new knowledge and skills as well as seeking and making use of guidance. Learning to learn engages learners to build on prior learning and life experiences in order to use and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts: at home, at work, in education and training.
- 6 **SOCIAL AND CIVIC COMPETENCES:** these include personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence and cover all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life, and particularly in increasingly diverse societies, and to resolve conflict where necessary.
- 7 **SENSE OF INITIATIVE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP:** it refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports individuals, not only in their everyday lives at home and in society, but also in the workplace in being aware of the context of their work and being able to seize opportunities, and is a foundation for more specific skills and knowledge needed by those establishing or contributing to social or commercial activity.
- 8 **CULTURAL AWARENESS AND EXPRESSION:** it is the appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media, including music, performing arts, literature, and the visual arts.

The three TGS repertoires illustrated above are examples of large-scale models developed at supranational level. Other similar repertoires have been devised at national level. An example is the one by the American *Partnership for 21st Century Skills* (P21), a non-profit organization founded in 2002 that brings together the US Department of Education and several organizations representing the educational and business community. After years of research and consultation, P21 developed the *Framework for 21st Century Learning* (P21 2011), a model of skills meant to prepare students (in K-12 education) for increasingly complex life and work environments. Although the skill areas covered in this framework largely overlap with those contained in the three models described so far, what characterizes the P21's initiative from similar ones is the considerable support it offers to policymakers, school leaders, educators, and

practitioners towards the implementation of the 21st century skills agenda statewide. Particularly interesting resources, among others, are the *21st Century Skills Maps*, i.e. guides developed by groups of subject experts that provide concrete examples of how these skills can be integrated into the teaching of core disciplinary subjects. Finally, TGS inventories have also been devised at local level, by single academic institutions or university networks for internal use (Bennett et al. 2000, Barrie 2004). Aspects of interest are certainly to be found in all of them, yet providing an exhaustive account of such plurality is beyond the scope of the present study.

TGS represent a vast and multifaceted object for investigation. This section, far from claiming exhaustiveness, has only attempted a discussion of their nature, providing but a glimpse of what lies behind this label. Further insights may derive from an account of the lively debate which TGS-promoting policies have generated, which is the focus of the next section.

2.3. Reactions to the transferable generic skills agenda

The interest in transferable generic skills in higher education was welcomed with varying degrees of skepticism and resistance. Criticisms concerned three main issues: (1) the quality and role of higher education; (2) common misconceptions about TGS; and (3) skills transferability, as discussed in the following sections.

2.3.1. Quality and role of higher education

In its early days, the TGS agenda came under attack because it was considered a threat to the traditional university curriculum and the principles of liberal education. One of its most outspoken detractors, Barnett (1994, 1997), decried its responsibility in generating a change for the worse in higher education, reflected in a lurch from an ideology of academic knowledge to one of operational knowledge. He attributed this shift to a series of interferences in the governance and funding of the university sector, which eroded its institutional independence and created a new order in which academics are state servants and student identity is “predetermined to fulfill instrumental ends of economic and social survival” (Assiter 1995a: 15). He saw this orientation as radically dissonant with the academic purpose of developing critical reasoning and only framed by goals of

knowledge marketability and commodification at the expense of an open pursuit of inquiry and truth. Echoing these concerns, Blass (1999) claimed that introducing generic skills into higher education would dilute its cognitive contents whereas for Whitston (1998: 310), it meant fostering an impoverished form of education and—referring to the British context—the “long-standing anti-intellectual, anti-theoretical posture” of the system.

These views were rejected by advocates and less critical interpreters of the TGS agenda, who shared the view that this allegedly operationalist paradigm is not antithetical to liberal education. Bridges (1993), for instance, argued that just as the latter grounds curriculum design in fundamentality and generalizability of knowledge, so the former is inspired by the not dissimilar principle of breadth of cross-curricular or social application. Similarly, Assiter (1995a) affirmed that, although the TGS agenda is responsive to societal and employment-driven issues, it is difficult to argue against it also being good for individual learning, personal development, and for life. As such it can be considered as humanistic as liberal education. With respect to the purported drift away from intellectual and critical pursuits, Assiter argued that not only do the skills under discussion rest upon a considerable body of knowledge and sensitivity, but they also involve predominantly cognitive processes which can be subsumed under Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of interpretation, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. As such they neither represent a threat to the intellectual rigor of traditional academic provision nor keep students from engaging in the critical reasoning invoked by Barnett.

More doubts were raised as to whether it is even appropriate to ascribe to higher education the responsibility for the development of TGS, many of which fall into the category of personal attributes and values. Clanchy and Ballard (1995) argued that a university may hope that its graduates, for instance, tolerate differences of opinions, but it cannot explicitly set out to teach such values or to assess them in students. In their view, what universities can ensure and be asked to test, is that students have acquired certain bodies of knowledge, together with certain generic intellectual skills and attitudes, and that, where applicable, they meet standards of access to the professions. The authors conceded, however, that some attitudes certainly exist which are generic to and distinctive of university education, and which can legitimately be expected of all graduates. In their opinion, these can be subsumed under three fields of activity: “thinking, research, and communication” (ibid.: 160-164). These are integral to the very process of university teaching and learning and are certainly worth focusing on. The real

challenge is thus, from their viewpoint, to clarify for stakeholders those skills and attitudes which universities can reasonably integrate in curricula, without yielding to governments' and employers' checklists. In the authors' opinion, such checklists are "fine in service stations, but not appropriate in higher education" (ibid.: 159), as they encourage a fragmented curriculum, decontextualized skill modules, and check-off assessment procedures.

2.3.2. *Common misconceptions about transferable generic skills*

Hager et al. (2002: 7) addressed a similar point to Clanchy and Ballard's above when discussing the misconceptions about transferable generic skills that are widely held by different stakeholders. They argued that, while it is useful in developing an understanding of these skills to consider them individually, it is misguided to treat them as a simple mechanistic list of discrete, unitary things. This is because, in practice, their nature is closer to that of complex wholes, where very different components—practical abilities, knowledge units, sensitivities, values etc.—“overlap and interweave like the threads in a carpet”. To illustrate their point, they discuss a familiar analogy, i.e. the ability to drive a motor car (ibid.):

A simple analysis might break this activity into (say) 80 discrete components, e.g. start engine, release hand break, turn steering wheel through ninety degrees, know meanings of road markings, exercise care when reversing, etc. These discrete components represent a mix of knowledge, skills and dispositions (attitudes and values), i.e. a mix of attributes. However, not much thought is required to see that someone might be able to demonstrate each of these discrete attributes yet still be an incompetent driver. Driving is a holistic activity which depends mainly on a capacity to bring together the various 'discrete' attributes in an appropriate way determined by changes in conditions and contexts.

The same applies to TGS: for example, a professional identifying a problem and developing a solution (commonly referred to as “problem-solving” in TGS inventories) might be simultaneously communicating with a colleague, thinking analytically, and acting as a mentor, in ways that are tailored to the traits of the problem at hand. The latter aspect, which the authors term “contextuality of generic skills” (ibid.), is another fundamental aspect of TGS that, beyond their holism, has not always been fully appreciated. Contextuality is central to another criticism leveled at the TGS agenda, namely that concerning skills transferability.

2.3.3. *Skills transferability*

One of the claims that has informed—more or less tacitly—the TGS agenda is that generic skills can be applied across knowledge domains or from education to work and life settings. This claim has come in for extensive criticism from a number of educationalists who have argued that generic skills “mean very little until they are placed in particular contexts and supported by domain-specific knowledge” (Bolton and Hyland 2003: 18). These determine indeed the form those skills will assume in each particular instance, to the degree that they cannot be regarded as the same activity when displayed in different settings. Arguing on similar grounds, several critics (e.g. Barrow 1987, Wolf 1991, Kemp and Seagraves 1995, Hyland 1997, Hyland and Johnson 1998, Johnson and Gardner 1999, Hager 2006) have deemed it fallacious to suggest that these skills can be both content/context-dependent and applicable across settings *at the same time*. Whitston’s (1998: 313) expression of the criticism is to the point:

We might suppose working with others involves common skills, whether those others are friends helping to paint a house, students working on a project, or colleagues at work. Such assumptions may not, however, be very firmly based. The behavior of students collaborating on a seminar presentation and that of employees participating in a project team are shaped by quite different circumstances. The power relationships specific to the corporation, for example, are absent from the academic exercise. It is extraordinarily superficial to imagine that just because these situations share some common social processes—interpersonal reactions, group roles—they can be treated as, in some senses, the same.

In this light, Hyland and Johnson (1998: 168) have hypothesized that maybe what proponents really mean by transferable skills is simply skills which “occur with great frequency in that they can be repeated in a number of contexts”. However, if transfer is taken to refer to the existence of free-standing, universally applicable skills or to notions of general powers of the mind, they suggest that transferability claims are simply untenable and should be abandoned as a “chimera-hunt, an expensive and disastrous exercise in futility” (ibid.: 170).

Critics of the TGS agenda espousing content/context-dependency of skills have unconditionally dismissed any discussion of transferability. Other scholars—though quite wary themselves of the complexities involved—have suggested different views, highlighting some weaknesses in the above criticisms. Bridges (1993), for instance,

claims that objections predicated on domain-specificity portray domains as discrete, watertight compartments, with clear-cut boundaries and no channels for the development of inter-domain understanding and skill. He also points out that, while a rather conventional taxonomy of disciplinary domains exists, there is no such thing for social domains. It is therefore not straightforward to define what makes one social context different from another to the extent that it may constitute a barrier to the transfer of skills. He thus concludes that to make sense of both transferability and its criticisms a sound theory of disciplinary and social domains is needed. A further point of interest in Bridges' counterargument is that the TGS agenda does not necessarily presuppose that solving a problem in, say, economics is in every significant respect the same as solving problems in electrical engineering, as several critics have objected (e.g. Bolton and Hyland 2003). The claim may simply be, he argues, that "there is *some* thing in common" (1993: 48, emphasis in the original) between approaches to problem-solving in economics, engineering and other subject areas and that "developing this in one area can therefore contribute to, but not be sufficient for, its development in other areas". What this "thing in common" could be is open to investigation. Yet, Bridges concludes, by addressing the issue from this perspective, we can begin to identify attributes and even skills that are not specific to a single domain even though they need in the end to be exercised in the cognitive context of one or more such domains and on the basis of knowledge appropriate to that domain.

For Perkins and Salomon (1989), the above criticisms of skill transferability rest instead on the misguided advocacy of a strict dichotomy between specialized domain knowledge and general strategic knowledge, and on a blind belief in the superiority of the former over the latter in all human cognition. The authors (ibid.: 23) offer an alternative view, postulating that the categories of general and specific are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary, and that general cognitive skills "do not function by somehow taking the place of domain-specific knowledge, nor by operating exactly the same way from domain to domain". Rather, they are general tools, or general principles of reasoning, mindfully abstracted from previous contextualized knowledge and applied in another context, in ways that configure to the kind of knowledge in question. As such, the researchers argue that these principles come into play when we face unfamiliar problems or situations, and give the example of somebody with a knowledge of chess who might apply the general chess principle of "taking control of the center" to investment practices, politics, or military campaigns. They conclude that

it is not domain-specificity that is to blame for the long record of failures of transfer reported in much transfer literature, but rather the lack of conditions needed for it to occur.

As pointed out by Hinchliffe (2002), scant evidence of transfer is probably the favorite criticism by those skeptical about including TGS provision in academic curricula. In his counterargument, he moves from the interesting observation that advocates of skill transferability seem to stand no chance to win, as the issue resembles a typical catch-22 situation, which he pithily summarizes as follows (*ibid.*: 200):

If a procedure has been transferred successfully from one context to another, but the procedure itself has not been altered, then nothing has changed and no transfer has taken place. On the other hand, if a procedure has been altered in some way then it must be a different procedure in each case, so again, no transfer has occurred. The problem is that, in order to test for transfer, the skills/procedures involved, as well as the contexts, have to be closely aligned. Conversely, if transfer is to have the power ascribed to it, then we need the contexts to be different to the extent that the deployment of the skill is modified—yet in such cases we are at a loss as to what it is that has been transferred.

Against this backdrop, Hinchliffe concludes that one is tempted to either fall back in an even more skeptical attitude towards skills transferability, or to think that it is dependent on some putative special ability to transfer, with neither position bringing us very far. In his view, the problem lies in the type of transfer aimed at. What detractors may have in mind when stressing the lack of transfer evidence is what he terms “direct transfer” (*ibid.*), i.e. the situation in which “a technique is used in different contexts in the same way”. He makes the example of word-processing skills, for which transfer is identifiable and explicit, since the same techniques can be carried across contexts. A similar concept is described by Perkins and Salomon (1994: 6452) in their encyclopedic entry on transfer of learning, when they distinguish between “near transfer” and “far transfer”: near transfer occurs when knowledge or skills are applied in situations very similar to the initial context of learning, as for instance when students taking a test encounter a mix of problems of the same kinds that they have practiced separately in their homework. When describing the mechanism by which this type of transfer occurs, the two scholars introduce the notion of “low-road to transfer” (Salomon and Perkins 1989). Such mechanism depends on varied and extensive practice of domain-specific units of knowledge or skills to near automaticity, which then leads to application to

perceptually similar contexts by means of stimulus-response. For much of the century-long history of transfer research, the goal of laboratory experiments was largely the identification of this type of transfer (Singley and Anderson 1989).

By affirming “[if] the procedure itself has not been altered, then [...] no transfer has taken place”, Hinchliffe claims that direct (near) transfer, i.e. the replication of a procedure unaltered in similar situations, does not classify as transfer. He probably considers it an example of plain learning: one learns *x* in the physics class on Monday and retrieves it for application in the physics laboratory on Thursday, or in the end-of-term physics exam. The difference between learning and transfer, by admission of Perkins and Salomon themselves (1992), is fuzzy. They say that transfer begins when minimal learning ends, but this is not any clearer. In a later contribution (2012: 249), echoing the conclusions of other scholars (e.g. Haskell 2001), they argue that all learning involves transfer in some sense. Occurrence of learning always involves the learner doing something at least later and under another set of conditions, if not elsewhere, informed by what has been learned, “otherwise there would be no basis to claim that learning had occurred”. In Carraher and Schliemann’s (2002: 1) words, it can be postulated that transfer is itself a theory about learning. In any case, what is most important is the point that Hinchliffe makes when he says that direct (near) transfer has only limited application when dealing with “more opaque” (2002: 201) generic skills, like e.g. problem-solving, as these cannot be reduced to a set of fixed procedures that are mechanically lifted out of one context and replicated wholesale in a different context. Nor can they be equated with “discrete and atomic entities that can be acquired and transferred singly”, as Hager (2006: 19) puts it. For this reason, Hager joins Hinchliffe in criticizing the expectations of direct transfer implied by the above detractors of TGS transferability.

Further, TGS are theorized as applicable in situations characterized by stark differences (e.g. transfer from education to work and life settings), thus envisaging a case of “far transfer”. Perkins and Salomon (1994) define this notion as transfer of knowledge and skills between contexts as alien to one another as arteries and electrical networks or strategies of chess playing and politics. In their view, far transfer involves the opposite mechanism, “high-road”, which depends on mindful abstraction from the context of learning or application and a deliberate search for connections and general patterns in the new context. Such transfer is not stimulus-driven. Rather, it demands mental effort and time to frame the new situation. Hinchliffe (2002: 201) labels this type

of transfer “situational” and sees it as entirely dependent on the agent’s (read subject’s) understanding of the context. By way of example, one can become competent in, say, the generic skill of communication and learn, for instance, all the techniques necessary for giving successful presentations, “all the way from their preparation right through to handling questions at the end” (2006: 96), but none of these techniques will tell the skillful communicator how to judge a particular audience’s expectations at a particular time, nor how such techniques should be modified in light of those expectations. What is needed is therefore a situational understanding, which allows the acquired knowledge and techniques to be re-fashioned according to the specificities of the situation. He concludes that in order to make sense of the transfer of generic skills we have to “investigate the dynamics of agency in situations of change, as opposed to the mere mechanical transfer of procedures and practices” (2002: 201). In this, Hinchliffe echoes the position of other educationalists (e.g. Rey 1996) who are skeptical about looking at skills as *intrinsically* transferable and are more inclined to look at different cognitive mechanisms underlying transfer as well as contextual factors that may facilitate it.

Overall, Hinchliffe’s argument captures the spirit of much recent transfer research, which has tried to move past rigidly conceived notions of transfer to embrace broader views. One significant departure from such notions is Bereiter’s (1995: 22) theory of “transfer of dispositions”. A dispositional view of transfer sheds light on the possibility of transferring general habits of mind, like scientific thinking, intellectual curiosity, and creativity, and depends on incorporation into one’s personality. In emphasizing the desirability of this kind of transfer, the author acknowledges that it poses considerable didactic problems. He argues too that the difficulty partly derives from flawed conceptions of transfer: it is generally thought of as something inside the head of the individual that will get turned on from time to time in other situations. He calls this “heroic transfer” (ibid.: 30). Although possible, he sees it as too unstable to provide a basis for instruction. He thus suggests an alternative view, namely “transfer of situations” (ibid.: 31), rather than *across* situations. Learning to participate in thoughtful, critical, or imaginative discourse may not imbue learners with dispositions to think that way in general, but it may dispose them to create situations similar to those where that particular thinking was first experienced. Bereiter concludes that, if education were seriously to aim at transfer of dispositions rather than relying on heroic transfer, it would no longer be sufficient for teachers to create situations characterized by desirable kinds of thinking. They would need to work progressively toward enabling

students to create those situations for themselves, with different participants and different constraints. Then there might be reasons to expect that certain attitudes acquired in education “let us not say transfer but reappear, as people recreate similar situations later” (ibid.: 33).

Bereiter's theory, though challenging, features elements that are relevant to the present research. On the one hand, it introduces the sphere of dispositions and attitudes, which feature substantially in TGS inventories; on the other, it emphasizes the creation of situations or general performance frameworks rather than merely the correct reaction to given tasks through the application of discrete procedures, which seems to better accommodate the nature of TGS. Under the influence of Bereiter's work, transfer research has moved towards more expansive notions, increasingly privileging social and situational perspectives (e.g. Mestre 2005). These scientific efforts have been partly prompted by the paradox that evidence of transfer in the psychological laboratory is slight even though it appears to be a common aspect of everyday life, in fact a necessity: as claimed by Whitston (1998: 314), “if knowledge and skill were not transferable at all we would hardly get through the day, being constantly confronted with ‘new’ situations”. Social and situative transfer theory admits that this phenomenon is difficult to measure and often seems to not happen at all. However, such failures are mostly seen as ascribable to fundamentally limited experiments and restricted conceptions of transfer. Interestingly, many theorists have found major limitations in the very term “transfer” and have proposed alternative labels and theories.

One point of consensus across the recent reconsiderations of transfer has been to replace the metaphor of static transportation or replication of knowledge from one context to another (Hager and Hodkinson 2009) with more dynamic processes. Hatano and Greeno (1999: 647), for instance, see transfer in terms of “productivity”, intended as “the extent to which learning in some activity has effects in subsequent activities of different kinds”. Central to their theory is the well-documented fact that individuals routinely rely on prior learning when confronted with new situations and phenomena, a perspective that was also discussed in relation to the process of learning a foreign language in connection with one's mother tongue (see 1.1.3). Individuals do so by analogical reasoning, a general tendency for learning that the authors deem broadly productive. Similarly, Schwartz and colleagues (Bransford and Schwartz 1999, Schwartz et al. 2005) understand transfer as “preparation for future learning”. Rather than just looking at whether and how prior learning affects immediate problem-solving

performance in artificial experimental settings, they demonstrate how the usefulness of prior knowledge may not be apparent until individuals are given the opportunity to learn new information and frame it in a way that it becomes similar to something they know. Another alternative view is provided by Carraher and Schliemann (2002) who look at transfer in terms of restructuring and adaptation of prior learning to deal with the unique predicaments at hand. In the scholars' view, it is this generative transformation of existing knowledge over time that should inform transfer theories, unless instructors are content with training across strongly similar contexts, only emphasizing assimilation and continuity. The idea of transformation is central to other expanded conceptualizations of transfer, notably Engeström et al.'s (1995) notion of "boundary-crossing" and Beach's (1999, 2003) theory of "consequential transitions". Both rest on the assumption that, when individuals move from one situation to another, prior knowledge is transformed, not just transferred, and new knowledge is generated. Drawing on these broader perspectives, Hager (2006: 26, 43) offers the following synthesis of the issues surrounding the long-standing debate on generic skills transferability:

Rather than any common sense conception of direct transfer, it is more realistic to view transfer as application of previous knowledge to new settings that result in learning of significant new knowledge. [...] Thus transfer becomes more a growth in confidence and adaptability as learners experience ever more success in their deployment of generic skills in a range of situations. To put it another way, perhaps it is not so much generic attributes that transfer, as growing understanding of how to deal with different contexts.

Although Hager's view may serve to put an end to, or to find a way out of a long-standing, often sterile controversy, the question is whether his proposal is probably too general to sustain the kind of analysis that earlier adherents of TGS discourse used to make claims about curriculum development (Kearns, personal communication, January 2014).

The foregoing discussion suggests that transfer of learning is an extremely complex and contentious issue, beginning from the related terminology. Given the major challenges posed by this field of study, transferability claims with respect to generic skills have either been taken for granted or abandoned altogether. Despite using the term "transferable", the Tuning Project and the European framework of reference *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* gloss over the issue entirely. The DeSeCo

Project touches upon it in passing and resolves it in terms of “adaptation” to the specificities of changing contexts (Rychen and Salganik 2003: 48). Over time, transferability claims have become less prominent in the TGS agenda—as shown, among other things, by the terminological shift from “transferable skills” to “generic competences” or “graduate attributes”. These labels, not constrained by implications of transfer, have shielded TGS proponents from related criticisms and have released them from research obligations in a field particularly complex to investigate empirically.

The long-standing research into transfer of learning—of which I have just scratched the surface here and which is now enjoying an unprecedented resurgence of interest—suggests that transfer is elusive and by no means automatic. At the same time, it also indicates that it happens, and not infrequently, given the right conditions and a sufficiently expanded notion of what counts as transfer. The recent reconsiderations of both transfer forms and transfer mechanisms seem to offer the necessary margin to take stock of transferability in relation to TGS. Yet they also pose considerable challenges for both research and pedagogy: as pointed out by Brent (2011), detecting evidence of higher-order skills that have been transformed or used as platform for further learning makes the research task considerably complex. Also, gaining a deep understanding of how higher-order generalization works and what knowledge has the most potential to transform and aid learning in the widest range of contexts is no easy task either. Yet the contemporary flowering of scholarly interest in mechanisms facilitating transfer is encouraging in this respect (e.g. Marton 2006, Wagner 2010, Lobato et al. 2012).

Although interesting methodological suggestions can be found in different sources, belonging to different—often contrasting—paradigms, recent research seems to offer more ample, optimistic, and evidence-based insights into transfer-supportive teaching than was the case in previous studies. Further, while most previous theories emphasized the role of cognitive processes in the single individual, e.g. memory, depth of initial learning, or analogical reasoning, contemporary studies are focusing more on contextual factors and on how learning is framed by the teacher. Representative of the latter approach is, for instance, Engle and colleagues’ work (Engle 2006, Engle et al. 2011, Engle et al. 2012), which suggests that transfer is significantly promoted when learning and transfer contexts are framed to create what the authors call “intercontextuality” between them (2006: 455), a perspective that can be seen as akin to Bereiter’s transfer of situations discussed above. This type of framing occurs socially and verbally through ongoing conversations in which the teacher actively involves the

students in the creation of links between the learning context and other future situations where each student's understanding of the lesson will be relevant and generative. As a complement to this view, transfer is also encouraged when transfer contexts are framed as being connected back to past learning contexts. Both forward and backward connections expand the boundaries of the lesson temporally, spatially, socially, as well as in terms of knowledge areas and activities and create expectations that what is being learnt will be relevant in future settings and that what has been learnt continues to have relevance now. An important aspect of these processes—termed “expansive framing” (Engle et al. 2012)—is that students become publicly recognized as authors of the connections and the transferable contents they are encouraged to identify. This accountability increases the likelihood that students will transfer the particular content they authored in future contexts. In turn, through regularly practicing authorship, students begin to see themselves as capable of addressing unfamiliar situations adapting what they already know and generating new knowledge. A more sophisticated version of forward-reaching framing are simulations or case-studies, which provide rich opportunities for teachers to point out how learning can be brought to bear on out-of-classroom experiences.

In the discussion of their classroom findings, Engle et al. (2012) interestingly observe that, by itself, expansive framing encourages learners to use regularly what they already know, creating a generative web of connections. Yet it does not provide resources for students to determine which prior knowledge is the most appropriate for a particular problem or issue. So this practice can lead to overgeneralization and negative transfer. It therefore needs to be accompanied by activities in which learners critically evaluate for relevance and validity the knowledge they have transferred, or by guided work in which students are provided with specific contexts for when generalization from the learned content will be most appropriate.

This final observation creates some convergence between Engle and colleagues' research and previous transfer theories which, from Judd's (1939) theory of general principles onwards, have focused on the role of generalization and awareness of underlying shared causal principles or deep structure. To support this productive cognitive processes, Perkins and Salomon (1988: 28) discuss an instructional strategy called “bridging”, in which the teacher explicitly points out, or elicits from students, some general principles or fundamental features behind particular skills or knowledge. Elsewhere (1992), they provide the example of a biology class on the human circulatory

system, where the teacher—aware of the issue of transfer—decides to provoke a wide-ranging examination of circulatory systems *in general* (e.g. house piping, electricity, vehicle traffic), extracting a number of key similarities and dissimilarities between them, then consolidating some key insights about circulatory systems in general. The authors see two gains in this: on the one hand, the class reaches something far more general than the original topic of the circulatory system in itself; on the other, it better appreciates its basic logic, how it has certain features fundamental to any circulatory system. This, in the authors' view, helps students to build an explicitly understood conceptual bridge from the context of learning to other contexts of potential application.

This body of research about transfer-fostering pedagogies is what in my opinion could be salvaged from the hotbed of controversy over skills transferability discussed above. The multiple insights it offers into the ways in which people generalize their learning experiences and create connections between situations or between acquired knowledge and new knowledge provide suggestions that, despite the considerable intellectual challenges they pose, could guide classroom experimentation with TGS. A final issue worth exploring in this discussion of TGS is that of implementation, which is the focus of the next section.

2.4. Implementation of the transferable generic skills agenda

Despite considerable pressure and investment on the part of employers, governments and international bodies, the agenda promoting transferable generic skills in higher education has registered rather slow progress. As stated by observers in different countries and over time (Drummond et al. 1998, Bennett et al. 2000, Barrie 2006, Green et al. 2009), the overall picture is one of patchy uptake, with evidence of implementation often restricted to policy statements, curriculum mapping, or isolated teaching initiatives. Several factors can be deemed responsible for this situation. Chief among these is the “plurality of viewpoints and approaches” (Barrie 2004: 263), not only at the level of TGS-related terminology and semantics but also with respect to the nature of these learning outcomes, their relationship with disciplinary knowledge, and their ultimate function. Barrie's research (2004, 2006, 2007) at one Australian university shows that instructors from different faculties hold quite disparate conceptions of TGS. These range from the most basic views of precursory or

complementary functional abilities that precede or can usefully round out subject-specific knowledge but do not alter or interact with it in any way, to the complex views of TGS as clusters of skills and personal attributes that are strictly connected to subject-specific learning and play an essential role in its application to familiar and unfamiliar settings, as well as in the creation of new knowledge. The literature shows a similar variation also among scholars, whom Moore (2004: 4, 14) assigns to three distinct camps: the “generalists”, who advocate universal, context-free skills (e.g. Ennis 1997); the “specificists”, who believe that skills cannot be separated from disciplinary contents (e.g. Wolf 1991, McPeck 1990); and the “relativists”, who think that generic skills are learnt contextually, but once learnt, can be transferred to another context (e.g. Clanchy and Ballard 1995).

In turn, these orientations inform the different understandings of how TGS are—or should be—developed within the curriculum. The literature yields a rather composite picture (Bennett et al. 2000, Barrie 2007), where three main approaches can be identified: (1) TGS are taught in supplementary “bolt-on” modules, unrelated to disciplinary learning outcomes, and with minimal contextualization, by either course instructors or TGS experts; (2) TGS are understood as an integrated component of the course curriculum and are taught by course instructors through the teaching of subject-specific contents; (3) TGS are believed to be best developed through work-integrated learning, i.e. the incorporation of work experience in degree programs. Understandings also vary in terms of the methodological approaches and instructional activities deemed conducive to TGS development. A vast array of initiatives are reported in the literature in the form of case studies, where profession-based projects and experiential learning are featured as central didactic modalities (e.g. Assiter 1995b, Atlay and Harris 2000, Fallows and Steven 2000, Sherry and Curry 2005).

Accepting the integrated and content/context-bound pattern of TGS provision poses a further challenge to implementation, i.e. devising TGS profiles that are specific and meaningful to single academic subjects. This reflects not only an ideological position but also a practical need. Chapman and O’Neill (2010), among others, point out that most published TGS inventories tend to be lists of abstract, poorly operationalized umbrella terms (e.g. communication, critical thinking, creativity) that prove difficult to use as reference tools for instructional practice. Moreover, in Chanock’s (2003: 5-6) view, these inventories often represent one-size-fits-all models that ignore the peculiarities of each field of study. Speaking as an Arts scholar, she argues that the

structure and culture of her field tend to be agonistic and to value the construction of knowledge “through argument rather than by trying to negotiate harmony and compromise, and success at an argument is an individual rather than a joint achievement”. As such they are not entirely compatible with professional pressures to form Arts graduates who are competent in skills like teamwork, conflict resolution, or negotiation. Although this viewpoint is open to question, the remainder of Chanock’s argument appears less disputable. She claims that, even though the language of TGS may be the same across disciplines, the meaning behind common labels may be quite different. For example, problem-solving in the Arts involves problematic situations “in the sense of something that needs explaining rather than something that needs solving”, as may be the case in, say, business studies. It is more about understanding the complexity of what *does* happen rather than deciding what *should* happen. Sharing widely felt sentiments, she thus advocates a TGS agenda that is not only sensitive to the specificities of single subject areas but also plausible, rather than blindly subservient to “all the things encompassed in the usual bundles of Graduate Attributes” (ibid.: 6).

Despite the broad consensus on the need to articulate TGS in the language of single disciplines, few academic institutions have risen to the challenge. Some efforts have indeed gone in this direction (e.g. University of Sydney, Male 2010, Jackson and Chapman 2012), others have stalled due to a number of difficulties. Among the most immediate ones are funding issues, the need for institutions to have a TGS policy and framework to begin with for subject specialists to work on, the need for substantial consultation with a range of stakeholders, the resistance of subject experts confronted with the heavier workload and responsibility such initiatives mean for them than they do for curriculum developers. More challenges regard the development of operational definitions for the identified discipline-specific TGS and above all their assessment. To this respect, Hager (2006: 31) observes that TGS are often thought to be “readily and unequivocally describable in language”. In reality, he claims, most TGS are difficult to articulate, both by the performer and the person assessing the performance, as they often amount to tacit or volatile forms of learning, in the sense that it is seldom possible to specify fully what it would mean to be skillful in, say, adapting to new situations or working autonomously. Knight and Page (2007) define these skills “wicked competences”, echoing the label “wicked problems”, because like the latter they elude most attempts to pin them down in words, take on different shapes in different contexts, and are likely to keep on developing. This has implications for any description of TGS,

which is bound to be limited and/or incomplete, and for their assessment, which is unlikely to be amenable to conventional procedures based on descriptors and levels of performance. Hager (2006: 29) argues further that TGS are widely believed to be single, atomistic entities. In practice, the fact that most of them are holistic “constellations” (OECD 2005: 9) of interrelated and overlapping components makes their assessment a hard task, due to the difficulties involved in determining performance in single components in relation to the wider competence area. One final challenge for the task of assessing TGS is that their development is an ongoing process, “the product of years, rather than of weeks” (Knight and Page 2007: 11). This means that—provided a valid measuring tool is devised—it may be hard to detect any significant development over the short time-frame that is generally allotted to university courses or controlled experiments. In light of these challenges, TGS assessment has been largely neglected or limited to student self-rating of perceived development (Alpay and Walsh 2008, Jackson 2014).

Finally, the slow progress of the TGS agenda can be explained in terms of a generalized institutional inertia in accepting and managing the systemic and multidimensional changes such policies necessitate. As pointed out by Drummond et al. (1998), effective initiatives require a reconsideration of curriculum development principles, pedagogies, and assessment procedures, along with staff and student involvement as well as appropriate teacher training. Also, they imply top-down coordination, leading to an institution-wide adoption of TGS-promoting policies rather than to isolated initiatives.

Each of the factors discussed here has played a role in hampering attempts at effectively incorporating TGS within university curricula. In combination, they represent a serious challenge, yet as encouragingly suggested by Green et al. (2009: 12) “not an impossible one”. Given the complexity of the task, they wisely suggest that there should perhaps be greater recognition that progress in TGS-promoting policies will be justifiably slow, or require more support and resources, together with organizational synergies, than first anticipated.

2.5. Conclusion

The learning outcomes here defined in terms of “transferable generic skills” have attracted considerable attention in recent years as universities are responding to increased pressures to ensure that tertiary graduates are equipped not only with disciplinary knowledge but also with a suite of general, meta-skills that are believed to be generalizable across contexts and to support functioning in the knowledge economy, in complex societies, and in lifelong learning. After outlining the evolution of the TGS agenda in higher education, this chapter has attempted a synthesis of its conceptual underpinnings and of the multiple repertoires that have been devised. Further, it has focused on some challenges facing this agenda, in particular the controversial issue of skills transferability, the relation of TGS to disciplinary contents, their teaching, and their assessment, all issues that have considerably impinged on its implementation thus far. Overall, the incorporation of TGS in university curricula emerges as a highly significant project but at the same time as an enterprise characterized by extreme complexity, still featuring considerable gray areas and contentious aspects, which put it in danger of being jettisoned as indefensible or, more optimistically, which call for further research as well as more concerted efforts at the level of whole education systems. This aspect will be touched upon again in the concluding remarks of the thesis (see 7.3). After this lengthy review of the vast scholarship in the field of TGS in higher education in general, the next chapter will present an account of whether and how the issue of transferable and generic learning outcomes has been acknowledged in association with translation in educational contexts.

UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA I VIRGILI

TRANSLATION IN UNIVERSITY FOREIGN-LANGUAGE CURRICULA: AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDES, WITH REFERENCE TO

Costanza Peverati

Dipòsit Legal: T 765-2015

Chapter 3. Transferable generic skills and translation

This chapter further expands on the literature review about transferable generic skills in higher education presented in the previous chapter. In particular, it explores whether and how theories and/or practice concerning these learning outcomes have been explicitly addressed in connection with translation and its teaching. Such connections are sought and looked at from different perspectives, namely that of Translation Studies as a discipline, that of translator training, and that of translation in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning.

3.1. Transferable generic skills in theories of translation competence

Although the discourse of transferable generic skills (TGS) has developed a rather established tradition in current tertiary education ideologies, it has not penetrated every single disciplinary domain with the same force. Translation Studies is an example. An area of Translation Studies where it has timidly surfaced or where some points of contact can be identified is the field of translation competence research.

Translation scholars have been addressing the concept of translation competence for the past forty years, producing a vast body of literature which has fueled a lively and as yet unresolved debate (Pym 2003). There is indeed no consensus yet on a shared term to refer to this concept, much less on a widely accepted definition or a description of what it takes to translate well (Orozco and Hurtado Albir 2002). Although differing labels have been used—e.g. “transference” (González-Davies 2004), “translational” (Toury 1995), and “translator” competence (Bell 1991, Kiraly 2000) along with translation “performance” (Wilss 1989), “expertise” (Gile 1995), and “proficiency” (Cao 1996)—most scholars opt for “translation competence”, with increasing interest being shown in notions of “expertise” (Whyatt 2012) or “skill-sets” (Pym 2013). Preference for a discourse of expertise is justified by the term’s connotations of enhanced quality and holistic character of the abilities involved (Pym in Yanchun et al. 2012), whereas the concept of skills is favored by some over that of competence for its greater precision and discreteness in portraying human action and, not least, because the decade-long controversy over competence has semantically “polluted” the term (Pym

2013). Despite extensive scholarly work on the subject, not many theorists have suggested neat definitions of translation competence. Incomparably more effort has gone instead into describing the elements believed to constitute it.

Over time, a large number of translation competence models have been devised, from the early linguistic ones (e.g. Koller 1979, Wilss 1982), to the markedly cognitive ones (see Göpferich 2008 for an overview), all the way to those grounded in the profession (e.g. Kiraly 2000, Robinson 2003, Mackenzie 2004). The general trend has been to dissect the concept into a number of interrelated sub-competences including things as diverse as declarative knowledge, procedural abilities, and dispositions. These multi-componential models have become increasingly sophisticated, in response to the growing interdisciplinarity of Translation Studies on the one hand and the “fragmentary development of the profession” (Pym 2003: 487) on the other.

This multi-componential conceptualization of translation competence has attracted some criticism. Among the most vocal detractors, Pym (2003, 2013) notes how the attempt to provide as comprehensive an account as possible of all the knowledge, abilities, and personal qualities useful when translating generates potentially endless lists which miss the singular specificity of this practice and, despite their aspirations for exhaustiveness, risk remaining one step behind the rapid technological and professional changes distinguishing this sector. Pym thus reaffirms his minimalist approach—developed in the early nineties—according to which translation competence is “[t]he ability to generate a series of more than one viable target text (TT₁, TT₂...TT_n) for a pertinent source text (ST)” and “the ability to select only one viable TT from this series, quickly and with justified confidence” (2003: 489).

Minimalism has not gone unchallenged either. Kelly (2007), for instance, claims that Pym’s model certainly reduces the translation process to its essence but it is a fact that in order to be viable, it implicitly necessitates many of the items explicitly listed in multi-componential models. Arguing from a translator-training perspective—ironically, the same adopted by Pym—she advocates the need for detailed competence repertoires to assist trainers and administrators in the task of curriculum development. Along similar lines, Way (2008) observes how Pym’s model leaves students wondering about what exactly characterizes a “viable target text” and trainers at a loss for guidelines on how to train the specific translational abilities Pym suggests. It could be added, though, that the same applies to most other competence models, for that matter.

The above is just a cursory overview of the extensive conceptualization that has surrounded the topic of translation competence. Of this vast scholarship, the first contribution to ever expand the discussion and include an explicit focus on TGS is Kelly's *A Handbook for Translator Trainers* (2005), a seminal reference work providing step-by-step guidance on curriculum design for translator training. The author tackles translation competence in the second chapter where, in line with reforms towards the creation of the European Higher Education Area, she presents the establishment of learning outcomes as the essential first step of the entire planning process. Among the factors to be considered in this crucial phase, Kelly accords particular importance to local professional requisites on the one hand and areas of translation competence on the other. As to the latter, she espouses a componential approach and elaborates a taxonomy of seven sub-competences, described as follows (ibid.: 32):

- Communicative and textual competence in at least two languages and cultures. This area covers both active and passive skills in the two languages involved, together with awareness of textuality and discourse, and textual and discourse conventions in the cultures involved.
- Cultural and intercultural competence. Culture here refers not only to encyclopaedic knowledge of history, geography, institutions and so on of the cultures involved (including the translator's or student's own), but also and more particularly, values, myths, perceptions, beliefs, behaviours and textual representations of these. Awareness of issues of intercultural communication and translation as a special form thereof is also included.
- Subject area competence. Basic knowledge of subject areas the future translator will/may work on, to a degree sufficient to allow comprehension of source texts and access to specialized documentation to solve translation problems.
- Professional and instrumental competence. Use of documentary resources of all kinds, terminological research, information management for these purposes; use of IT tools for professional practice (word-processing, desktop publishing, data bases, Internet, email...) together with more traditional tools such as fax, dictaphone. Basic notions for managing professional activity: contracts, tenders, billing, tax; ethics; professional associations.
- Attitudinal or psychophysiological competence. Self-concept, self-confidence, attention/concentration, memory. Initiative.
- Interpersonal competence. Ability to work with other professionals involved in translation process (translators, revisers, documentary researchers, terminologists, project managers, layout specialists), and other actors (clients, initiators, authors, users, subject area experts). Team work. Negotiation skills. Leadership skills.
- Strategic competence. Organizational and planning skills. Problem identification and problem-solving. Monitoring, self-assessment and revision.

Aware of the criticism leveled at componential approaches to translation competence, Kelly points out that her model is by no means conceived of as a description of the cognitive process of translating, but rather as a tool supporting objective-oriented curricular planning and design, where objectives correspond to a catalog of “areas of competence desirable in graduates from translation courses” (ibid.: 32). The more detailed the catalog, Kelly argues, the easier the tasks of “assess[ing] student profiles, sequenc[ing] outcomes, and subsequently design[ing] teaching and learning activities” (2007: 135). From this perspective then, multi-componential models of translation competence are justifiable as a practical means to a practical end, even if they may feature some weaknesses when it comes to theoretical discussions on the issue.

What is most ground-breaking in Kelly’s discussion of translation competence is not so much her model in itself as the identification of interesting parallels between the competence areas she includes in it and the generic competences drawn up by the EU project *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe* (see 2.2.2). In a later contribution (2007: 136), Kelly elaborates on this position and graphically illustrates the parallels identified, aligning the constituent items of each model as shown in Table 3.1. In Kelly’s view, this “striking idiosyncrasy” (2005: 34) of tertiary translator education of providing access to such a wide range of generic competences while developing discipline-specific skills constitutes an invaluable pedagogical asset that uniquely characterizes this disciplinary sector. Embracing the spirit of much current thinking on higher education, especially at a European level, Kelly claims that, in times of rapid social and professional changes, universities can no longer exclusively insist on disciplinary contents and strictly professional know-how. Rather, they should commit themselves to helping students “learn how to learn, becom[e] flexible critical citizens prepared for several major career changes during their working life” (2007: 135). In other words, universities should also invest in those competences that are believed to favor the attainment of holistic educational pursuits, i.e. what has been discussed here in terms of TGS. In this respect, given the considerable generic/specific parallels identified, Kelly claims that translation as a discipline appears to have an edge on other academic fields. This peculiarity is all the more significant, she goes on to argue, in light of the “incredible proliferation of mainly undergraduate translator-training courses in numerous countries in recent years” (2007: 137) and the ensuing saturation of the market in many parts of the world (Pym in Yanchun et al. 2012): this trend means that

Table 3.1. Parallels between Kelly's areas of translator competence and the Tuning Project's model of Generic Competences

<i>Major areas of translator competence</i>	<i>Generic competences (Not in the original order) (González and Wagenaar, 2002 [sic])</i>
Communicative and textual (in at least two languages and cultures)	Oral and written communication in the native language Knowledge of a second language Capacity for analysis and synthesis
Cultural and/or intercultural	Appreciation of diversity and multiculturality Ability to work in an international context Understanding of cultures and customs of other countries
Subject area or thematic	Basic general knowledge
Professional and/or instrumental	Grounding in basic knowledge of the profession Elementary computing skills Information management skills Ethical commitment Research skills Concern for quality
Attitudinal and/or psychophysiological	Capacity to learn Capacity to adapt to new situations Capacity for generating new ideas (creativity) Leadership Ability to work autonomously Initiative and entrepreneurial spirit Will to succeed
Interpersonal or social	Teamwork Interpersonal skills Ability to work in an interdisciplinary team Ability to communicate with experts in other fields Appreciation of diversity and multiculturality Ability to work in an international context Ethical commitment
Strategic or organizational	Capacity for organization and planning Problem solving Decision making Critical and self-critical abilities Capacity for applying knowledge in practice Project design and management Concern for quality

an increasing number of graduates are not likely to pursue careers in translation, thus risking entering the working world armed with a set of highly technical knowledge and skills that may be of little use to them personally and professionally. Yet the very fact that translation-related skills can be largely subsumed under generic areas of competence makes them applicable to other fields, thus reducing the risk of a skills mismatch that graduates can run. In my view, this aspect of Kelly's claim is particularly significant to the discussion of translation as part of foreign-language programs and its sometimes excessive vocationalization, which risks imparting too specialized training whose relevance to language graduates is likely to be rather limited (see 1.2).

To my knowledge, Kelly remains the only scholar to have explicitly discussed translation competence in relation to TGS, hence casting light on its potential for transferability. In her 2007 contribution, she manages to corroborate this position, albeit indirectly: for each major area making up her translation competence model, she

mentions a deliberately limited but representative series of authors who include the same component in their own descriptions and adds that, despite apparently wide divergence—mainly due to terminological variance—“fairly extensive agreement on such a list [of competence areas] can be derived from Translation Studies literature” (ibid.: 135). This shared ground is presented with a view to justifying her translation competence model as a possible basis for curriculum design. At the same time, however, it indicates that the observed parallels between translation-specific competences and generic competences are not peculiar to Kelly’s model alone but can be drawn from others as well. This may be regarded as an indicator of the possibility to generalize, at least theoretically, Kelly’s intuition of skills genericity and skills transferability. More corroborative data in this sense can be drawn from the analysis of other multi-componential models of translation competence that are either absent from or subsequent to Kelly’s 2007 article. In particular, those devised by the PACTE group (2003), Göpferich (2008, 2009), and the European Masters in Translation Expert Group (EMT 2009) show a high level of overlap with the whole spectrum of competence areas in Kelly’s taxonomy, as concisely illustrated in Table 3.2.

When discussing translation competence it may be hazardous to talk about agreement across different conceptions because, despite a certain degree of correspondence at the macro-level, the details tend to vary. The three models in Table 3.2, however, are highly convergent with Kelly’s even at the micro-level. As such, they present the same level of comparability with the Tuning Project’s model of generic competences originally highlighted by Kelly, thus creating more shared ground to buttress the author’s hypothesis of genericity and transferability. This, however, is not sheer coincidence, but rather the result of simple dynamics of cross-fertilization and cooperation among the respective authors: Kelly was a member of the EMT expert group and is institutionally located in the same context where the PACTE group works, whereas Göpferich explicitly drew from the previous models (Pym, personal communication, February 2014).

Table 3.2. Convergence between major areas of translation competence in recent models

Kelly 2005	PACTE 2003	Göpferich 2008, 2009	EMT 2009
Communicative textual competence in at least two languages and cultures	Bilingual sub-competence	Communicative competence in at least two languages	Language competence Intercultural competence (sociolinguistic and textual dimension)
Cultural and/or intercultural competence	Extralinguistic sub-competence	[-]	knowing how to recognize and identify elements, values and references proper to the cultures represented (from the textual dimension of Intercultural competence)
Subject area or thematic competence	Extralinguistic sub-competence	Domain competence	Thematic competence
Professional and/or instrumental competence	Instrumental sub-competence Knowledge about translation	Tools and research competence	Information mining competence Technological competence Translation service provision competence (interpersonal and production dimension)
Attitudinal or psycho-physiological competence	Psycho-physiological components	Psycho-physical disposition (intelligence, ambition, perseverance, self-confidence, etc.) Translator's self-concept, professional ethos Motivation	being aware of the social role of the translator questioning one's habits, being open to innovations, concerned with quality, ready to adapt (from the interpersonal dimension of Translation service provision competence)
Interpersonal or social competence	[-]	[-]	Translation service provision competence (interpersonal dimension)
Organizational or strategic competence	Strategic sub-competence	Translation routine activation competence Strategic competence Translation brief and translation norms	Translation service provision competence (production dimension)

When trying to detect possible matches between translation-specific and generic competences in an attempt to substantiate Kelly's intuition, it is tempting to resort to multi-componential models for their affinity with the taxonomic nature of generic competences models themselves. Interesting parallels, however, can also be established with Pym's (2003) minimalist model. As explained above, Pym encapsulates translation competence in the uniquely translational ability to generate more viable renditions for a given ST and to select only one from among them. He associates this process with acts of problem-solving and decision-making, both of which feature among the instrumental competences of the Tuning Project's taxonomy (see 2.2.2). In turn, Pym sees this process of detecting a problem, producing possible renderings, and eliminating alternatives as dependent on "constant theorization" (ibid.: 492), that is drawing on implicit translation theories and norms to inform one's actions and justify them. This

ability seems to broadly match the Tuning Project's "capacity for analysis and synthesis" and "capacity for applying knowledge in practice". Finally, in Pym's minimalist approach, translation is conceived of as an interactive, cooperative activity; as such, an important part of translation competence is "the ability to use and negotiate with a plurality of propositions and opinions" (ibid.: 493), even in the apparently more individualistic machine-assisted manifestations of this practice. The interactional dynamics involved in this view of translation may be seen as corresponding to the Tuning Project's interpersonal category of generic competences.

Any a posteriori analysis of what has been written on translation competence or translator expert behavior reveals some kind of analogy with a number of items contained in the Tuning Project's taxonomy of generic competences. For example, a massive body of literature identifies problem-solving as an essential aspect of the ability to translate and a regular component of the actual process of translating (e.g. Lörcher 1991, Wilss 1992). As noted for Pym's minimalist model, problem-solving also features in the Tuning Project's taxonomy as an example of instrumental competences, common to all or most of the degrees and applicable to a host of different contexts in and outside education. Again, following in Kussmaul's (2000) footsteps, some scholarly attention has been placed on creativity as a key feature of the translation process and hence of translation competence (e.g. Bayer-Hohenwarter 2012), identifying a strong correlation between creative processes and successful translating. This procedural as well as dispositional skill can also be found in the Tuning Project's taxonomy, among systemic competences, expressed as the "capacity for generating new ideas (creativity)". In a classroom activity eliciting brainstorming on translator competence components, González Davies (2004: 131, 167-206) discusses "transference skills" as the features distinguishing a translator from a bilingual speaker. Under this competence category, she subsumes quite a number of the skills featuring in the Tuning Project's taxonomy, though under different labels, i.e. resourcing, decision-making (including creativity and problem spotting and solving), and mental skills (including reflection). And the list of parallels could continue.

The method of identifying parallels between translation-related competences and the Tuning Project's generic competences pioneered by Kelly can also be applied to the other repertoires illustrated in Chapter 2, i.e. DeSeCo's classification of *Key Competencies for a Successful Life and a Well-Functioning Society* and the European reference framework of *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*. Thus, for instance, the

three key competencies subsumed under DeSeCo's first category "interacting in heterogeneous groups" (see 2.2.2) can be associated with what in some conceptions of translation competence has been referred to as interpersonal dimension, that is the ability to liaise with other participants and stakeholders in the translation process and to manage diversity and conflict. The second DeSeCo category, "acting autonomously", refers to the multifaceted ability to inhabit the social space as responsible and critical citizens. As such, it applies to a wide range of professions and social behaviors, among which certainly professional translation and the translation process. An analysis of the items in this category yields more discrete affinities. The first, "the ability to act within the big picture", involves understanding the wider context each individual is a part of, considering the long-term consequences of one's actions, as well as the interests of all parties involved. Broadly speaking, this may be associated with the top-down approach to translation, i.e. the consideration of global, situational, and pragmatic features with a view to obtaining effective target-text reception. The second competence in this category is "the ability to form and conduct life plans and personal projects". It seems quite general but actually many of the micro-skills involved in this self-managing ability (e.g. prioritize goals, balance one's resources, self-direct learning, monitor progress, adjust when necessary, evaluate effectiveness) turn out to be essential aspects of translation competence, both in an education environment (e.g. for long individual projects) and in the profession (e.g. project-managing, freelancing). Finally, the third competence, "the ability to defend and assert one's rights, interests, limits, and needs", can be associated with Kiraly's notion of "translator self-concept" (1995: 113-114) along with an overall awareness of the duties and responsibilities required of a professional translator. Also the third category of DeSeCo's repertoire, "using tools interactively", can be easily mapped onto a series of competence areas that have been attributed to translation, because it refers to an effective use of languages and ICT technologies as well as the ability to recognize one's knowledge gaps, retrieve appropriate and qualitative information, and finally store it.

Similarly, considerable correspondence can be found when juxtaposing the areas in which translation competence has been variously broken down and the eight domains which constitute the European reference framework of *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* (see 2.2.2), as Table 3.3 schematically outlines.

Table 3.3. Parallels between major translation competence areas and the EU Key Competences for Lifelong Learning

<i>Dimensions of translation competence (shared ground)</i>	<i>Key competences European Reference Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning</i>
Linguistic Cultural and intercultural	Communication in the mother tongue Communication in a foreign language Cultural awareness and expression
Interpersonal (teamwork, negotiation, leadership)	Social and civic competence
Technological and instrumental (use of tools, information management)	Digital competence Learning-to-learn
Organizational and strategic (time-management, project-management, self-assessment, revision)	Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
Professional (all types of calculations involved in the profession, e.g. tax, budgets, billing)	Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology

The different parallels between translation-specific and generic competences shown in the foregoing can be regarded as corroborative data for Kelly's claim discussed above, i.e. that the study of translation at university level can be expected to develop generic, transferable learning because it offers access to a range of widely applicable skills, which are also deemed fundamental for personal development, social participation, and lifelong learning, thus uniquely qualifying students as flexible, autonomous, and highly employable individuals. It must be pointed out, however, that the methodology informing the identification of such convergence between all the pairs of competence models—in which I have indulged too in the discussion of Kelly's proposal—is not entirely reliable. The parallels are indeed drawn between broad, roughly described competence areas, with little attention being paid to clearly-defined or fine-grained skill-sets. In other words, correspondences are often established at a nominal or superficial level. This approximation certainly helps sustain the general argument that there is some degree of overlap and comparability between translation-related and generic competences; on the other hand, it exposes it to possible discrediting.

Overall, Kelly's claim remains largely speculative and, given the difficulty involved in empirically testing such a level of abstraction, it is probably bound to remain so. Yet this needs not be seen as an element that undermines the inner validity of the proposal. It can be assumed that other theories in education sciences—and in other fields for that matter—have been proposed and advocated on the grounds of their

theoretical value, even though they have not been subjected to strict empirical validation. An example that comes to mind is the very pedagogy of lifelong learning (Hinchliffe 2006, Osborne et al. 2007), which has inspired recent education policies worldwide on the grounds that it is believed to be based on positive principles.

It is this inner value of Kelly's claim that prompted me to pursue the present study, which actually originated from the assumption that, in the context of foreign-language programs, a focus on the generic, transferable learning developing from translation education might have a broader pedagogical potential than training in strictly vocational skills. Yet Kelly's claim as well as mine—largely drawing on hers—are not free from intrinsic weaknesses. One of these has to do with the theoretical issues surrounding the conceptualization of translation competence in multi-componential terms, an unresolved debate already discussed above. A further, probably more fundamental weakness regards TGS, their existence, their being *generic*, and above all their actual transferability, all issues that were discussed in general terms in section 2.3.3. In other words, one might legitimately wonder whether it is plausible to expect that putative generic skills developed or applied in translation-related contexts, with translation-related materials can spill over into contexts and tasks *not* related to translating. Kelly does not go into detail on this issue. If we accept the idea that skills are fundamentally specific to a certain knowledge domain and to the contexts in which they are learnt or deployed, and consequently that TGS cannot be conceptualized as free-floating, super-disciplinary abilities, doubts arise as to the possibility to apply them in other contexts. These qualms are undoubtedly justified. Yet the debate seems to still be open over whether learning is *always* necessarily tightly bound to context and disciplinary knowledge, or whether instead learning and performance can also be informed by general/generalized principles wielding domain-specific knowledge (Perkins and Salomon 1989, Anderson et al. 1996). This aspect, coupled with the fact that recent transfer research is exploring productive ways to foster transfer and the impact of learning generalization, seems to leave some margin to consider the theoretical issues about TGS with less pessimism. My view of the issue is that it is certainly unreasonable to assume that translation-related generic skills transfer *intact* and *immutably* from a task or situation involving translation to a task or situation not involving translation. A somewhat more plausible assumption might be that a set of general strategic, analytical, and interpersonal skills explicitly focused on in translation education and taught in a transfer-fostering way might form a skill reservoir that

students might have recourse to in other contexts. In short, although there are some theoretical issues with multi-componential conceptualizations and models of competence as well as with the nature and logic of TGS, I do not believe that they invalidate Kelly's proposal entirely. What they undoubtedly point to is the need for further research in the field.

3.2. Transferable generic skills in theories of translation teaching

Two further areas in which the issue of transferable generic skills has been explicitly tackled is translation pedagogy in FLT/L and translator training. As to the former, the line of argument leading into the topic is generally a discussion of the benefits of translation activities for language acquisition and academic learning at large, and/or the claim, already mentioned above, that language graduates often enter career paths that are not necessarily related to the discipline studied and therefore may profit from training in widely applicable skills.

Some contributions approach the transferability of translation skills from a predominantly language-oriented perspective, focusing on the purely textual and communicative skills involved in translating and their applicability to contexts other than the translation classroom. An example is a short article by Belam (2001) that describes a module for final-year undergraduates at the University of Exeter's School of Modern Languages, focused on activities with machine translated texts. Illustrating the fine analytical skills that the module exercises in both L1 and L2, the author emphasizes how the absolute precision and avoidance of ambiguity practiced in L1 pre-editing and L2 post-editing is likely to stand students/graduates in good stead in the production of intelligible, non-idiosyncratic texts in both other disciplines and jobs involving writing. Further, an awareness of what makes a translation adequate for its target readership is believed to help graduates strive for effectiveness and adequacy when variously engaged in global business communication. A similar perspective is taken by Sewell (2003) in an equally short contribution tellingly entitled "The hidden merits of the translation class". Describing a final-year BA translation module at the University of London, the author comments on twelve skills and attributes characterizing, in her view, translation work, which she presents as being transferable to a variety of professional tasks involving language-related activity. These are the abilities to:

1. Read accurately
2. Operate effectively socio-linguistically: be aware of register, text-type
3. Understand a theory of communication and see one's role as a link in a chain of communication
4. Use contextual knowledge effectively
5. Work to a brief, carry out instructions, i.e. adopt the attitude of a professional
6. See when extra research is needed, and do it, i.e. act autonomously
7. Prioritise work, pace oneself, manage one's time, have work ready early if possible
8. Produce reader-friendly documents, work on lay-out
9. Step back from one's work and evaluate it with objectivity
10. Post-edit one's own and other people's work (requires considerable language-awareness)
11. Understand what makes the two languages tick
12. Articulate unspoken assumptions (translation strategies, and reasons for translation decisions)

The majority of the skills in this list—whose wording does not render the full depth of the author's commentary—are indisputably linguistic in nature, thus sustaining Sewell's argument. On a closer look, however, some of them reveal a more generic characterization, thus suggesting a wider applicability. An example is skill 5, which is ultimately what every employer looks for in a new recruit, whatever the field. Also, skill 6, the ability to question and research problematic or unknown elements—instead of uncritically translating words at a surface level—represents a useful exercise in critical thinking, information retrieval, and autonomy, which is certainly portable to many life spheres. More translation-related skills that also apply to activities other than language-related ones are numbers 7 and 12, i.e. the highly prized abilities to manage time effectively and justify one's decisions and actions. Contrary to what is postulated in her initial claim, Sewell ends up expanding the scope of translation transferability from primarily language-related dimensions to also non-linguistic dimensions, and envisaging a wider range of possible contexts of application or adaptation, thus anticipating future developments in this direction.

An example worth mentioning in this respect is the Irish project entitled *Transferable Skills in Third-Level Modern Languages Curricula* jointly conducted between 2003 and 2006 by the career services and languages departments of Dublin City University, Trinity College Dublin, and Waterford Institute of Technology. The impetus for the project was the perceived need to raise language students' awareness of the TGS developed during their academic experience, with a view to enhancing their ability to “fully articulate the more holistic aspects of their personal development”

(Curry and Sherry 2004: v) with a hoped-for positive impact on employability. The preparatory work consisted of an extensive process of consultation with four groups of stakeholders (students, alumni, academics, employers) aimed at gathering data on importance rating and level of development of twenty-three TGS, though details are limited as to how this repertoire was arrived at. The project's main phase involved a pilot program that, based on the consultation findings, set out to explore ways of explicitly integrating eight selected skills into the language curricula of the three institutions, with care being taken not to compromise specialist academic focus. The program was evaluated through pre/post-test surveys of experimental and focus groups, with a view to establishing whether the methodologies devised had had any impact on awareness of and competence in the selected skills. The results were very encouraging in this sense and formed the basis for a series of recommendations on modes of curriculum design that raise awareness of TGS acquisition (Sherry and Curry 2005). The final stages of the project involved the development of varied resources to support the mainstreaming of these learning outcomes in higher education.

The pilot program was also implemented in two translation modules, respectively a second-year Japanese Reading and Translation module taught by Niamh Kelly at Dublin City University, and a third-year Italian Translation Strategies module, taught by Cormac Ó Cuilleain at Trinity College. The former, reported on in a published collection of case-studies (Sherry 2005), focused on the IT skills fostered by the proposed translation activities, in particular word-processing, text-formatting, Internet searching, generating electronic glossaries, and using an online learning environment. Unfortunately, scant information is provided on actual teaching activities, awareness-raising procedures, skills assessment, or on the pilot's overall strengths and weaknesses. The same applies to the latter module, for which no official report exists. Some data are accessible on the Department of Italian webpage,¹ where outdated contents explain the module's rationale as part of the wider pilot program and describes some of the activities proposed to "unlock the key skills" of time-management, team-work, written communication, presentation skills, and coping with multiple tasks.

As shown by the choice of skills in both modules, the claim of transferability is applied to a much wider spectrum of translation-related skills than is the case in the early, language-focused contributions. In a way, this study anticipates Kelly's theory

¹ <http://www.tcd.ie/Italian/undergraduate/skills/>. Accessed February 2014.

above and further backs it up. Overall, this project is of great import for my research interests as it represents one of the very few empirical investigations of TGS in the neighboring field of language education and specifically in translation pedagogy within language education. This is why it is a pity that the official reports scantily document the actual teaching and learning experiences that formed the main project stage and their—supposedly differing—impact on skills awareness. Also lamentable is the fact that, at some unspecified time, the project website went offline, and with it a rich database of useful resources for skills integration.

In the recent resurgence of interest in the role of translation in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning (see 1.1.3), a few contributions have briefly touched upon the broadly applicable learning that can be developed through translation. One of these is by Leonardi (2010: 82) who, when outlining the variety of purposes for which translation can be used in the foreign-language classroom, adds the following remark: “Furthermore, translation can help language learners enhance their analytical and problem-solving skills which are essential in everyday life as well as in most working fields”. In this short sentence, almost an aside or rather a coda to her wider argument, Leonardi sums up the rationale behind my advocacy of TGS with regard to translation teaching, and it is a pity that she does not elaborate on this any further.

More perspectives on skills transferability and translation education come from the field of translator training. Worth mentioning in this respect is Kearns’s work (2006, 2008) which, together with Kelly’s contributions, can be regarded as the theoretical backbone of the discourse of TGS in Translation Studies. Kearns frames the discussion within the larger context of curriculum renewal principles for the training of translators. In particular, he tackles skills and knowledge transferability in relation to the assessment of locally relevant learning needs and situational factors. Such analyses tend to be perceived as a means of vocationalizing academic studies, but in fact they take stock of a much wider array of factors than the job market alone, including stakeholders as diverse as learners, graduates, academics, the institution, and society at large. In other words, they represent a societally and individually relevant way of shaping the curriculum, which goes far beyond the trite dichotomous reading of curriculum orientations in terms of vocational versus academic. Convincingly arguing against such a dichotomy and in favor of a cross-fertilization of educational philosophies and curricular orientations, Kearns claims that just as institutions “have the right to academic freedom, they also have a responsibility to students to provide them with an

education that will address issues and circumstances which they will encounter in their lives” (2008: 205). It is here that he sees skills transferability as crucial. In other words, he believes that a key issue to be addressed by needs and situation analyses is the extent to which “the skills (knowledge) imparted by [the] curriculum are (is) transferable” (ibid.: 207). The theoretical issues with the claim of skills transferability identified in Kelly’s proposal above could be reiterated here with reference to Kearns’s argument. Probably, in light of the complex and contentious issues involved in such claim, the thrust of his view should rather be seen in the following terms: needs and situation analyses informing the process of curriculum development should ponder how generally the knowledge and skills imparted by the curriculum will be useful, i.e. to what extent they are useful across contexts (Chapman and O’Neill 2010).

It might be hoped that the translator training community has acknowledged the novelty and pedagogical significance of Kearns’s and Kelly’s theories more than is to be inferred from the literature. To my knowledge, there are very few documented examples of their impact on the sector. One is a methodological paper by Sánchez Nieto (2009). The author describes a teaching activity that, drawing on both Kearns and Kelly, and in a similar vein to the Irish study, aims at raising awareness of—and eventually proficiency in—some aspects of translation competence expected to apply in manifold professional and non-professional contexts throughout one’s life. Implemented in a fourth-year German-Spanish translation module within the translator training program at Valladolid University, Spain, the activity revolves around the rendering of culture-specific references in tourist texts, a task that in the author’s view requires extensive application of multiple TGS. Students are encouraged to reflect on their level of proficiency in these skills by means of written feedback on their work in which the instructor comments on inappropriate choices and their possible origin using a so-called “competence-based metalanguage” (ibid.: unpaginated). Simply put, all inaccuracies are explained in terms of an insufficient application of good practices of competent translating—using Kelly’s competence terminology—with a view to eliciting future corrective measures and internalization. Although this assessment technique is not entirely novel (see Fox 2006), Sánchez Nieto can be credited all the same with presenting a practice-oriented way of working explicitly on generic aspects of translation competence. In particular, she exemplifies comments in which the focus is on the skills subsumed under Kelly’s strategic competence (i.e. identification and solution of problems, self-monitoring, self-assessment, revision), on information

retrieval and assessment for problem-solving purposes, as well as on attitudinal qualities like initiative, manifested for instance in the act of asking questions to peers/instructor/others in order to clarify doubts, instead of passively expecting input or instructions.

3.3. Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed a small body of literature sources that explicitly address the issue of transferable generic skills in connection to translation pedagogy and training. What clearly emerges from the discussion is that the intersection between these areas is still largely uncharted ground, from both a theoretical and an empirical point of view. The existing work on the subject, however speculative and at times methodologically shaky it may be, represents at least a starting point for further research aimed to identify possible transferable and generic areas of learning that might develop from translation activities in language education and to explore ways of incorporating them or making them explicit to students. After this preeminently theoretical premise, attention is now turned to the empirical part of this study. In particular, the next chapter will outline the research objectives informing it and will describe the instruments and the analytical approach that was adopted.

UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA I VIRGILI

TRANSLATION IN UNIVERSITY FOREIGN-LANGUAGE CURRICULA: AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDES, WITH REFERENCE TO

Costanza Peverati

Dipòsit Legal: T 765-2015

Chapter 4. Methodological issues

This chapter opens the empirical part of this thesis. After presenting the underlying rationale of the study that was carried out in terms of research questions and research hypotheses, it details the data collection tools and the analytical approach that were selected.

4.1. Outline of research objectives

As outlined at the end of Chapter 1 (see 1.4), the present study sets out to expand the knowledge about the teaching of translation in foreign-language degree programs that emerged from my initial analysis of the Italian context (see 1.2). Following on from the ensuing discussion of some problematic aspects—fundamentally linked to the ways in which translation is conceptualized—and of possible approaches to address them, the main focus of this study is to gain broader and richer insights into the following three areas, here presented as research questions:

1. What understandings and uses of translation are to be found among language teachers working at university level internationally?
2. What are the reasons for not including translation in tertiary language education?
3. Is there an awareness of other functions of translation education beyond those more traditionally related to language skills enhancement, in terms of transferable projections of translation skills and especially of transferable generic skills?

Given the rather broad and open-ended nature of these research questions, the type of study that they delineate is predominantly qualitative and exploratory. It seeks to analyze and understand a central phenomenon, obtaining information from the participants themselves, as relatively little is known about it in the literature. Qualitative research generally does not formulate clear-cut hypotheses or predictions at the outset, as it tends to develop theories from the interpretation of data. However, based on what I inferred from my analysis of the Italian context and on the conclusions I drew after reviewing the literature, I formulated the following tentative hypotheses of what I might find in the data:

1. Among language teachers at university level, translation is subject to restrictive conceptualizations and partial uses, informed by formalistic views on the one hand and vocational views on the other.
2. The reasons why translation is not incorporated in language pedagogy, or only minimally so, rest on narrow and partial notions of translation.
3. There is limited awareness of the transferable generic learning that translation may foster in language students.

The insights obtained through this study are expected to inform a wider discussion of curriculum development, with particular emphasis on the third research question, my main interest area, which still constitutes a relatively unexplored field in Translation Studies and in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning (FLT/L).

4.2. Research design and instruments

The research approach that better fits the aims and features of the study delineated above is primarily qualitative. Qualitative research is indeed concerned with understanding a phenomenon and its diverse manifestations, analyzing the subjective experiences of the people directly involved with it (emic perspective). Also, in qualitative research, the researcher is interested in the description and interpretation of phenomena of which there is not enough information to support any rigid hypothesis-testing research (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003). Although it is true that much has been written on translation in FLT/L, especially over the past thirty years (see 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3), it is also true that such literature has mainly been produced by scholars or advocates of this subject, while the views of a wider group of stakeholders, including detractors or teachers who do not necessarily produce/publish research, have remained comparatively underrepresented. Moreover, the information on the issues addressed in my research questions, when available in the literature, tends to reflect the perspectives of individuals over a more or less extensive period of *past* time. These perspectives do not offer an overview of the multiple dimensions characterizing the phenomena being studied, at the time of studying them.

A research methodology that lends itself well to addressing my research interests is a cross-sectional survey of directly involved subjects, in my case language teachers in higher education or experts in the field. Surveys tend to generate mostly quantitative

data, typically by means of questionnaires with closed-ended items, whose responses are computed and analyzed statistically. Qualitative data are also possible in surveys, in the form of questionnaires with open-ended or semi-closed-ended items as well as interviews (Creswell 2002). Both types of instruments can prove appropriate to the purposes of this study. Yet, given the complex nature of the research questions— involving multifaceted concepts and motivations—the survey instruments should not constrain respondents to choosing pre-set response options that inevitably reflect the researcher's experiences and understandings. They should rather allow them to provide rich and articulate responses within their cultural and social experiences as well as responses that capture the broad semantic scope of the issues under analysis in their variation.

At the time of writing, a large-scale survey study on the use of translation in language learning has recently been conducted by the European Society for Translation Studies, the Intercultural Studies Group of the Universitat Rovira i Virgili (Tarragona, Spain), and the University of Leicester (UK), for the European Commission's Directorate-General for Translation (DGT). As it represents the most up-to-date analysis of the subject being investigated here, as well as one of the most authoritative, I deemed it an ideal source of information for my research purposes. Upon receiving permission from the researchers, I thus decided to carry out a follow-up analysis of the data obtained through this particular study.

The DGT study, titled *Translation and Language Learning: The Role of Translation in the Teaching of Languages in the European Union*, was conducted between October 2012 and July 2013 with the overall aim of researching the use of translation in language pedagogy at primary, secondary, and tertiary level in a selection of EU Member States. More precisely, the study set out to address the following research questions (Pym et al. 2013: 5):

1. Can translation contribute to effective language learning?
2. What is the pedagogical value of translation compared to other language learning methods?
3. To what extent does the contribution of translation to language learning depend on the learning objective, i.e. the targeted level of proficiency (fluency or mere comprehension of a language)?
4. Does translation currently form a part of the curricula for language teaching in primary, secondary and higher education in the selected Member States?
5. If translation does not form part of the language teaching curricula, is there a willingness to introduce it? If not, what are the reasons?

6. Is there a difference in attitude towards the role of translation in language teaching between bi/multilingual and monolingual countries?
7. How can translation as a method of language learning be made more attractive in order to motivate the students?

The first three research questions were dealt with by means of a thorough literature review. Questions 4, 5, and 6 found responses through a questionnaire survey. Finally, to address the last question, the researchers devised a series of possible classroom activities, drawing on different literature sources, consultation with experts, and their own understanding of translation as an FLT/L tool.

The survey part of the research was structured in terms of case-studies of ten countries, of which seven are EU Member States (i.e. Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Poland, Spain, the United Kingdom) and three served as comparison countries outside the EU (i.e. Australia, China, the United States). In the selected countries, two questionnaires were administered, one for experts (Appendix 1) and one for teachers (Appendix 2). The former—consisting exclusively of open-ended questions—gathered expert opinions on translation for language purposes as well as data on language policies and regulations in the respondents' respective countries; the latter—containing closed-ended, open-ended, and semi-closed-ended items—sought information on actual teaching practices and general attitudes towards translation. Respondents were recruited as a convenience sample using a snowball sampling technique in controlled areas, at national level for the experts and at national, regional or city level for the teachers. Questionnaires were distributed and completed via email in the case of experts and through the online survey tool Encuesta Fácil in the case of teachers. In the latter case, questionnaires were made available in English, French, and German, with a view to avoiding possible language barriers that would impinge on response rates. In the course of the study, the networks of contacts led to additional free participation from respondents in Albania, Lithuania, Italy,¹ Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and the Schola Europaea (also known as European Schools, i.e. institutions mostly catering for EU workers' children).

A total of 963 respondents participated in the survey, of whom 67 were experts and 896 were language teachers. Because of the diverse sampling methods employed, their distribution was highly uneven, across both the selected countries and the three

¹ The Italian additional sample, particularly interesting for the purposes of this study, was comprised of 8 experts and 2 teachers. Being so limited and biased towards experts, it was deemed inadequate to represent the Italian community of language teachers.

education sectors. The expert sample was comprised of invited respondents whom the DGT researchers identified as subjects involved in language teaching and translation in various ways, such as teachers, teacher trainers, researchers or leaders of organizations. The term “expert” implies “no formal recognition of authority” (Pym et al. 2013: 33). Of the teacher sample, 22% worked in primary, 50% in secondary, and 28% in higher education. The vast majority were teachers of English, with more than 11 years of experience, except for China, where the weighting was more in favor of younger teachers (less than 3-10 years of experience).

With a view to contextualizing and clarifying the questionnaire findings, two focus group interviews were carried out in Tarragona and Leicester in April 2013, with fifteen and sixteen participants respectively. Among them were educationalists, language teachers working in the three education sectors, as well as MA and doctoral students of translation, many of them teachers in universities worldwide. The former session convened individuals from the Tarragona area and focused mainly on discussing the views of the teachers surveyed, whereas the latter brought together people from different UK regions (including the North West, North East, Midlands, London, and the South East) and was more concerned with analyzing different aspects of the experts' responses, in particular issues of national language policy, mainly owing to the fact that England was then undergoing a revision of the National Curriculum, a revision that, among other things, would introduce translation as a statutory requirement for children aged 11-14 from September 2014.

Data analysis was carried out both globally and by case-study country. Although the main research instrument, i.e. the questionnaire for teachers, generated mostly quantitative data, the researchers opted for a predominantly qualitative and interpretative approach, triangulating survey data with a number of contextual determinants (i.e. official regulations, recommendations, expert opinions, and linguistic demographics).

4.3. Data selection

To address the specific interest areas of this study, I looked for pertinent findings in the data collected through all three instruments used in the DGT study, i.e. questionnaire for teachers, questionnaire for experts, and focus group interviews. While the DGT

researchers collected the data from representatives of the three education sectors without separating out any of the three sectors as such, I focused selectively on data that reflect the reality of translation teaching in higher education only. Of the three instruments, the one that best lent itself to this targeted data selection was the questionnaire for teachers, as the online tool supporting it permits to filter data by different parameters. I thus filtered the responses given by tertiary participants only. As to the questionnaire for experts, no a priori filter was applied. I could have selected the replies from respondents active in higher education only, but I assumed that all respondents might well provide information pertinent to my purposes, independently of the level at which they (had) worked. And indeed, this was the case. Similarly, I analyzed the third research instrument—focus group interviews—in their entirety, trying to isolate tertiary-related material where possible.

Regarding the demographics of the different respondent groups, the teacher sample consisted of 295 subjects, distributed across countries and years of service as illustrated in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 below. As already mentioned, the expert sample consisted of 67 subjects, whose distribution across countries is shown in Figure 4.3 below.

Figure 4.1. Distribution of tertiary teachers by country

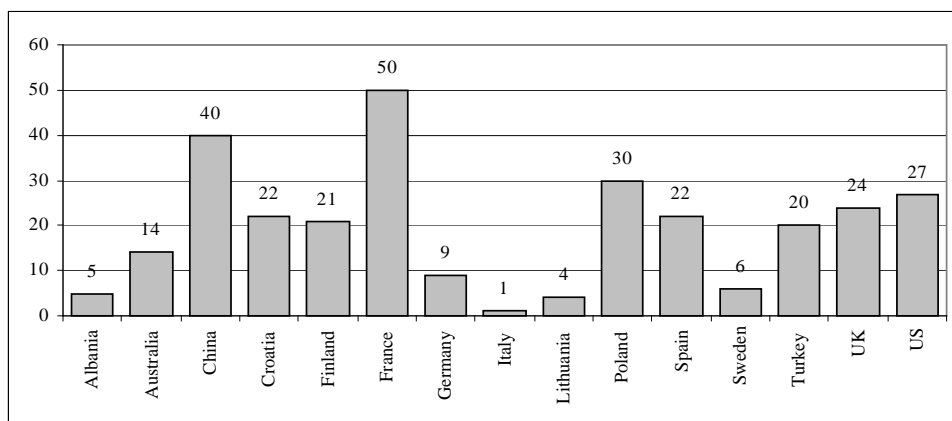


Figure 4.2. Distribution of tertiary teachers by years of service

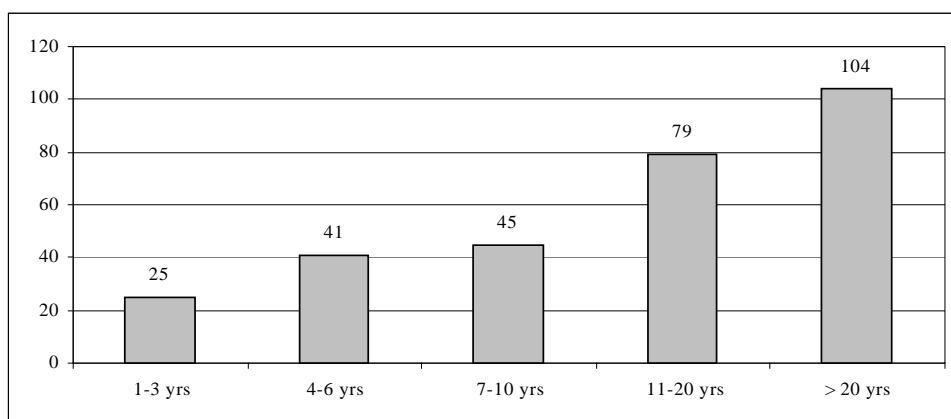
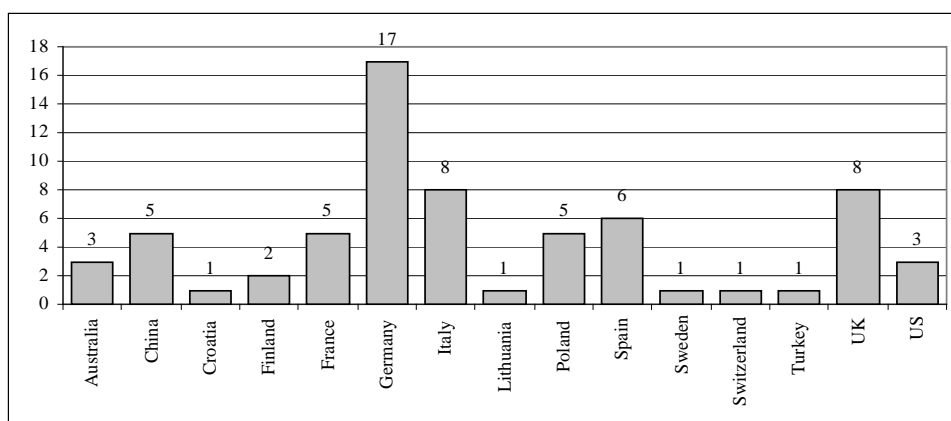


Figure 4.3. Distribution of experts by country



As to the focus group participants, an overall description was provided above. Here it can be further specified that, of those present in Tarragona (n=15), four were in primary, two in secondary and nine in higher education, and almost all of them were teachers of English as a foreign language. The participants convened in Leicester (n=16) made up a very composite group comprised of four PhD students, three MA students in Translation Studies, two middle school teachers, one director of Translation Studies, and one professor of Italian; the remaining ones were language or education development advisers.

Once the sources of data were established, permission was obtained from respondents to access and analyze the information they provided through the different research instruments. Then, the next step was to focus on data pertinent to my research

questions. It must be pointed out that the DGT survey was designed to answer a set of research questions different from those set out for this study. With few exceptions, the three data collection instruments tackled a wide variety of issues that seemed only loosely related to the concerns of this study. Yet, on closer analysis, even apparently unrelated questions yielded responses that contained interesting data. By way of example, information on translation concepts were drawn, inferred so to speak, from free-text responses to the question “Please say why you prefer [the translation activities you use]”: a question like this, in fact, elicits statements about what translation in its different manifestations contributes to the language learning process, hence about its functions, and ultimately about its nature.

It must be noted, that special attention was given to free-text responses because, as stated above, they permit to explore in greater detail the different possibilities that respondents create for a question, and secondly because they were subjected to no systematic and targeted analysis during original data processing (Pym, personal communication, July 2013).

4.4. Analytical approach

The data focused on for analysis take multiple forms: some are focus group discussions, others are responses to closed-ended questions, yet others are free-text responses. Data analysis followed by necessity different approaches: the free-flowing oral discourse of focus groups was not transcribed verbatim due to the often poor sound quality of recordings. The analysis was limited to repeated listening and note-taking. Note-taking and isolation of pertinent data was also the approach adopted for the responses to the questionnaire for experts. As to the questionnaire for teachers, the replies to the closed-ended items were read with attention to mean values and frequency levels, and their overall quantitative meaning within the sample, whereas for the free-text responses to the open-ended items, I adopted an approach that draws on typical techniques for inductive analysis of qualitative data, in particular code-based text analysis and grounded theory (Miles and Huberman 1994, Ryan and Bernard 2000, Krippendorff 2004), as explained next.

Inductive analysis consisted of subsequent, iterative steps, all conducted manually. The preliminary step was, for each open-ended question of interest, to

explore the response database in its entirety by reading through it at least twice in order to obtain a general sense of the data. The next step was the organization of the textual material into manageable units of analysis, a process called “unitizing” (Krippendorff 2004: 83). A unit of analysis consists of a sentence or phrase containing a single, non-overlapping concept or opinion. Free-text responses lend themselves relatively well to being segmented in this way because, as Jackson and Trochim (2002: 311) point out, they are typically a “sparse, list-like type of text”. Thus, “units can often be lifted intact from the response because respondents tend to express one idea for each concern or opinion they list” (ibid.: 312-313). Alternatively, responses are unitized by breaking sentences down into single-concept statements, which are then placed in a list or on cards for subsequent sorting. In the data at my disposal, for example, one response read:

I think [translation] is an important learning skill. It helps students to learn about the differences between languages and that the one-to-one translation does not exist. It also helps them think in the new language and their attitude towards error correction changes.

This response was segmented into five separate units of meaning, as follows “(1) I think it is an important learning skill. (2) It helps students to learn about the differences between languages (3) and that the one-to-one translation does not exist. (4) It also helps them think in the new language (5) and their attitude towards error correction changes”. All single-concept units obtained through unitizing were assigned a progressive number, together with an abbreviation for the respective question, i.e. the letter “Q” plus question number (e.g. “Q12-3” refers to single-concept unit number 3 of the free-text responses to question 12).

The next stage (coding) was to assign each single-concept unit a code, that is a label that summarizes the meaning expressed by that text segment. The purpose of this operation, which is absolutely central to text analysis—so much so that Miles and Huberman affirm that “coding *is* analysis” (1994: 56, emphasis in the original)—is to create descriptions and start identifying emergent thematic patterns in the data. So, in the response quoted above, the following five codes were identified: (1) learning process, (2) contrasting languages, (3) pragmatic, functional language use, (4) thinking in the new language, (5) error correction. The next stage was to group all statements carrying the same code into thematically homogeneous categories (clustering).

During coding and clustering, which involved extensive reading and re-reading of raw data in relation to the meanings ascribed to them, the identified codes were checked for redundancy and similar ones were clustered together. Also, in the process, codes were constantly refined in their wording, so as to describe the expressed meanings as accurately as possible. At the same time, attention was increasingly focused on the relationships among the identified codes as well as the features differentiating them. This generated broader, hierarchically superordinate themes, or nodes, that is aggregations of similar codes. Such hierarchical data organization, which Creswell (2002: 273) defines as “layering”, resulted in a sort of descriptive model for both understandings of translation and reasons for resistance.

After approximately three weeks, I went back to the list of unitized statements with this preliminary coding scheme to see whether my initial decisions still held or whether new codes and new groupings would emerge. This represents a relatively unsophisticated intra-coder reliability test, which however confirmed most of my initial analysis and led to a number of categories being slightly redesigned to enable greater descriptive precision.

Free-text responses are a convenient data collection instrument and, at the same time, pose a number of challenges. As Jackson and Trochim (2002) point out, this type of textual data can provide a rich description of the different dimensions of respondent reality at a relatively low cost to the researcher, contributing alternative explanations to those accessed through closed-ended questions. Also, compared to interviews, they offer greater anonymity and often elicit more honest responses. On the other hand, they are challenging because they tend to contain essential, dehydrated language, at times deprived of contextual information. This aspect, coupled with the impossibility of asking for clarifications, may compromise the researcher's understanding and eventually lead to non-exhaustive coding. These features also characterized the textual data at my disposal: save few exceptions, all free-text responses tended to be fairly concise, but nonetheless mostly unambiguous. This certainly made the coding process relatively straightforward and above all minimized the risk, intrinsic to code-based analysis, of subjective and biased categorization on the part of the researcher. The few ambiguous cases or those where the respondents seemed to be off the mark were not taken into consideration.

The aim of code-based analysis was primarily to study the variation in the respondents' understandings of and experience with translation in FLT/L at university

level. This qualitative approach allowed me to describe *what* there was in the data-set, with an emphasis on characterization and perception. While sorting and clustering the coded units according to descriptive categories, however, I also engaged in extensive calculations, which revealed *how much* there was of each understanding, attitude, or practice, how recurrent they were, and which seemed to matter more for respondents. This quantitative approach to the qualitative data complemented the descriptive analysis with additional insights. Finally, in order to draw more thematic patterns or confirm already identified ones in the body of text on translation understandings, I carried out a simple word count based on Wordle™, an online tool that generates word clouds from text fed into it, giving visual prominence to terms that occur more frequently in the text.

4.5. Conclusion

Moving from a number of local considerations regarding the teaching of translation in tertiary foreign-language curricula, the present study sets out to explore in more general terms issues related to the conceptualization of translation as a pedagogical tool in this education sector, the purposes underlying its curricular incorporation and the reasons for resistance, as well as teaching approaches informed by notions of skills transferability. This chapter has described in detail the research design that was adopted: methodology, data collection instruments, sample, and analytical approach. The data emerged from the study are illustrated in the next chapter.

UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA I VIRGILI

TRANSLATION IN UNIVERSITY FOREIGN-LANGUAGE CURRICULA: AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDES, WITH REFERENCE TO

Costanza Peverati

Dipòsit Legal: T 765-2015

Chapter 5. Data analysis

This chapter presents the data from the DGT survey study *Translation in Language Learning* that were selected and analyzed to answer the research questions set out at the beginning of this thesis. It is divided into three sections, each addressing one of the main areas of interest focused on in the study, namely understandings and uses of translation, reasons for resistance to incorporating it, and awareness of transferability issues, with particular reference to transferable generic skills, in foreign-language education at university level.

5.1. Understandings and uses of translation among tertiary language teachers

My first research interest regarded the qualitatively distinct ways in which tertiary foreign-language teachers conceive of translation and its functions in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning (FLT/L) in their education sector. In the following sections, the pertinent findings from the three DGT survey instruments (see 4.2) are presented in detail.

5.1.1. *Questionnaire for teachers*

5.1.1.1. *Question 8: "To what extent do you agree with the following statements?"*

Question 8 (Appendix 2) asked respondents to express their level of agreement, on a five-point Likert scale running from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree", with the following five propositions on translation in FLT/L: (1) Translating is a fifth skill (in addition to reading, writing, listening, and speaking); (2) Translating brings the skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking together; (3) Translating takes time away from more valuable learning activities; (4) Translating is for professionals only; (5) Translating does not allow the student to think in the new language.

These statements are a distillation of what can be assumed to be common understandings and accepted views of the issue. The first one presents translation as an independent ability, on the same footing as the four primary skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Though fairly established in the literature, this view is not

entirely unambiguous. Traditionally, it depicts an activity to be trained autonomously, with a view to developing a number of strategies involved in translating well—possibly transferable outside education—just as reading tasks are offered in order to develop strategies of good reading like skimming, scanning, inferring, distinguishing facts from opinions, etc. From this perspective, it can be seen as an end of language teaching—“one of the most complex and advanced stages of it”, in Balboni’s view (2012: 192, English mine, here and throughout)—and not as a technique towards enhanced language proficiency, mainly because “L1 and L2 are supposed to be well known already when translation practice is introduced” (Freddi 1999: 192). Yet it is difficult to support the claim that the ability to translate *per se* has no impact on other skills or no role in sustaining continuous language learning. Thus it might be misguided to see this first statement as referring *univocally* to translation as an end, because the issue is not so straightforward (Cook 2010: xx). Some doubt remains as to how exactly respondents understood the statement and to how the levels of responses should be interpreted.

The second statement may at first appear just as ambiguous, as it leaves one wondering how translation can possibly be *all* four things at the same time. However, as was clarified at the focus group in Tarragona when the same perplexity was voiced, this proposition refers to translation as a comprehensive, inclusive skill that requires the deployment of other abilities. It reflects, for instance, Balboni’s (2012: 192) view of translation as a complex, *integrated* ability of “text-transformation and text-manipulation”. Also, this statement can be taken to refer to translation as a skill involving both the written (reading plus writing) and the oral (listening plus speaking) modes, thus approximating the concept of mediation discussed in section 1.3.

The third proposition depicts translation as a time-consuming activity, whose impact on language learning is not worth the effort, whereas the fourth one reflects the concept of translation as a non-FLT/L tool, a highly specialized activity, done only at professional level, demanding considerable expertise. Finally, the last statement represents the traditional criticism according to which translation undermines the fruitful principle of monolingualism, not only in classroom dynamics but also in the learner’s mind, by hindering direct L2 thinking.

Responses were gathered from 264 subjects. Their distribution across the five propositions and the mean values by country¹ are shown in Figure 5.1 and Table 5.1.

¹ The samples from Albania, Lithuania, Italy, Schola Europaea, and Sweden were excluded because they are too small to be representative and risked distorting global results.

Figure 5.1. “To what extent do you agree with the following statements?” – responses from 264 tertiary teachers from all countries

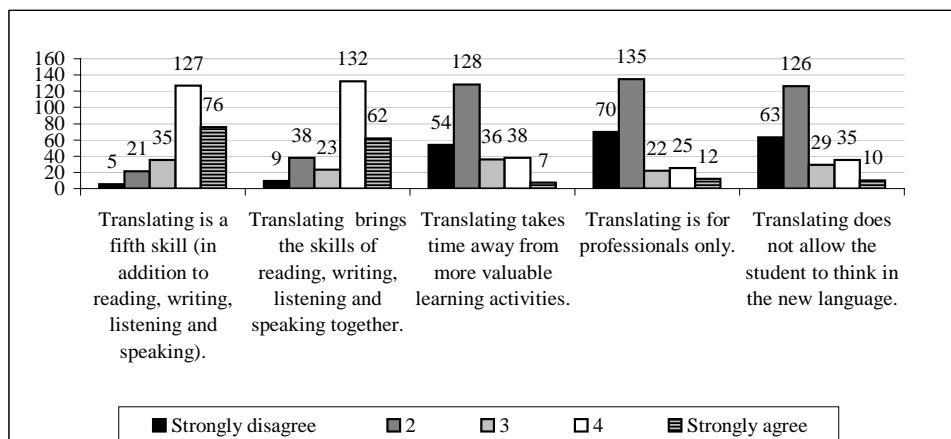


Table 5.1. Degrees of agreement with theoretical propositions on translation – means by country (1=Strongly disagree; 5=Strongly agree)

	HR	FI	FR	DE	PL	ES	TR	UK	CHI	AUS	US	Mean
Fifth language skill	4.250	3.941	4.025	3.875	4.066	3.761	3.650	4.045	3.805	4.000	3.851	3.934
Uniting skill	4.000	4.058	3.461	3.500	3.966	3.380	3.650	3.727	4.055	3.500	3.777	3.734
Takes valuable time	2.200	2.058	2.410	2.125	2.220	2.142	1.947	2.000	2.500	2.285	2.518	2.218
Professionals only	2.100	2.294	2.076	2.125	2.133	1.952	2.000	1.681	2.138	2.000	2.037	2.049
Hinders L2 thought	2.200	2.764	2.435	2.125	2.366	1.809	2.050	2.318	2.250	2.000	2.259	2.234

The distribution of responses from the whole sample (Figure 5.1) shows strong agreement with the understandings of translation as a fifth skill and as a complex, uniting skill. By contrast, it shows considerable disagreement with the ideas that translation takes time away from more useful tasks, is for professionals only, and stops learners from thinking directly in the L2. The levels of agreement become clearer if we look at the global averages in Table 5.1 (right column). Here, the lowest value is for the notion of translation as something for professionals only, which suggests that this activity is felt to have a place in FLT/L. This can also be taken to indicate that the respondents did not read the “fifth skill” statement as an argument for professional translation only, but possibly for a transferable skill-set, applicable outside education as one of the different applications of one’s language competence. Looking at the mean values by country, what strikes one most are the contrasting positions of some countries, like for instance Finland and the United States, which are strongly in agreement both with the propositions in favor and with the propositions against translation, with values above the global average. This invites a broader consideration about the way the issue

was approached in the DGT study: thinking in retrospect, one of the researchers noted that “attitudes to translation are so inherently complex that they cannot be grasped by simply asking for agreement or disagreement with abstract propositions” (Pym, personal communication, February 2014). This in turn justifies the analysis of the free-text responses to the next item of the questionnaire, which was expected to allow for a more fine-grained description of how translation is perceived and understood.

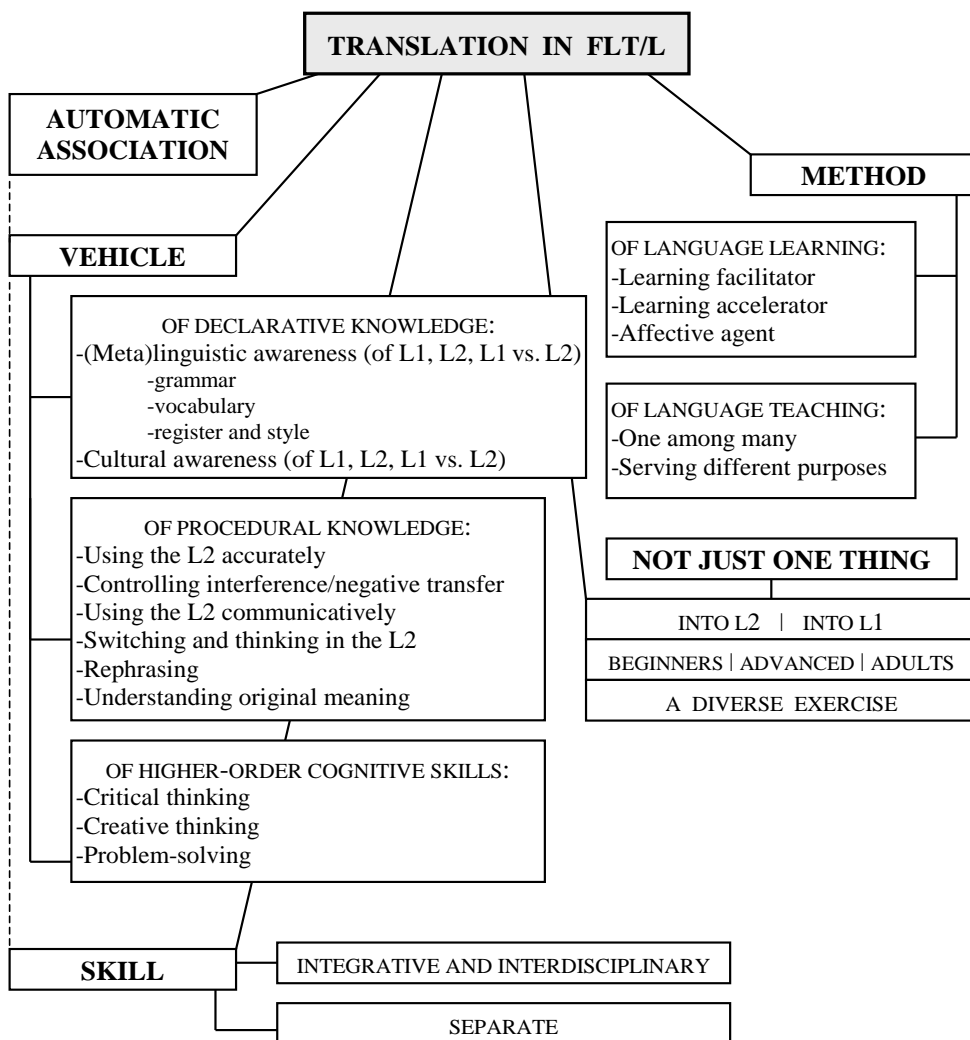
5.1.1.2. Question 9: “In addition to the above, do you think there is another relation between translation and language learning?”

More data about the different understandings of translation in FLT/L were provided by the next item, question 9, which required that participants type their responses in a blank space, using their own words. Out of the 295 respondents, 122 responded. The gathered text chunks varied in length from one single word (i.e. “N/A”, “No”, and “Yes”) to several short statements—what Jackson and Trochim (2002: 308) call “a free list in context”—to a more cohesive paragraph. Through unitizing the pooled data, 209 single-concept units were identified, which were then labeled using 33 codes, each referring to a qualitatively distinct facet of translation and its role within FLT/L. During the cyclic data reading and code refinement that followed (see 4.4), the identified codes were sorted into five macro thematic groupings, or categories of description, and within these groupings data were organized into further sub-categories, according to an emerging conceptual pattern illustrated in Figure 5.2. In what follows, each of the five broad thematic groupings and their multi-layered structure are described in detail. Excerpts from the free-text responses are provided by way of exemplification of the concepts being discussed.

In Figure 5.2, one of the five macro categories of description (in bold capitals) presents the relation between translation and FLT/L in terms of **AUTOMATIC ASSOCIATION**. The single-concept units sorted into this thematic grouping refer to translation as the process of mapping new L2 material (i.e. words, phrases, and syntactic structures) onto corresponding L1 material as a way of making sense of the unknown and only then assimilating it. Underpinning this view is the contention that the learners’ L1 represents a strong reference point, “a base on which to build” (Q9-58),² or a

² All single-concept units are indicated with the abbreviation of the respective question (e.g. “Q9” stands for question 9) followed by the number each one was assigned during unitizing. All units are quoted in their original wording. Some units have been edited to guarantee clarity and to maintain confidentiality. Square brackets indicate where changes have been made.

Figure 5.2. Understandings of translation in FLT/L among tertiary language teachers



“prism” (Q9-93) through which the L2 is filtered, i.e. processed. Seen from a learning transfer perspective, the L1 represents prior learning preparing/supporting subsequent learning. This conception also contains the value of translation as a natural, reflex process, as expressed in this unit: “Unless a person is exposed to a [foreign] language from infancy, the existing [structures, concepts and values] will be used as a reference against which all [those] of the new language/culture are measured and compared” (Q9-94). From this viewpoint, translation—understood as L2-L1 mapping for scaffolding purposes—becomes a sort of “survival strategy”, something that is not taught or learnt, but resorted to involuntarily. This mapping was also depicted as a sine qua non of the

learning process, as shown here: “It’s not possible to really learn an L2 in complete separation from the mother tongue (unless perhaps by genuine immersion, but even then we use dictionaries and phrasebooks)” (Q9-170).

Another broad conceptual category that emerged from coding the pooled responses to question 9 was that of translation as a VEHICLE. This term aggregates a number of different views, all revolving around the central idea of translation as a *way towards* the attainment of specific learning outcomes. These, in turn, can be grouped into three main sub-categories (in small capitals in Figure 5.2): (1) DECLARATIVE KNOWLEDGE, (2) PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE, and (3) HIGHER-ORDER COGNITIVE SKILLS. The first one, the declarative dimension of translation-related learning, is further divided into two branches: (i) (meta)linguistic awareness (of L1, L2, L1 vs. L2) and (ii) cultural awareness (of L1, L2, L1 vs. L2). As regards the former, it can be explained as the explicit knowledge *of* a language system and *about* its functioning. The majority of respondents understood this knowledge mainly with reference to the L2, expressing their view with little variation along the following lines: “Translating promotes awareness of how the target language functions” (Q9-152). Some also mentioned translation’s “side effect” of concurrently consolidating the knowledge of one’s mother tongue: “I believe translating increases the learners’ awareness of their own language, and that’s always a good thing” (Q9-174). Other respondents described translation as an activity that, beyond developing awareness of language systems in isolation (L1 and L2), fosters declarative knowledge of these languages in relation to each other, that is contrastively. Typical examples of this understanding are the following: “Translation makes learners more aware of language differences” (Q9-71); “Translating encourages students to learn about similarities among and contrasts between the two languages involved” (Q9-199). As was often the case with the open-ended items in this questionnaire, the respondents did not provide particular details substantiating their assertions. So it is not clear, for instance, *how* this metalinguistic awareness of L2 and L1 is believed to come about. A few respondents, however, indicated that it is the very process of contrasting the two languages that enables learners to develop such declarative knowledge, as shown in these units: “Translation and reference to differences between L1 and L2 help deepen the understanding of how different languages work” (Q9-22); “Translation is a good means for comparing languages and thus improves language awareness” (Q9-181).

Translation-induced metalinguistic awareness was mostly discussed as an undifferentiated whole. Some respondents, however, referred to three specific areas, i.e. grammar, vocabulary, register and style, which are represented on a further subordinate level in Figure 5.2. The process of contrasting structural patterns by translating was understood to be an effective way of assimilating and consolidating grammar rules and patterns. Compared to other grammar-focused activities, translation was acknowledged to offer the advantage of an exercise embedded “in a real context” (Q9-124), assuming the language chunk is taken from an authentic text and is not the fabricated language often characterizing most exercises in this area of language learning. As to the second specific area of metalinguistic awareness, vocabulary, translation practice was understood to be a way of easily accessing new lexical items and memorizing them, as exemplified in these units: “A translation is a source of lexis (lexical approach) where the student benefits from a bilingual contrast” (Q9-34); “Translating allows students to make theirs the foreign terms” (Q9-57). In addition, this type of exercise is seen as a tool “to learn subject-specific vocabulary” (Q9-186), hence supporting an LSP (Languages for Specific Purposes) approach to language education. Finally, translation was perceived as a way of becoming acquainted with language-specific features of text-types and genres, in terms of “different writing styles” (Q9-123), as well as register (e.g. formality levels, context- and reader-appropriate traits).

Beyond metalinguistic awareness, translation was understood to be a vehicle for a second major area of declarative knowledge, namely culture. This concept is predicated on the widely shared belief that a language is not merely a formal system comprised of arbitrary signs, but also and above all the expression of a whole culture, made of values, traditions, behaviors, and perceptions. Moreover, this view rests on the common assumption that a foreign language provides privileged insights into other cultural worlds, with their geography, history, institutions, politics, arts, folklore, etc. Since translation is one of the many possible exercises that can be done with and through foreign languages, the respondents described it as an activity that allows learners to access the vast encyclopedic system informing the L2, relate it to their own, come to terms with otherness, and ultimately avoid monoculturalism. This is shown in these units: “Translating can be used as a window into how another culture thinks, which in turn may have positive effects on students eager to learn about the target culture” (Q9-151); “Translation makes the student aware of cultural differences” (Q9-64); and “La traduction rend présente l’expérience de l’autre” [Translation makes the experience of

the other tangible] (Q9-201). From the majority of the single-concept units grouped under this sub-category, however, it is not clear how translation differs from other culture-laden monolingual activities with respect to the development of L2 cultural awareness. Three units seem to suggest that translation has an edge, so to speak, over other exercises: “Translation helps learners *better* understand the culture in which the target language was born” (Q9-46); “Translating into both L1 and L2 makes one aware of linguistic and cultural differences (many levels!), which is *not explicit in any other form of language teaching*” (Q9-120); and “[Students] have a possibility to learn the culture *deeper*” (Q9-125) (emphasis added). Yet these responses provide no explanation of *how* translation concretely contributes to this enhanced involvement with cultural issues, basically because the respondents were not asked in the first place.

Beyond the sub-category of description discussed in the previous paragraphs, data analysis revealed a second layer in the macro understanding of translation as a VEHICLE, namely that of translation as an activity that leads to the development of PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE. If the layer of meaning presented above describes a body of language-related knowledge that is referential and static in nature (knowing something, including how this something works), procedural knowledge of an L2 refers to an active dimension, as it involves actually doing something with the language. The units coded into this sub-category thus indicate an understanding of translation as an exercise that enables learners to develop and perform a number of language-related skills.

Among the skills the respondents acknowledged to be fostered through translation is that of using the L2 accurately. In FLT/L literature, accuracy refers to the perception and production of formally correct language, both in oral and written mode (cf. Brumfit 1984). Together with fluency, it is also discussed as one major orientation of classroom activities: accuracy-oriented activities, such as pattern presentations and drills, aim primarily to help learners achieve an error-free understanding and use of specific target items, be they sounds, words, or sentence structures. In the analyzed data, translation is understood as an example of this controlled practice, expected to lead to error-free production. No particular details were provided by the respondents as to how this accurate linguistic performance is achieved through translation. It can be assumed to result from the activation and application of the metalinguistic knowledge acquired during the contrastive practice discussed above. Yet I would rather not impose this meaning, as the extent to which declarative knowledge precedes or informs procedural knowledge is a fairly contested issue. An interesting aspect that emerged from the data,

though, is the concept of translation as a task that can counter the often inaccurate, uncontrolled output of spontaneous thinking in the L2, i.e. the negative side-effect of fluency-oriented approaches, as shown in these units: “La traduction peut permettre de préciser, d’affiner et de polir l’expression de la pensée” [Translation allows learners to refine and polish the expression of their thoughts] (Q9-202); “La traduction est une recherche de la part de l’apprenant d’une précision de sens dans les deux langues – contrairement à un flou parfois trompeur” [Translation is the pursuit on the learners’ part of semantic precision in both languages—as opposed to a sometimes misleading approximation] (Q9-206).

Strictly connected to the understanding above, the respondents expressed a notion of translation as an exercise that develops the ability to control negative transfer, that is the error-inducing influence of the learners’ L1 on their L2 learning process, as regards both reception and production. This interference tends to occur in cases where L1 and L2 are governed by different rules at various levels, or where the two languages feature similarities that are only apparent (“false friends”). If L2 learners are not made aware of these misleading asymmetries and are not systematically trained to keep interference under control, they may rely uncritically on their L1, with repercussions on their accuracy level. The respondents expressed the view that translation develops an ability to exert such control, thus allowing learners to monitor their language output in asymmetrical areas (Danchev 1983). The underlying assumption seems to be that, through translation, awareness of misleading differences becomes proceduralized into correct usage. However, once again, no details were provided as to how this should come about: all the responses expressing this view were in rather lapidary style, along the lines of “Translation tackles ‘interference’” (Q9-39); or “Translation helps positive transfer in the learning process” (Q9-11).

Besides the ability to use the L2 in a formally accurate way, translation was also understood to develop the capacity to produce pragmatically and communicatively functional L2 output. The units grouped under this sub-category highlight the role translation can play in weaning learners off mere substitution habits, as it “show[s] that literal translation often does not work” (Q9-193) and that all translation involves some kind of adaptation, not only to L2 formal structures but above all to the socio-pragmatic norms that govern real-life communication in a certain linguistic and cultural context: “Translation reveals differences between language as a formal system and the contextual use of language, within a given ‘culture’” (Q9-177). One of the respondents

gave the example of idiom translation (Q9-61) as an activity that can train and automatize this type of functional approach.

In addition to the three skills described so far, the respondents expressed the view that translation is a vehicle for the ability to think bilingually as well as directly in the L2, as shown in these two representative units: “Translation improves flexibility in switching between L1 and L2” (Q9-163) and “Translation helps students think in the new language” (Q9-44). This understanding seems to rest on the argument advanced by Salmon (2008) that systematic translation practice from the early stages of learning enables L2 learners to build an increasingly large data-base of functional equivalents, a sort of internal bilingual corpus, which enables them to switch between the two languages with growing agility and automaticity. The second facet of this understanding—here exemplified by unit Q9-44 above—seems to suggest that the more automatic this switching becomes, the less reliant the learners will be on their L1 in the production of L2 output, and they will thus directly think in their L2. This view is surprising since one of the strongest criticisms leveled at translation, not least one of those that were hardly argued against until very recently, is the very claim that translation “*prevents* learners from thinking in the second language” (Malmkjær 1998: 6).

The concept of flexibility briefly touched upon above reappears in another understanding, that of translation as a vehicle for “the capacity to rephrase ideas” (Q9-66), that is, the ability to use one’s linguistic resources in different combinations to obtain a wider range of versions of equal semantic and functional value. This skill is pithily explained in the following unit: “There are usually more than one kind of translation to an idea, so while doing translation, students may learn to express the same idea in several ways” (Q9-101).

A final understanding in this sub-category is that of translation as a vehicle for enhanced comprehension skills. Here translation is discussed as an activity that “requires to closely analyze the source-text meaning” (Q9-82), even “*forces* a student to understand better the source language” (Q9-114, emphasis added). Underlying this concept is the common-sense idea that, in order to render a text in the target language, learners cannot limit themselves to skim-reading it and getting the gist of the argument but need to go deeper into it, penetrating all layers and nuances of meaning, at the level of semantics and topics, as well as the line of argument. Translation, especially from the

L2, is understood to offer the opportunity to practice this type of reflective text processing and to become skillful at it.

The third sub-category in the understanding of translation as a VEHICLE represents a rather innovative view compared to those illustrated thus far, having received comparatively less attention in FLT/L literature: a small number of respondents discussed translation as an activity that can lead to the development of HIGHER-ORDER COGNITIVE SKILLS, in particular critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem-solving. These abilities directly fall in the category of transferable generic skills discussed in this thesis and are therefore of major interest. Examples of these understandings are the following: "Translation [enhances] critical thinking – unfortunately, I think there is too little critical thinking going on in the classes and too little thinking 'out of the box'" (Q9-134); "Translation might encourage students to be creative" (Q9-27); and "Translation requires, besides two languages, creative problem-solving in novel, textual, social and cultural conditions" (Q9-144).

As is the case with other sub-categories, the respondents did not elaborate on what exactly they take these skills to be. A possible explanation is attempted here. Higher-order cognition is a vast topic. Simply put, it involves more than simply recalling accumulated, domain-based knowledge and applying it to directly related, predictable tasks (e.g. gap-fill exercises, information retrieval questions about lecture material). It entails instead taking new information and combining it with existing information, or rearranging it to find possible answers to non-routine, puzzling situations (Lewis and Smith 1993). Translation often poses a wide range of such non-routine, puzzling situations, from the countless cases of asymmetry and untranslatability at different levels to textual and subject-area complexity or ambiguity. These constitute problems, that is "real, crossdisciplinary situations where the solution path is not immediately obvious" (OECD 2003: 156). Problems, as opposed to exercises, are intellectually and cognitively challenging tasks that may require several cycles of reasoning, interpreting, inferring, manipulating known theories and strategies, evaluating, and deciding, all this in a constant move between familiar and unfamiliar knowledge. Problem-solving, in its extreme cognitive complexity, encompasses the two further cognitive skills mentioned in the analyzed data, i.e. critical thinking and creative thinking. The former covers the analytic, reflective, inquisitive dimension of this process whereas the latter involves more productive processes like generating ideas, visualizing, playful thinking, and taking risks when dealing with paradox and ambiguity

(Fogarty and McTighe 1993). All these higher-order cognitive processes can be seen at work during the act of translating: basic dictionary look-up and the processing of documentary information, for instance, involve among other things attentive analysis and interpretation; tackling a case of lexical asymmetry requires imagination and inventiveness; dealing with inconsistencies and obscure passages calls for a wide range of problem-solving strategies that activate multiple levels of knowledge and action. The units discussed above may be understood to refer to such higher-order cognitive activity.

Beyond AUTOMATIC ASSOCIATION and VEHICLE, a third category of description that emerged from the responses to question 9 is that of translation as a SKILL. This marks a shift from an understanding centered around the idea of instrumentality to one that accords the act of translating a more independent status. When talking about translation in these terms, the respondents highlighted two different layers of meaning: translation as (1) an INTEGRATIVE/INTERDISCIPLINARY skill and as (2) a SEPARATE skill. As to the former, translation was perceived as an ability that draws on multiple areas of knowledge and skills related to linguistic-cultural systems, as the following unit shows: “Translation requires a host of other disciplines such as linguistics, rhetoric, culture, concepts, equivalence, communication and writing” (Q9-145). This view can be seen as a further elaboration on the second theoretical statement provided in question 8, as it depicts translation as a skill involving a higher level of complexity and sophistication, due to the number of areas it requires to be mastered simultaneously.

One of the responses conveying this idea of a skill that activates multiple areas of knowledge and other skills introduces the second thematic layer in this category of description, that of translation as a SEPARATE skill: “I’m not sure I would really say that translation is a ‘fifth skill’, but rather that it is a ‘meta’ skill somehow—at least with regard to translator training—that affects the others and allows greater consideration of the relationship between these others and the languages involved” (Q9-194). Here the term “meta skill” seems to be meant in the sense of Campbell’s (2002: 64) “macro-skill” more than in the sense of higher-order cognitive ability of the type described above. Terminological hair-splitting aside, the reason why this response is worth commenting is that it distinguishes between translation for language learning and translation for translator training, apparently seeing translation as a complex skill only in relation to the latter area. The responses coded in this sub-category similarly describe

translation as an exercise unrelated to or following language learning, as shown in these units: “Translation is a further step once language learning is completed” (Q9-51) and “Translation should come only *after* the second language has been learned in depth” (Q9-54, emphasis in the original). The underlying views are that translation activities involve language work at a high level of complexity, that they have no correlation to language learning or further enhancement, and above all that “translating is a separate skill” (Q9-158). Although not further specified in the responses, this separate skill can be interpreted as the ability to produce a source-text-based target text that is perceived as working within a real communicative situation and for real addressees. In other words, translation proper. Representative units for this understanding are the following: “As a skill for life and work translation and interpretation are underrated” (Q9-70) and “I feel that my students find it useful to translate only to be able to translate texts later on in a professional context (for example export/import field)” (Q9-53). These units indicate the respondents’ acknowledgement of translation as a potentially transferable skill-set, i.e. as an ability with relevance outside the language classroom, both in everyday life and in the occupational domain, as discussed in section 1.3.

In the model in Figure 5.2, the five main understandings of translation in FLT/L are to be seen as distinct and of equal value, with no particular hierarchical relation among them. Some kind of interconnection, however, can be seen among those illustrated so far, i.e. AUTOMATIC ASSOCIATION, VEHICLE, and SKILL. Taken in this order, indeed, these concepts reflect the continuum from *translating* to *translation* (Witte 2009) discussed in section 1.1.3, that is the gradual progression from the instinctive juxtaposition of L1 and L2 with a scaffolding function, to the controlled practice of interlinguistic decoding-encoding, over to the communicatively purposeful production of translated texts. As such, these themes can be read as contiguous stages of the language learning process, hence the broken line linking them in the diagram in Figure 5.2.

The fourth category of description that emerged from the data analysis refers to translation as a METHOD. The responses coded into this category were further grouped according to two subordinate conceptions, that is translation (1) as a method of FOREIGN-LANGUAGE LEARNING and (2) as a method of FOREIGN-LANGUAGE TEACHING. As regards the former, the respondents discussed it in predominantly positive terms, varying in tone from neutral—e.g. “Translation is a useful way to learn a language” (Q9-113)—to rather enthusiastic—e.g. “Translation is one of the most effective ways

for students to learn a foreign language” (Q9-118); and “Translating IS language learning” (Q9-133). Despite the overall positive judgments, a few words of warning were also given, in particular with reference to the possible negative consequences of using translation excessively or entirely in place of other approaches, as shown here: “Too much translation is almost certainly unhelpful and probably quite damaging to the students’ language development” (Q9-80); and “Translation should not be relied on as a crutch or a substitute for discovery” (Q9-139).

Among the approving responses, some went into more detail in their discussion of translation as a technique for L2 learning, highlighting three further understandings: translation as (i) learning facilitator, (ii) learning accelerator, and (iii) affective agent. The first can be seen as an umbrella term for a number of specific benefits. Chief among these is the way translation models and exploits the automatic L2-L1 mapping discussed above and in so doing helps learners build up the new language on a solid, familiar base, providing a sort of “springboard” for the learning process itself: “Translation enables students to construct what they do not know so much (L2) by referring back to what they know” (Q9-38); and “Language learning uses previous language(s) as a base on which to build and translation helps students to become aware of the common ground” (Q9-58). Moreover, translation is understood to be a facilitator of error perception and correction, which in turn may bring about greater autonomy and self-monitoring on the learners’ part: “Translation can help students find out their mistakes in their expressions” (Q9-119) and “[Through translation] the students’ attitude towards error correction changes” (Q9-45). Finally, this exercise is believed to facilitate language acquisition itself through the awareness-raising process discussed above: “Translation facilitates L2 learning by raising [students’] awareness of the common ground between languages” (Q9-59); and “Translation possibly enhances language acquisition by raising learners’ metalinguistic awareness and helping learners notice the relationships between form and meaning” (Q9-3).

The second understanding, translation as learning accelerator, describes an exercise that reduces the times of meaning comprehension and assimilation, as shown for example here: “Translation might help students to understand new words quickly and easily” (Q9-28); or “In some cases, translation is the best or only way for understanding difficult sentences” (Q9-130). Finally, the third theme highlights the role translation can play in addressing the affective, emotional domain of language learning. In particular, this activity was described as “a practical task which raises learners’

perception of their self-efficacy” (Q9-74) and self-confidence, thus encouraging them to persevere in the learning process and concretely prompting them to use the language, as stated here: “Translation can help students feel more confident about their learning in the lower levels” (Q9-98); and “Translation can give adult learners confidence to begin to use the target language” (Q9-188). As shown in these two units, this understanding was discussed with particular reference to beginners and adult learners, two groups for whom limited knowledge may lead to frustration, mental blocks, and rejection altogether. Further, translation was also perceived as an exercise that generates a “sense of achievement” (Q9-164), that is, the feeling of satisfaction and success for having dealt with a challenging task. One final conception emerged from the following unit: “Translation is not just about translating words/sentences but expressing one’s way of thinking & oneself, meaning ‘one’s self’, in the new [language], personalising it” (Q9-171). The underlying view here is that translation, though a derivative exercise, allows each learner to convey their self through the particular linguistic choices they make, the way they decide to render meanings, or to arrange information in a text etc., not unlike what a written composition task makes possible.

In this category of description, i.e. translation as a METHOD, the second main understanding focuses on the pedagogical perspective and presents translation as a FOREIGN-LANGUAGE TEACHING technique. Here, two chief conceptions emerged, coded in terms of (i) one among many and (ii) serving different purposes. As to the former, translation is “part of an informed eclectic approach to FLT” (Q9-62), namely “a method among methods” (Q9-148) that supplements a number of coexisting others (in contrast to the role it played in the Grammar Translation Method of the late 19th and early 20th centuries). As to the latter conception, translation was discussed as a useful method that supports the teacher’s work, fulfilling several functions, from explaining to assessing. Some representative units are listed here by way of example: “Very useful in ESP teaching with very specialized vocabulary” (Q9-26); “Translation helps illustrate problems related to patterning” (Q9-141); “Translation seen not so much as an end in itself, i.e. producing translated texts, but as a tool for efficient language correction” (Q9-96); and “Translation is one of the most rigorous and satisfactory methods of assessing improvement and competence” (Q9-196). Despite the generally positive tone characterizing the responses in this category, some reservations and caveats were expressed, for instance: “*In monolingual classes and with a bilingual teacher* translation can be very convenient” (Q9-79); or “*Used creatively*, translation can be useful in the

languages classroom” (Q9-155) (emphasis added); or “Translation is sometimes necessary, but language teachers had better not use it in language teaching classes” (Q9-110); and “I wouldn’t recommend using translation in the classroom on a regular basis” (Q9-160).

Data analysis yielded one final category of description, the fifth in the conceptual model of translation in FLT/L illustrated in Figure 5.2. This gathers responses that point to the underlying idea of translation as NOT JUST ONE THING. More precisely, the views expressed here did not refer to an undifferentiated whole—as was largely the case in the categories discussed so far—but rather focused on translation’s multiple “identities”. These can be arranged on three different levels. At the superordinate level are the two broadest types of translation: TRANSLATION INTO L2 and TRANSLATION INTO L1. The former was discussed at greater length than the latter, and in exclusively positive terms. Typical comments regarded the fact that translation into L2 “has all the ingredients for improving the language transfer from passive to active (aka. accessing)” (Q9-5) and “is an invaluable way of understanding how a language works” (Q9-75), whereas translation into L1 was generally acknowledged to support L2 comprehension, but was criticized for its potential to generate the “very harmful” habit of tracing all new language back to one’s mother tongue (Q9-7).

On a lower level, translation was discussed in terms of different things playing different roles according to learner type, i.e. BEGINNERS, ADVANCED, or ADULTS. As regards beginners, the respondents’ views were rather divided: for some it was a useful activity only at this stage, because it speeds up the learning process and fosters confidence; for others, it was counter-productive because “it would hold students back from fully ‘giving themselves over’ to learning to communicate in the L2” (Q9-136) or because “it interferes with capturing the flavor and nuances of the new language” (Q9-178). On the other hand, there was almost unanimous consensus on translation being a useful activity if practiced with more proficient students. Some responses even discussed translation as sensible and justified only at advanced levels, as shown here: “Translation has a role, but a marginal one, except at very advanced levels” (Q9-197), “otherwise it can inhibit progress, by becoming an easy way out” (Q9-68). Finally, translation was discussed as an activity specifically suitable for adult learners, in which case it was seen either as an automatic mechanism—e.g. “Early stage language learning by adults will inevitably involve translation in the thought processes” (Q9-183)—or as a device towards enhanced understanding of how the L2 works—e.g. “Adults want to

learn the logicity of foreign languages; translation serves for this end” (Q9-31); “In adult learning translation speeds up language learning since adults can learn only if they can understand every detail” (Q9-30)—or else as a confidence booster—e.g. “Translation can give adult learners confidence to begin to use the target language” (Q9-188).

On a further subordinate level, indicating yet a higher degree of diversification, is the understanding of translation as a multi-faceted, DIVERSE EXERCISE. One respondent, for example, commented on how it is impossible to “just talk about translation per se [because] *some types* are more relevant to language learning than others” (Q9-166, emphasis added). Unfortunately no details were provided about exactly what these types are. Another respondent distinguished between written and oral translation (Q9-175). Again, different things can be understood by the latter, from sight translation to interpreting, but the concept was not expanded upon in this response. More data pertinent to this sub-category are discussed in section 5.1.1.3 below.

5.1.1.3. *Question 14: “Please say how often you use the following activities.”*

Beyond the responses to question 9 discussed so far, more data about translation as NOT JUST ONE THING (Figure 5.2) came from closed-ended question 14 “Please say how often you use the following activities”. The respondents were asked to indicate—on a five-point Likert scale from “Never” to “Always”—the frequency with which they use eight different translation exercises in their daily practice. Responses were gathered from 159 teachers. Their distribution is shown in Figure 5.3. The activities listed by the researchers in this question confirm the “identities” of translation as described above and add new ones. The first four activities (“Translating into L2 of individual sentences”; “Translating into L1 of individual sentences”; “Translating into L2 of longer passages”; “Translating into L1 of longer passages”) parallel the two understandings of translation into L1 and into L2 discussed by teachers in the free-text responses to question 9, although further differentiated according to the quantity of text involved. The remaining activities reflect translation identities that the respondents had not previously discussed, but this does not mean that they ignore them. In fact, two of these (i.e. “Translation analysis/criticism/discussion” and “Watching subtitled films”) obtained a significant frequency rating, as shown by the mean values in Table 5.2.

Figure 5.3. “Please say how often you use the following activities” – responses from 159 tertiary teachers from all countries

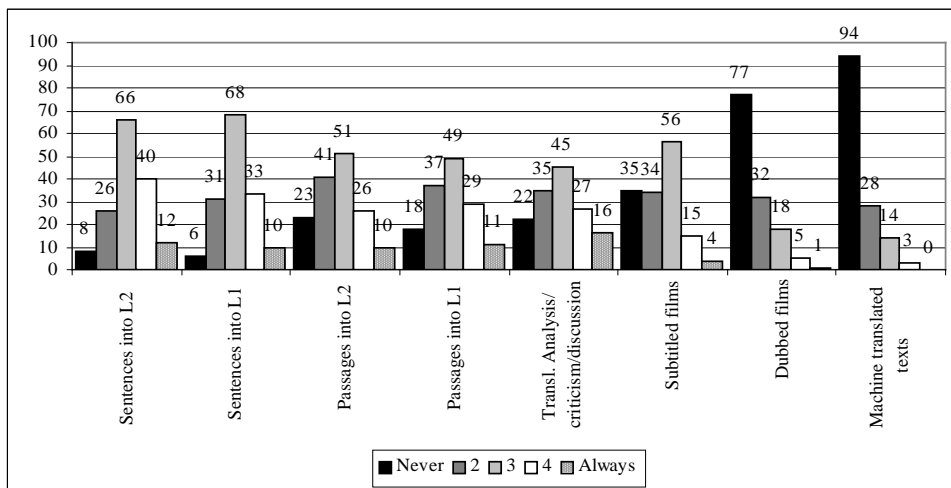


Table 5.2. “Please say how often you use the following activities” – global mean frequencies from highest to lowest (1=Never; 5=Always)

Activity	Mean
Translating into L2 of individual sentences	3.144
Translating into L1 of individual sentences	3.067
Translation analysis/criticism/discussion	2.862
Translating into L1 of longer passages	2.847
Translating into L2 of longer passages	2.728
Watching subtitled films	2.437
Watching dubbed films	1.654
Working with machine translated texts	1.467

The questionnaire provided no definition of these activities, so doubts remain as to how the respondents understood them. My understanding of “Translation analysis/criticism/discussion” is that of analysis carried out on existing target texts both in L1 and L2, either translated by peers or external subjects, with a view to checking translation choices and their linguistic-pragmatic implications, identifying mistakes, showing best practices, and practicing critical thinking. “Watching subtitled films”, again unspecified, can be taken to refer to the task of watching a film clip with a focus on L1 or L2 subtitles followed by some analytical activities. The task of *producing* L1 or L2 subtitles to be subsequently compared with the official ones does not seem to be covered in this question. The last two activities listed in this question, “Watching dubbed films” and “Working with machine translated texts”, can be interpreted as two further examples of analytical tasks: the former involves work largely similar to that carried out with subtitled films, i.e. watching the dubbed version of the film clip and

commenting on it; the latter entails post-editing of automated translations. Both represent rather atypical activities in the surveyed sample. Despite the different ratings, all these activities can be subsumed under the sub-category DIVERSE EXERCISE in the model of Figure 5.2, in addition to those discussed so far.

Closer study of the numerical data, especially the mean frequencies (Table 5.2), shows a marked preference for translations of single sentences into the L2 and L1. This clearly suggests a fairly traditional use of translation as a check on grammar and vocabulary acquisition. Interestingly, the third most frequent activity is “Translation analysis/criticism/discussion”. Depending on how it is understood, this can focus on formal aspects—thus aligning with the first two exercises—but also on pragmatic and intercultural issues (e.g. target language genre and cultural conventions, culture-specific items, intended effect on the reader), thus catering for communicative work in the language classroom. The next most frequent activity is “Translating into L1 of longer passages”, i.e. a classic activity focused on L2 understanding. Yet, depending on how it is understood, it can be used as a communicative exercise too, if emphasis is placed on the production of a functional, socially recognizable target text in the learners’ mother tongue, and not on a form-oriented transposition. The same two approaches can also be adopted for the next most frequent activity, “Translating into L2 of longer passages”. But since with long text chunks a focus on form can be boring and a focus on pragmatics can be challenging, these two activities rank in the mid-to-low levels of the list. Also, as they require considerable time, they fit best in contexts where translation is taught in dedicated modules more than in general language classes, and maybe this is uncommon in the surveyed sample. Finally, uses of video material and machine-translation are fairly rare.

5.1.1.4. Question 15: “What other translation activities do you use?”

Question 14 above also featured the “Other (specify below)” option. Of the 22 respondents who selected it, only eight provided details in the following open-ended question (Q15). Thematic analysis of the free-text responses yielded the following extra activities, from which possible understandings of translation were inferred (here given in brackets). All these can be added to the DIVERSE EXERCISE sub-category in the conceptual model of Figure 5.2: legal translation (an LSP technique plus a highly specialized professionally-oriented activity); poetry translation (a highly sophisticated and challenging aesthetic task); sight translation into L2 (an exercise towards enhanced

verbal agility as well as a form of liaison translation practice, with a transferable potential outside the language classroom); “transgeneric translation” (an activity supporting a “pedagogy of multiliteracies” (The New London Group 1996), focused on the multiplicity of communicative genres and meaning-making forms, and on the ability to transform meaning to work in other contexts or cultural sites).

5.1.1.5. Question 16: “Please say why you prefer some activities.”

In the follow-up open-ended question (Q16), the respondents were asked to explain the reasons behind their preference for certain activities among those listed in the two preceding questions (Q14 and Q15). Although the analysis of these responses largely confirmed the data discussed so far, some of the reasons revealed a few additional understandings that are worth commenting on.

One of the 70 respondents talked about watching subtitled films in terms of “a listening comprehension exercise made easy, also more attractive/engaging because of the visuals/story” and went on to say “I use it mostly as a fun activity at the end of the lesson” (Q16-56). Question 15 did not specify whether “watching subtitled films” meant subtitles in the film’s original language (the L2) or in the learners’ L1. The author of coded unit Q16-56 did not specify either. If what is meant is subtitles in the L2, this response cannot be taken to refer to a *translation* activity, but rather to a monolingual one. If, on the other hand, subtitles are in the learners’ L1, then it is possible to discuss the activity discussed here in terms of translation. Actually, watching films subtitled in L1 does not involve learners in concrete translation work. It rather serves as a listening task where a chunk of authentic language is displayed together with its L1 version, with a view to facilitating follow-up comprehension or language-focused activities. Although there are mixed views about whether L1 subtitles really help L2 speech perception (Mitterer and McQueen 2009, Talaván 2010), this activity can be seen as beneficial to that bilingual education discussed by Salmon (2008), where learners are exposed to translation, though more passively, in the form of double-code input, which can be expected to help them build an ever-expanding bilingual database. What is most innovative in this response, however, is that translation was described as a “cooler”, i.e. a short, entertaining, and relaxing task proposed after a long, concentration-demanding section, an attribute that is hardly ever associated with it.

Another quite novel understanding of translation is the one expressed in this unit: “Translation tasks seem to significantly decrease the teacher-learner divide, are real-life,

engaging, collaborative, and amazingly democratic” (Q16-48). This can be seen as an extra facet of the affective agent concept illustrated above under the category METHOD OF LANGUAGE LEARNING (Figure 5.2): carried out jointly, with teacher and learners going through the same stages and facing the same challenges (possibly with teachers refraining from exploiting their greater language proficiency or previous work on the text), translation can remove hierarchical barriers in the classroom, creating an egalitarian work atmosphere where everybody contributes something and is held accountable for it in the accomplishment of tasks.

The notion of “real-life” mentioned in unit Q16-48 above reappears in another unit, where the respondent expressed a preference for “translation from L2 into L1 of longer *authentic* texts” (Q16-28, emphasis added). The implication of this is that translation can be understood as a technique to be used in a language pedagogy supported by authentic materials, an FLT/L area that has attracted much attention in recent years (Gilmore 2007). From magazine articles, to web contents, to film dialogs, translation lends itself well to working with real-world materials. These, unlike textbook materials (often fabricated and rapidly aging), can bring learners into contact with a more real-world experience of the L2 and with content areas directly relevant to their profiles. The adjective “authentic” in this and the above response can also be read through the lenses of transferability, as discussed in section 1.3: classroom translation activities can indeed focus on real-world texts for which an L1 or L2 version can be realistically envisaged in real-world communicative contexts, and realistically entrusted to language students/graduates. This is the case of, for example, menus, signs, commercial correspondence, diverse informative materials, etc. Also, classroom work can focus on interlingual activities of various kinds (both oral and written) aimed to develop the ability to relay messages between interlocutors unable to communicate with each other directly, in countless situations pertaining to the private, public, educational, and occupational domains. Translation activities of this type confront learners with a number of situational factors impacting on translation choices that can prove fruitful for the development of their socio-pragmatic skills and of potentially transferable know-how. Though pertinent to my research interests, this interpretation is based on pure speculation and cannot be taken as firm evidence of transferability issues.

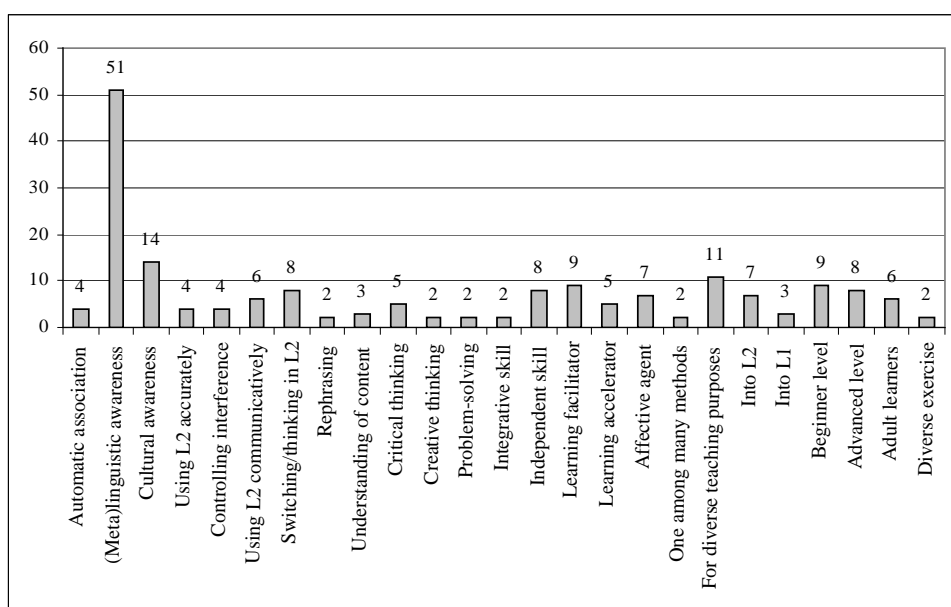
One final understanding that emerged from the responses to this question is that of translation as an instrument of a language pedagogy grounded in the “learning by doing” principle, as discussed in this unit: “I feel that translation is not all theory and

that ‘learning by doing’ plays a major role in the learning feedback loop” (Q16-63). The concepts discussed in this and the previous paragraph supplement the understanding of translation as METHOD OF LANGUAGE TEACHING discussed above (Figure 5.2).

5.1.1.6. Quantitative analysis of data on translation understandings

If we take the single-concept units obtained from unitizing the responses to question 9 and check their distribution across the different understandings in the conceptual model of translation in tertiary FLT/L (Figure 5.2), the following data display is obtained:

Figure 5.4. Weightings of the understandings of translation (question 9)



As shown in Figure 5.4, the most recurrent understanding of translation among the teachers surveyed is that of a tool—or vehicle—for the acquisition of (meta)linguistic knowledge of the L2, by itself and in contrast with the L1. With 51 units coded into it, this conceptual node towers over the others. Around 35 units below it, the concept of translation as a way of accessing the culture of the L2-speaking world and relating it to one’s own ranks second. All the others seem to disappear by comparison, below the 10-unit levels.

This general drift of the data is also confirmed if, instead of counting coded units, we count words. A simple way of running a word count of the pooled responses to question 9, obtaining a visually compelling display of data, is through Wordle, an online

Table 5.3. Weightings of the reasons for using translation activities (question 16)

Reason for using translation	Units out of 90
To show L2 functioning and L2-L1 contrast	20
Easy/quick/engaging/collaborative way of working with language	13
For comprehension check	9
To show functional/communicative use of language	6
To develop translation skills per se	5
For vocabulary practice	5
Required at institutional/curricular/syllabus level	5
To show shortcomings and best use of machine translation	3
For contrastive stylistics	3
To offer activities with authentic language	2
To offer listening practice	2
To practice language in context	2
To point out cultural differences	2
For error correction	2
For assessment purposes	1
For fluency enhancement	1
Confidence booster	1

These data can also be read in light of the responses to question 14, where the respondents had to rate the frequency with which they use certain types of activities. As shown in Figure 5.3 and Table 5.2 above, the most frequently used activities are reported to be translation of individual sentences into L2 and into L1, which represent typical form-focused, accuracy-oriented contrastive drills.

The result of this quantitative reading of the data can be taken to indicate the predominant understanding and use of translation in the foreign-language classroom at university level. Yet it must be pointed out that frequency of use may be a rather unreliable indicator of how translation is perceived, because several situational factors can influence what activities are chosen and how often they are resorted to, as discussed in section 5.2.1.2 below.

5.1.2. Questionnaire for experts

Sixty-seven invited respondents replied to the questionnaire for experts. Although the main aim of this research instrument was to gather background information on current language education policy in the respective countries as well as general trends in translation use, numerous responses touched upon individual as well as widely held notions of translation and are therefore relevant to the purposes of this study. Among these, the German experts' responses are particularly interesting as they discuss translation in relation to the concept of "mediation". This is what I briefly described in section 1.3 when arguing in favor of transferable applications of translation-related

learning. In line with the information found in my cursory analysis of the literature on mediation in FLT/L, the 16 German respondents observed that, in their context,³ mediation refers to a cluster of different interlingual activities, such as summarizing the main points of a text, assisting someone in authentic communicative situations where they have no access to the language being spoken, interpreting, as well as “situation-based translation with detailed instructions concerning task, target group and text type” (DE-KN),⁴ whereas translation is associated with word-for-word transcoding, with a “detailed rendition of [a] text in the target language” (DE-JB), or with “a highly specialized task (i.e. translation of literary texts, of legal contracts etc.)” (DE-EBW). Moreover, translation is seen as having a primary focus on structures and close adherence to textual contents. As such, it is felt not to be in line with more popular approaches to FLT/L, where the focus is rather on “real-life language use” (DE-EBW) and understanding of general meanings (DE-JB). For this reason, translation exercises in language education and assessment have been recently replaced by mediation tasks. This seems to indicate that, in the surveyed Länder, language policies have been particularly responsive to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Yet, in the CEFR, mediation is described as an umbrella term, *including* translation and interpreting, whereas in the German experts’ replies it is largely intended as an activity *antithetical* to translation. In fact, some respondents pointed out that, in the respective Länder, policy-makers have been pushing mediation extraordinarily (a number of them used the term “hype”), as it is accorded greater real-life communicative relevance than is the case with translation. At the same time, one respondent wrote that the policy in Baden-Württemberg puts translation and mediation “on the same footing” (DE-EBW). Needless to say, more clarity is needed on these concepts.

Beyond casting some light on mediation, hence on transferability issues for translation-related skills, the experts’ replies provided corroborative data for the above discussion of prevailing translation concepts. More precisely, among the respondents who expressed either a personal or generally accepted view about what translation is and what functions it can serve in FLT/L, the majority discussed it along the lines of “a valuable means of raising learners’ metalinguistic awareness, implementing the

³ In Germany, education policy differs from *Land to Land*. The surveyed experts represent Baden-Württemberg and Rheinland-Pfalz.

⁴ The authorship of the experts’ responses is indicated through a reference to the country followed by the respondent’s initials.

contrastive dimension in FL teaching” (HR-JMD) and as a way of highlighting cultural differences. This view, expressed relatively evenly throughout the sample, confirmed the general drift in the data from the teachers’ questionnaire.

5.1.3. Focus group interviews

The conceptualization of translation was also touched upon in the two focus group interviews in Tarragona and Leicester. Overall, what clearly emerged on both occasions is that an agreed definition of the different identities translation can assume would be welcome, as the concept appears to be shrouded in some terminological confusion. Again, in both sessions, there was some discussion of the act of mapping L2 to L1 structures and meanings for scaffolding purposes. In Leicester there seemed to be general consensus on this activity as a possible form of translation. In Tarragona, however, opinions were more divided, as expressed in this quote: “I do exclude translation but I don’t exclude L1”. For those agreeing with this view, such mapping would be an instance of L1 use in the classroom, along with other instances of L1 use to different purposes (e.g. to give instructions, explain something, organize activities, create rapport). In other words, it would be a manifestation of the bilingual teaching proposed by, among others, Butzkamm and Caldwell (2009), who use the term “translation” very sparingly themselves. This view clearly indicates a neat distinction between translation and other uses of the L1. It is also suggestive of the fact that, as Cook (2010: 52) intimates, recognition of the need to reincorporate the students’ own language “does not necessarily entail advocacy of translation”. Finally, both groups also touched upon and expressed wide consensus on the term “translation” being used to refer to both translation and interpreting.

In Tarragona, translation as a teaching METHOD was discussed in sharp contrast to “immersion”. Participants understood the latter either as teaching a non-linguistic subject (e.g. economics, history) in the L2 (also known as CLIL) or as offering students an all-L2 learning environment, inside and outside the classroom. As such, this methodology was discussed as being incompatible with translation, since it entirely excludes any use of the L1.

In Leicester, there was some discussion of translation with reference to “mediation”, but the latter concept was not fully clear to the participants. Incidentally, beyond the German experts’ replies (see 5.1.2), it surfaced in none of the other experts’

replies nor in the teachers' responses, which is indicative of the fact that the expansive, transferable, socially responsive concept of translation introduced through the CEFR and further elaborations of it has only moderately penetrated common jargon in language education, at least within the survey sample.

5.2. Reasons for resistance to translation in tertiary foreign-language teaching

Our second research interest regarded the reasons for not using translation, or for not using it more, in foreign-language education at university level. Directly pertinent data were found in the responses to questions 11 and 12 of the questionnaire for teachers (Appendix 2) and to some extent in the questionnaire for experts (Appendix 1), as described in the following sections.

5.2.1. Questionnaire for teachers

5.2.1.1. Question 11: "If you have answered Never or Rarely, please say why."

Question 11 led on from question 10, which asked respondents how often they use translation activities in their L2 classes. The global mean shown in Figure 5.6 (right bar) is above the middle of the range between "Never" (=1) and "Always" (=5), which indicates a fairly frequent use. Analyzing the means by single country, we see that the United Kingdom, Finland, and China tend to use considerable levels of translation, whereas the United States and Spain resort to it the least. Germany ranks relatively high, despite the mediation-oriented policy discussed in section 5.1.2, which suggests a high frequency of use for a *specific* understanding of translation.

Question 11 was specifically addressed to those respondents who answered "Never" or "Rarely" to question 10. Four possible reasons were provided to choose from and the "Other (please specify)" option allowed respondents to state any additional motivation in free-text format, if they felt that their situation was not represented in the question. The response distribution is illustrated in Figure 5.7 below:

Figure 5.6. “Do you use translation exercises in your language-teaching class?” – means by country (1=Never; 5=Always)

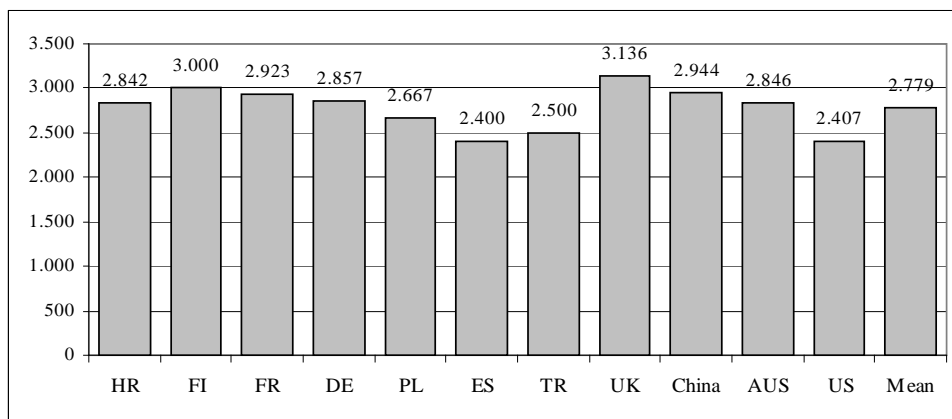
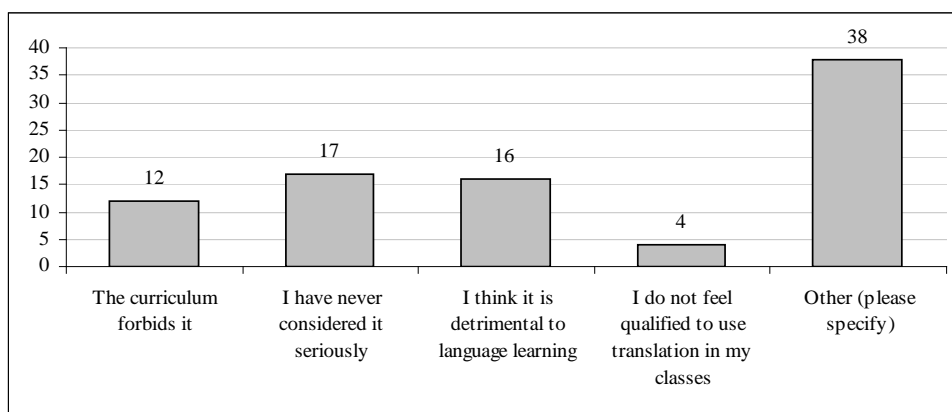


Figure 5.7. “If you have answered Never or Rarely, please say why” – responses from 87 teachers from all countries



As shown in Figure 5.7, 49 out of the 87 respondents (i.e. 56%) selected one or more among the four reasons provided. As many as 38 (i.e. 44%) chose the “Other (please specify)” option, which indicates that this issue is characterized by a high level of variation. The two motivations with the highest ratings are “I have never considered it seriously” and “I think it is detrimental to language learning”. The former—selected by 17 respondents out of 87, with Spain and the United States slightly above the sample average—may be read as an indicator of a lack of interest in or knowledge about the subject. A possible explanation may be found in the sample’s demographics, in particular in the respondents’ average teaching experience of over 11 years: older teachers may be less willing to experiment or change their well-tested teaching practices

than are novices. The latter reason (“I think [translation] is detrimental to language learning”)—chosen by 16 respondents out of 87, with France and the United States slightly above the average—reflects an evaluation of this activity as being unfavorable for the process of learning an L2. This position, which had already been expressed—although not in these exact terms—in question 8 (see 5.1.1.1), points to the fact that the entrenched historical antagonism towards translation still persists. More precisely, both reasons discussed here can be explained in light of some contextual determinants: the American sample, for instance, comes from highly bilingual areas, i.e. Monterey County (California) and Tucson (Arizona). The information provided by the invited experts showed that, in these areas, immersion is a highly favored language policy, as it is believed to facilitate social integration of the many immigrants. On the other hand, the highly multicultural nature of American society means that the L1 of many students is not English, a situation widely understood as hampering translation work (see 5.2.1.2). Similarly, according to the background information provided by French and Spanish experts, in France and Spain translation has very little popularity in the L2 class and is largely discouraged by the education establishment.

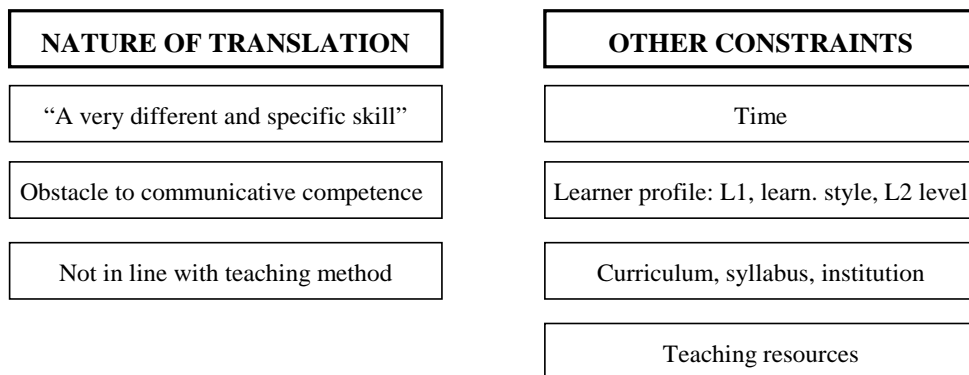
As regards the two remaining reasons provided in this closed-ended item, 12 respondents out of 87 attributed their choice not to incorporate translation to constraints beyond their direct control, i.e. institutional policies about curriculum composition. The distribution of responses across the surveyed countries shows that this type of constraint is reported in France (2) and the United States (2)—in line with the trends already seen for these countries—but also in Turkey (4), Poland (3), and China (1). In the rest of the sample, none of the respondents selected this option, indicating that resistance to translation is not regulated at institutional level but is largely a question of personal preference. A very small group of four respondents—of which two in Finland, one in the United Kingdom, and one in Australia—explained their choice as the result of a self-perceived unsuitability for the task.

5.2.1.2. Question 12: “Other reasons.”

All the 38 respondents who selected the “Other (please specify)” option in question 11 detailed additional motivations in their own words in the next open-ended question (Q12). The thematic analysis of these responses, conducted with the same methodology adopted for the other open-ended questions, yielded two main categories of reasons for

using translation rarely or never: one deals with different aspects of translation itself and the other refers to a number of external constraints, as illustrated in Figure 5.8.

Figure 5.8. Additional reasons for using translation rarely or never (question 12)



The reasons that share a reference to the nature of translation were grouped in turn into three sub-categories (left). The first brings together a small number of responses reflecting the view that translation is a specific skill that does not fit the profile of language students or graduates, in other words it does not fall into their educational need area, a view that acknowledges no margin of transferability for translation-related learning. Examples of this view are the following units: "It is a very different and specific skill" (Q12-16) and "I am a professional translator, and I think good translations should be done by translators and translating is not a skill my students require as such" (Q12-23).

The second sub-category can be seen as a further specification of the rather wide-ranging option "I think [translation] is detrimental to language learning" discussed in relation to question 11 above (5.2.1.1), as it deals with the respondents' perceptions of this activity as an obstacle to the development of language competence, in particular of speaking skills and fluency, as shown in these units: "If the students get the habit of translating, their fluency goes down" (Q12-2); and "Students will rarely be able to actually communicate in a real-life situation if they are constantly translating from [their L1] to [their L2]" (Q12-31). The distribution of the responses coded here largely correlates with that of the responses to the related option in question 11, showing intra-national consistency.

Finally, the third sub-category (not in line with teaching method), strictly connected to the previous one, includes references to the fact that translation does not fit

the methods the respondents espouse and apply in their daily practice, the methods they believe to be most conducive to the learning outcomes above, i.e. the communicative approach and the total immersion technique, as shown here: “I tend to focus on an interactive use of target language using communication tasks etc.” (Q12-37) and “I try to make my students use as much [L2] as possible” (Q12-8). These responses reflect the positions of those who reject translation completely, thus *never* using it. Others contain the views of those who use it only *rarely*. Such occasional use is limited to situations in which translation represents the most practical way of getting certain things done, like for instance clarification of unknown language and error correction: “I will try to avoid using translation in my language-teaching class; however, when it comes to the terms or phrases that have been frequently misused by my students I will specify their translations and the contexts in which they are used” (Q12-11); and “Occasionally I do use literal translation when introducing new materials to the whole group, but that would need to be done with great care and not as a routine procedure!” (Q12-45).

The issue of practicality, or rather impracticality, informs the second broad category of reasons the respondents gave for why they do not use translation in their language teaching classes (right column in Figure 5.8). The responses coded here refer to four different types of constraints that, in the respondents' view, make this instructional activity difficult or unfeasible. Each constraint represents a separate sub-category. The first one gathers responses that discuss time as the main limitation, as expressed here: “Translation takes time: first to translate and then to analyse the translation and to give feedback” (Q12-24); and “The curriculum (and teaching hours) are so restricted, there's no time to include translation on a greater scale” (Q12-49).

In the second sub-category, it is some specific features of the learners' profile that impose the major constraints on using translation. Chief among these is the learners' mother tongue. With societies becoming increasingly multicultural due to migration and mobility, having speakers of different first languages in our classrooms is nowadays more the rule than the exception. This aspect was perceived by some respondents as a major obstacle to working with translation, in terms of class-management and course delivery, as shown in the following units: “Students come to [this country] from all over the world to learn [L2]. I don't speak their languages, so I can't translate with them” (Q12-26); and “In multilingual classes, the learner can get feedback about his/her translation only from him/herself” (Q12-18). The distribution of responses for this reason shows that, besides the United States, this problem is considerably felt also in the

United Kingdom, another part of the world with a highly multicultural society and a popular destination for student mobility programs. The mixed-class constraint is also reflected in another response, where the difficulty seems to be the variety of individual learning styles rather than mother tongues: “[Translation] would not be effective for all learners, so I’d normally not do it as an exercise for the class” (Q12-44). One final aspect of the learners’ profile that the respondents discussed as a hindrance to the use of translation in their teaching practice is language proficiency level and education needs. The positions expressed here were not only diverse but conflicting. On the one hand, some respondents explained that they do not use translation because they teach beginner/intermediate learners, for whom they consider this activity to be “not beneficial” (Q12-14). On the other hand, other respondents stated that they do use translation in the beginners’ classes—“to make sure students understand a text and have learned their new words” (Q12-22)—but prefer other activities in higher level classes. The reasons supporting these statements invariably pointed to the fact that advanced learners no longer need their L1 as an interface, as shown here: “My students (B2/C1 level) make correct linguistic choices in most situations” (Q12-7); “My students are advanced enough to understand explanations in the target language” (Q12-34); or “The level of the language courses I teach is high and they use [the L2] in all the tasks” (Q12-28). It is clear from these divergent views that translation is understood as different things by different respondents, and above all as just one thing by each single respondent, as further discussed in section 6.2 in the next chapter.

The third type of constraint in this category of reasons brings together issues related to syllabus and curriculum composition as well as institutional policies. As such, it partly coincides with the first closed-ended option in question 11 (5.2.1.1). Here the respondents felt the need to further specify their views, slightly correcting the idea of “curricular *prohibition*” or stressing certain nuances of meaning. Representative examples are the following: “It depends on the objectives of the course and syllabus” (Q12-13); “The basic language curriculum I taught many years ago was shared by many sections of the same course (had to be the same) and had no room for translation” (Q12-33); “I think my department may think it is an old-fashioned method although I think it is useful at times” (Q12-12).

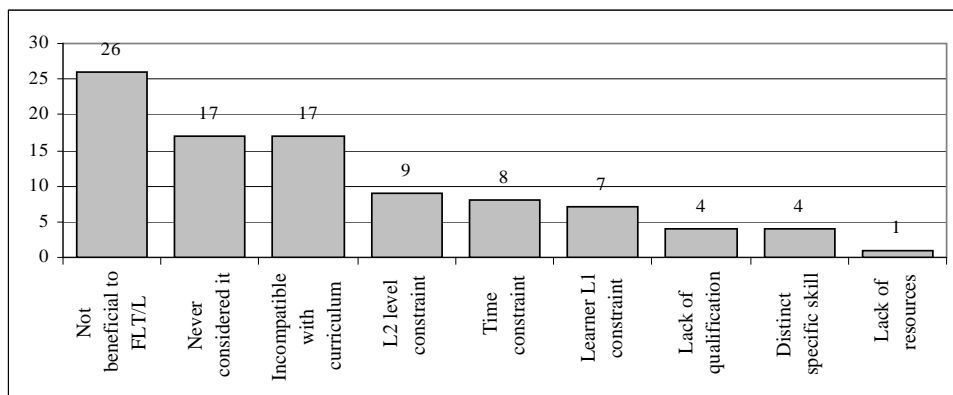
Finally, the fourth type of constraint is represented by one single response, but since I deem it central to the larger debate over translation in language education, I decided to include it. One respondent (from Spain) answered: “I have to find

appropriate activities in which I can ask for inverse translation, and this is not always easy...” (Q12-1). As reported by the experts surveyed, Spanish language-education policy is relatively hostile to translation in FLT/L and the general trend among teachers is consistent with this attitude. It can be expected that, in this country, teaching resources and training initiatives on this area of FLT are scarce if not absent. Speaking in general terms, the paucity of pedagogical materials and scarce teacher training opportunities may be seen as the single most important factor limiting a wider and more principled diffusion of translation in tertiary language curricula, even though things are slowly developing.

5.2.1.3. Quantitative analysis of data about resistance to translation

If we take the responses to question 11 (options 1 to 4) (5.2.1.1) and treat them as single-concept units, and then pool them with the units identified in the free-text responses to question 12 (5.2.1.2), it is possible to proceed to a unit count, so as to gain insight into the relative weight of the individual reasons for resistance (Figure 5.9).

Figure 5.9. Weightings of the reasons for resistance to translation (questions 11 and 12)



As shown in Figure 5.9, the most frequent reason (26 units out of 93) behind the choice to exclude translation from the tertiary language classroom or resort to it only rarely is that it is believed to hinder the development of a certain (communicative) type of language competence and hence has no place in teaching methodologies. The next most frequent reasons, with 17 units each, are closely related with the above: the respondents did not want or did not have the opportunity to explore translation as a possible FLT/L activity, alongside the fact that translation is in some way incompatible with curricular

contents or methodological advocacies. The reasons described in terms of constraints (time, learner profiles, resources) have much lower weightings.

5.2.2. Questionnaire for experts

The data on resistance to translation that emerged from the questionnaire for experts are largely in line with the teachers' positions, with the only exception that they focus not only on individual beliefs and preferences but also on education policies and general training tendencies in the surveyed countries. The one reason behind the scant use of translation that the experts mostly discussed regards the perceived incompatibility of this exercise with the predominant teaching methodologies: translation is deemed an opposite of the "monolingual orthodoxy" (PL-MS), "an outmoded method [that] has given way to immersion and text production" (FI-OP), or a non-communicative activity that is widely discouraged during teacher training. Of the surveyed countries, those where this is mostly the case are France, Spain, Germany (mainly due to the discussed preference for mediation over translation), and the United States (for the contextual factors already discussed). By contrast, China distinguishes itself as a country with a peculiarly benevolent attitude towards translation, mainly due to the longstanding popularity of the Grammar Translation Method throughout the three levels of education. In recent years, it has witnessed an evolution towards a plurality of methods where translation is used no longer with an exclusive focus on form but as a more dynamic tool of contrastive practice.

5.3. Awareness of transferability issues

My third research interest concerned transferability issues, with particular reference to the varied group of abilities and attitudes here defined as "transferable generic skills" (TGS) and their association with translation activities in tertiary linguistic and cultural education. More precisely, I was interested in determining the extent to which language teachers are aware of these skills and whether current instructional practices, as reported by teachers themselves, integrate these learning outcomes in any way. It must be pointed out that, as was the case with my first research interest (see 5.1), the DGT questionnaire for teachers did not directly address these issues through explicit and

targeted questions. I hoped to be able to identify or infer pertinent data from the free-text responses to the existing open-ended questions that elicit all sorts of information about translation conceptions and classroom uses.

Data referring to the awareness of the possible connection between translation and TGS were found in the responses to question 9. As already described in section 5.1.1.2, among the different understandings of translation that emerged from data analysis, one referred to this activity as a VEHICLE for the development of HIGHER-ORDER COGNITIVE SKILLS, especially critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem-solving. These three broad areas of cognition can also be found in most TGS repertoires, although at times under slightly different labels (e.g. in the Tuning Project's model "capacity for analysis and synthesis" and "creativity" are used for the first and second skill areas respectively). Owing to the very concise language used by the respondents, combined with the conceptual ambiguity surrounding TGS (see 2.2.1), it is risky to advocate full correspondence between the skills referred to in these free-text responses and those listed in the mentioned repertoires. This, however, may be seen as one of those cases that invite the researcher to adopt an exploratory attitude and investigate the issue in greater detail in follow-up research.

Although a pleasant discovery, the responses indicating awareness of a possible relation between translation in FLT/L and TGS represent an almost imperceptible minority if analyzed against the larger corpus: 9 units out of 209, a mere 4%. Similar figures, only more negligible still, also apply to the data regarding the second part of the research question discussed here, i.e. actual work with TGS. In their free-text responses to questions 15 and 16 (i.e. other translation activities used, preferred translation activities, and reasons why), the respondents made no reference to any particular use of translation geared to the familiarization with or development of TGS. Initially, I expected the 9 units above to reflect views based on concrete, first-hand experience in the classroom, which would thus surface somehow in the responses to question 15 and 16. The fact that problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity were not mentioned in any way might be taken to indicate that those views are mainly theoretical. Alternatively, it may be down to a problem of explicitness. As already said, responses to open-ended questions in surveys tend to be quite light on detail and, at times, cryptic; consequently, the references may well be implicit rather than overtly expressed and may need to be inferred. I thus tried to apply this inferential approach, reading between the lines of the responses to question 16. A few did actually yield some possibly pertinent

data. For instance, one respondent explained that s/he uses “translation in both directions [because] it can help students pinpoint their weaknesses” (Q16-35). It might be inferred that the respondent understands translation as an exercise that allows students to test themselves on what they know and do not know, to stand back and reflect on their progression, thus providing training in the ability to monitor and regulate one’s learning process, which is a central component of the learning-to-learn skill, often featuring in common inventories of TGS (e.g. the European reference framework *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*). Another respondent reported using translation criticism because “analysis encourages reflection rather than ad verbum translation and should lead to more interesting and sophisticated work” (Q16-60). Here “reflection” may be interpreted in terms of critical thinking. It must be pointed out, however, that to accept this response as an implicit reference to critical thinking would have meant seeing critical thinking as an implicit basis in a wealth of other responses. Such exploration of implicit meanings, though productive, risks getting out of hand, leading to all-embracing and superficial analyses. I thus refrained from continuing with this technique, concluding that references to actual work with TGS are uncommon in the data analyzed and that, as found in the literature, these skills tend to be treated mostly from a theoretical perspective rather than from a concrete methodological point of view. Incidentally, I also acknowledged the major limitation determined by resorting to a research instrument that was not specifically designed to address my research purposes.

Although in the analysis of the free-text responses the inferential approach turned out to be a rather unreliable technique, the responses to question 8 may constitute a set of data where inference might be applied more safely. As already described in section 5.1.1.1, in this question respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with five theoretical propositions about translation. One of these reads: “Translating is for professionals only”. As shown in Figure 5.1, out of 264 respondents, 70 (i.e. 26.5%) strongly disagreed and 135 (i.e. 51%) disagreed. These response levels indicate that, for the vast majority of the teachers surveyed, translation is not exclusively a professional activity and consequently its function as a curricular component and/or instructional activity is not just to train professional translators. In other words, if it is part of university curricula it is because it is believed to fulfill functions other than that of training students for a future specific profession. In a language-learning environment, the *other* function of translation that first comes to mind is that of supporting the process of teaching and learning a foreign language, as a formal system, a means of

communication, and a culture. But this needs not be the only one. Translation-related learning can impact on areas *beyond* the specific language course where it is offered for language-learning purposes. This in itself implies the concept of learning transfer and transferability outside the education context.

As discussed in section 1.3, the transferability of translation skills outside education can be articulated at different levels. One of these regards the occupational domain, i.e. a number of jobs in which translating different types of job-related texts is part of the tasks and duties of the professionals working there, though not as professional translators (Calvo 2011). Here, translation is clearly conceived of as a language ability in its own right, to be trained with a focus on the manifold strategies involved in such goal-driven process of text production. The high level of agreement with the statement “Translating is a fifth skill (in addition to reading, writing, listening, and speaking)” in question 8 (Figure 5.1) could be seen as evidence that the respondents acknowledge the independent status of translation skills and possibly their import not only for language-learning purposes within education but also for uses *outside* education, in one’s workplace. Yet the difficulties already underlined with the interpretation of the abstract statements in question 8 invite some caution in accepting this inference unconditionally.

At a second level of transferability, translation is a more inclusive and diverse activity, which involves relaying information interlingually and crosslingually in both written and spoken form, with a higher degree of informality and flexibility with respect to source-text contents and make-up. This activity, which can be defined in terms of “mediation”, is applicable in everyday life across contexts that include but also go beyond employment, to embrace the private, public, and educational domains. Again, the high level of agreement with the statement “Translating brings the skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking together” in question 8 (Figure 5.1) could be read as data evidencing the respondents’ acknowledgement of transferable projections of translation skills, in terms of mediation. The fact that this particular understanding did not surface in the free-text responses, however, invite once again for much caution with this type of inference.

Finally, at a broader level of transferability, translation is not so much a skill-set that can be applied as such or adapted across different contexts, as rather an educational activity that provides access to, and possibly develops, an array of higher-order cognitive skills, generic abilities, and dispositions that govern and sustain thinking,

learning, and acting in the widest spectrum of contexts, in other words what are discussed here in terms of TGS. At this level of transferability, translation has the farthest-reaching applicability and adaptability potential. At present, our knowledge of the interplay between TGS and translation education at large is still limited, which might explain the relatively scarce acknowledgement of these learning outcomes in the DGT survey data. It is clearly an area where there is more to be investigated, as will be discussed in the suggestions for further research, in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has devoted considerable space to describing the qualitatively diverse ways in which the tertiary language teachers participating in the DGT survey *Translation and Language Learning* understand the concept of translation in FLT/L and the concrete applications translation can have in the language classroom. In doing so it has highlighted a peculiarly broad conceptual variation. At the same time, it has shown a quantitatively significant concentration of data around the conception and use of translation as tool for accuracy-oriented, form-focused, contrastive language work. The next issue tackled in this chapter concerns the reasons behind the choice not to use translation. The focus has been again on documenting the qualitative variation in the respondents' experiences. A quite composite network of motives has emerged behind attitudes of resistance, with methodological advocacies weighing more than a range of practical constraints. The final issue addressed in this chapter regards transferability issues and in particular what I labeled "transferable generic skills". Despite the limited evidence of both awareness and actual incorporation of these broadly applicable and adaptable skills in the translation classroom, some data may be taken to suggest a certain degree of acknowledgement of other forms of transferability for translation skills. In the next chapter, the data presented here will be explained in greater detail.

Chapter 6. Discussion

The previous chapter presented and analyzed a selection of findings from the DGT study *Translation in Language Learning* that specifically addressed the research questions formulated at the beginning of this work. This chapter reviews the main results in relation to these questions and to the hypotheses that were put forward. Then it attempts a synthesis of the main insights, also incorporating additional data from the wider study to expand on the discussion of translation teaching at university level proposed in Chapter 1. It also briefly comments on similarities and discrepancies between the situation in Italy and in the areas surveyed.

6.1. Main findings

The reason why I set out to investigate the data on translation teaching in tertiary language education from the DGT survey *Translation in Language Learning* was to obtain deeper, broad-based insight into some areas of interest I developed after my analysis of the Italian situation, largely based on personal experience, literature sources, and a sample of informative materials about foreign-language programs. In particular, having conjectured that the weaknesses I had inferred from that analysis might possibly be contingent on a problem of conceptualization of translation, i.e. an over-reliance on restricted and partial concepts (see 1.2), I wanted to gain a better understanding of how university language teachers on a larger scale conceive of this teaching-tool in their classroom and in what ways they use it. I also assumed that narrow concepts of translation were at the basis of the absence of translation from Italian language courses. But since this choice can indeed be influenced by a number of factors, I wanted to investigate it in greater depth. Finally, having argued in favor of skills transferability (see 1.3) as a principle that might inform translation education in foreign-language curricula with a view to resolving some tensions in the field, I wanted to explore whether this concept is acknowledged in any way by those directly involved.

Based on my perceptions about the Italian context, I formulated some tentative hypotheses of what I might find in the data (see 4.1). In the first hypothesis, I assumed that the DGT survey data would reveal the existence of narrow concepts and uses of

translation similar to those I had inferred with regard to the Italian situation. By “narrow” I mean limited to restricted, partial identities and applications of translation, more precisely (1) as tool for formalistic and contrastive language analysis on the one hand, and (2) as vocational skill on the other. As to the first restricted notion, if we interpret the findings from a qualitative perspective, then the hypothesis is not confirmed, as the understandings and uses of translation that emerged from the respondents’ data show a very broad qualitative variation (see 5.1). From a quantitative perspective the data do nevertheless confirm the hypothesis: the responses about translation understandings (question 9, “In addition to the above, do you think there is another relation between translation and language learning?”) (Appendix 2) cluster substantially around the concept of translation as an awareness-raising tool of (meta)linguistic knowledge of the L2, in itself and in contrast with the L1 (see Figure 5.4). Similarly, the responses to questions 14 (“Please say how often you use the following activities”) and 16 (“Please say why you prefer some activities”) present a predominant use of individual sentences translated into L2 and L1, with the aim of showing the mechanics of the language to be learnt and its differences from the learners’ L1 (see Figure 5.3 and Table 5.3).

As to the second partial concept of translation I intended to investigate, that of a vocational skill-set to be applied in the translation services industry, the findings do not confirm the hypothesis above. The respondents did not discuss translation in foreign-language programs as a curricular component geared towards the development of specialized know-how to be applied in the translation services industry. This finding should not be particularly surprising, given that the DGT survey addressed language teachers—and not translator trainers—and specifically investigated the relation between translation and language learning. However, since my analysis of the Italian context had indeed highlighted a convergence of translation education and vocational translator training in language-learning environments, and since the spectrum of identities and functions of translation in FLT/L has been expanding (Cook 2010), I wanted to verify whether this was the case elsewhere as well. The DGT data do not seem to point to a similarly vocationalized scenario. One of the free-text responses referred to a post-graduation use of translation skills, though in non-specialized terms, as shown in the following unit: “I feel that my students find it useful to translate only to be able to translate texts later on in a professional context (for example, *export/import field*)” (Q9-53, emphasis added): in the import/export field, the translation skills that are likely to be

required are presumably those of a bilingual secretary, not necessarily those of a professional translator. In another case, this very concept of translation as a professional skill was mentioned as the reason for *excluding* any translation activity from the language classroom, as shown in the following excerpt: “I am a professional translator, and I think good translations should be done by translators and translating is not a skill my students require as such” (Q12-23). The underlying position is that professional translation is a skill-set irrelevant to, or inappropriate for the competence profile that language students should develop and, as such, has no place in academic foreign-language education. More evidence in this vein can be found in the responses to question 8 (see 5.1.1.1) where the levels of agreement with the statement “Translating is for professionals only”, albeit not particularly high, are not to be neglected: 25 respondents out of 264 (9.5%) agreed and 12 (4.5%) strongly agreed. Overall, the DGT data seem to suggest that the vocational impulses and the increasing overlaps between foreign-language and translator-training curricula discussed in Chapter 1 with regard to the Italian context are idiosyncratic of this particular academic environment. Yet this is an area where research is required to substantiate with empirical data what is still largely a perception.

The second hypothesis regarded the reasons informing the choice not to incorporate translation in language pedagogy at university level. Not unlike the first hypothesis, it assumes that attitudes of resistance rest on narrow and partial notions of this practice. The responses to questions 11 (“If you have answered Never or Rarely, please say why”) and 12 (“Other reasons [for using translation Never or Rarely]”) only partially confirm this hypothesis, indicating that resistance to translation is determined not only by restricted and biased views—as discussed in the next section—but also by curricular constraints, prevailing methodologies, and inappropriate or even absent teacher training.

Finally, the third hypothesis concerned my main interest area, namely transferability issues, in particular the acknowledgement of the not strictly (inter)linguistic and (inter)cultural knowledge and skills that translation activities may help develop in language learners. These are what, for the purposes of this study, I have labeled “transferable generic skills” (TGS), i.e. a varied bundle of abilities and dispositions that are not exclusive to any academic discipline and can be expected to be useful in a number of different contexts, both within and beyond education. Since my review of the literature in Chapter 3 revealed that the fairly established agenda

promoting TGS in higher education curricula has only modestly penetrated the fields of Translation Studies or Foreign Language Teaching and Learning (FLT/L), I hypothesized that this might be reflected also in the sample surveyed. This hypothesis was confirmed by data analysis: TGS were mentioned in a very limited number of cases (9 units out of 209), in terms of critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem-solving. Yet, although explicit awareness of these learning outcomes is rather scarce, the considerable level of disagreement with the statement “Translating is for professionals only” (see 5.1.1.1) allows one to infer that the respondents recognize some transferability potential in translation. This may be taken to cohere with the discussion of possible transferability-oriented approaches to translation teaching in foreign-language curricula illustrated at the beginning of this thesis (see 1.3). The exact nature of such potential and the extent to which the teaching community acknowledges it is matter for further research.

The overall scenario delineated by the analysis of the DGT survey data, however, is much more complex and nuanced than what emerges from this brief review of the findings in relation to the hypotheses formulated at the beginning of the study. In the following section, a synthesis of the main areas of complexity is attempted.

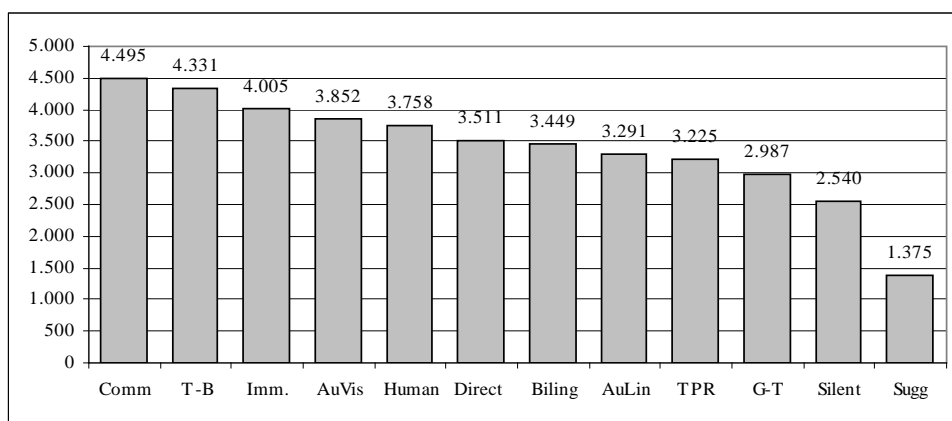
6.2. An overall scenario of complexity

The DGT study *Translation in Language Learning* showed that, in the global sample (896 teachers and 67 experts), there is a general tendency to use translation in the language classroom more in higher than in secondary education, and more in secondary than in primary education. Even in those countries where this pattern does not obtain, the tertiary sector emerges from both the teachers' and the experts' data as the one where, on average, translation features most substantially (Pym et al. 2013: 38-41). Indeed, as shown in Figure 5.6, the mean score for the use of translation in the tertiary language classroom is 2.779 (1=Never; 5=Always), which indicates a fairly frequent use of translation. This would suggest that, in the countries surveyed, there is no explicit anti-translation policy or ideology. It must be pointed out, incidentally, that the DGT study as a whole found no evidence of current policies that prohibit this activity. Yet, as the researchers rightly observe, it does not necessarily follow that translation “is specifically in the official curricula” (ibid.: 38). In my analysis of the Italian context,

although not rigorously supported by quantitative data, I found a similarly extensive presence of translation in tertiary language education. Unlike the DGT study, I drew this conclusion from a random sample of official course and syllabus descriptions, which indicates that this presence is certainly not tacit and is backed up by institutional missions and curriculum policies.

Against this background of relatively frequent use and wide diffusion of translation, a number of findings point to a situation of considerable complexity, in some respects verging on paradox. One of the primary factors for this complexity is the methodological orthodoxy governing current FLT/L. In the questionnaire for teachers, question 6 asked respondents to rate how a list of FLT methods (taken from the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning*, Byram 2004) are evaluated in their institutions. As shown in Figure 6.1, the FLT methods that are most popular at institutional level in the tertiary sample as a whole are those predominantly focused on oral-aural skills and purposeful classroom interaction through the L2, i.e. Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Language Teaching, and Immersion.

Figure 6.1. “How are these language-teaching methods viewed in your institution at the level at which you teach?” – responses from 275 tertiary teachers from all countries, means in order of global preference (1=Very negatively; 5=Very positively)



Comm: Communicative language teaching; TB: Task-based learning; Imm: Immersion; AuVis: Audio-visual language teaching; Hum: Humanistic language teaching; Direct: Direct method; Biling: Bilingual method; AuLin: Audiolingual method; TPR: Total physical response; G-T: Grammar-translation method; Silent: Silent way; Sugg: Suggestopedia.

It must be noted that the mean scores in Figure 6.1 cannot be taken to reflect the actual status of the single methodologies in the respondents' institutions because, although some respondents may have expressed an opinion based on direct information

from their colleagues or other faculty, others may have responded by simply *imagining* the attitudes held in their environment towards the given FLT methodologies. The figures should therefore be taken with a grain of salt, as a rough indication of prevailing orthodoxies.

Taken with the due care, the preference pattern for certain FLT methods shown in Figure 6.1 suggests that the environment in which the respondents operate is rather hostile to the use of L1 and translation, as the methodological canon is heavily weighed towards “monolingualism” and “naturalism” (Cook 2010: 8). And yet the survey findings show that translation is indeed used in language education at tertiary level, and rather frequently so, and also that attitudes towards it are fairly benevolent overall. For example, in the free-text responses to question 9 (“In addition to the above, do you think there is another relation between translation and language learning?”), little more than a dozen out of 122 responses expressed skeptical or negative views. Overall, the tones were decidedly approving, with an abundance of positive language of all kinds: the most recurrent adjective-noun pairs used to describe translation were free combinations of “useful, important, effective, invaluable” and “way, source, method”, followed throughout by verbs of support and empowerment such as “help, aid, develop, foster, contribute, promote, allow, enable, make”.¹

Further, in the same free-text responses and in those to question 16 (“Please say why you prefer some activities”), a number of opinions indicated acknowledgement of recent theoretical developments in favor of translation and offered novel interpretations. This can be read as a form of acknowledgement of the current reappraisal of its role in FLT/L and as a sign of the fact that the paradigm is in constant evolution. For example, the concept of translation as an automatic association between L2 and L1 (see 5.1.1.2) is suggestive of the respondents’ espousal of relatively recent Second Language Acquisition theories (Widdowson 2003) according to which learners necessarily draw on the language they know to learn the language they do not know, as all learning—including language learning—occurs by building new knowledge onto existing knowledge; translation therefore represents such a bridge between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Also, the respondents’ original views of translation as an affective agent (i.e.

¹ This may actually be seen as an instance of sample bias, probably inherent in any questionnaire study, since the respondents who offered their free comments in response to question 9 may have stronger or more positive opinions than those choosing not to answer. This is partly mitigated by the fact that this questionnaire offered a chance to express one’s opinions also to non-advocates, which should guarantee some balance.

a booster of self-confidence, sense of achievement, etc., see 5.1.1.2) or as a democratic exercise (see 5.1.1.5) indicate an interpretation of this practice in light of the greater attention to the learning process rather than just the learners' products, and this focus on process characterizes more recent FLT approaches (Richards 2006). Again, the seemingly counterintuitive claim—found in the free-text responses to question 9—that translation fosters direct thinking in L2 (see 5.1.1.2) suggests both a reconsideration of old negative positions as well as an awareness of recent research drawing on different scientific fields. Such a view may indeed still be anathema for a large number of instructors, methodologists, materials developers, and publishers, who strenuously advocate the idea of L1 negative interference—in the latter's case most likely for commercial reasons, particularly with regard to English. Yet recent neurolinguistic research (at least as reported in e.g. Salmon 2008 and Hentschel 2009) seems to suggest that, for a considerable part of the language learning process for late learners, the human brain stores and activates L2 items in L1-L2 binary pairs, to later retrieve only the L2 items.

More evidence of this generalized favorable attitude emerges from the responses to question 8 (“To what extent do you agree with the following statements?”, see 5.1.1.1), where respondents expressed considerable consensus with the “approving” theoretical propositions about translation—i.e. it is a fifth skill and can combine other language skills—and rebutted the “disapproving” ones—i.e. it is a waste of time, something for professionals only, and an obstacle to thinking in the new language. Considering these data about attitudes in light of the communicative/monolingual “dogma” suggested by Figure 6.1 above, the conclusion that can be drawn is that the context in which translation is used is theoretically and methodologically a context of latent tension and inner ambivalence, where a majority use and advocate something that is technically considered “not the thing to do”. A further conclusion can be attempted. The benevolent attitudes can be interpreted as the expression of the FLT methodology that has been emerging over approximately the past decade and that is rehabilitating translation and “own-language activities” (Kerr 2014) after years of ostracism. This methodology—not yet formalized as such—is not resistant to the use of the L1 or translation in the foreign-language classroom, and yet it is taking roots in an environment still largely dominated by ideologies that oppose them. This may be expected to generate some degree of disorientation in the teaching community.

Disorientation—which I believe to be another complexity factor—is something I discussed with respect to the Italian context (see 1.2). For example, I reported Di Sabato's views (2007, 2011b) on the confusing identity of translation as both an FLT/L tool and a skill in its own right, and on the widespread tendency to reach back to form-focused, language-testing drills even when the explicit goal of the module/course is a focus on the translation process and its strategies. A similar situation also seems to emerge from the DGT survey data. Again, the responses to question 8 concerning five propositions about translation (see 5.1.1.1) show highly convergent opinions on the statement presenting translation as a fifth skill. Taken at face value—due to the difficulty of interpreting this statement univocally—this consensus seems to suggest that the respondents are inclined to conceive or make use of translation as a language ability with some degree of autonomy, with its own norms and strategies, that is deployed to communicate messages and meanings in socially appropriate ways to certain recipients within a certain context. This, however, conflicts with the findings showing that, in the survey sample, the most common concept and classroom use of translation is as a tool for the acquisition of (meta)linguistic knowledge of the L2 and its differences with the L1, i.e. a contrastive pattern drill. As already mentioned above, this emerged from the count of the coded units identified in the free-text responses to question 9 about translation understandings and question 16 about reasons behind preferred activities (see Figure 5.4 and Table 5.3) as well as from the quantitative analysis of the responses to question 14 about translation activities (see Figure 5.3). Both sets of data show that the most typical use of translation is as an exercise of form-focused contrastive practice, most often in the form of individual sentences, translated into L2 and L1.

In a way, the predominant understanding and use that emerged from the survey data reflect quite closely the later adaptations of the original Grammar Translation Method and the purpose underlying them. As shown in Table 6.1, this method ranks relatively low (third to last), together with methods based on rote repetition and memorization (i.e. Audiolingualism, Total Physical Response). Closer study of the numbers nevertheless shows that, despite this low ranking, the mean preference for Grammar Translation is still largely above the middle of the range from very negative to very positive (i.e. 2.987 on a scale from 1 to 5). Moreover, the responses on this method from the whole sample were almost evenly divided between positive and negative perceptions (i.e. 33 very negatively, 60 negatively, 50 indifferent, 79 positively, 22 very

positively, standard deviation=1.215), which illustrates the complexity surrounding this method: many might have rated it negatively because of its bad reputation, even though they, or their colleagues, may be comfortable with classroom activities that are not too dissimilar from it or not too far from its underlying rationale. Cook (2010: 156) pithily discusses this ambivalent attitude as “a kind of schizophrenic accommodation between the party line and reality, [whereby teachers] have continued to translate while simultaneously denying that they do, and arguing that it is wrong”.

It must be noted, however, that the survey data did provide evidence of more communicatively-oriented understandings and uses of translation. The free-text responses to question 9 (about translation understandings) and question 16 (about reasons behind translation activities used) provided data about translation as a way to show and practice pragmatically functional language. However, the weightings for these concepts and uses show that they still represent a minority in the sample studied (see Figure 5.4 and Table 5.3). On the other hand, in question 14 (“Please say how often you use the following activities”), translation criticism/analysis/discussion obtained a peculiarly high frequency rating that makes it the third most frequent activity (see Table 5.2). If this is understood to be centered around an assessment of the naturalness, idiomaticity, and pragmatic appropriateness of a target text (both in the L1 and in the L2), then plenty of communicatively-oriented work may be expected to take place in the language classroom. If instead the focus of discussion and criticism is mainly on structural accuracy, then the high frequency obtained by this activity confirms the predominant trend seen above. Unfortunately, there are no elements to establish this, as question 14 did not detail what the researchers meant by this option. The fact that no clear reference to communicatively-oriented translation analysis/criticism/discussion was made in the follow-up open-ended question 16 allows for speculation that the communicative reading of this activity is only my subjective interpretation.

Overall, the prevailing understandings and uses of translation that were found in the survey data seem to be informed by the same strong philological and formalistic orientation that I perceived in my own teaching environment and that I inferred from my cursory analysis of translation pedagogy in Italian foreign-language curricula. This similarity could possibly be taken to indicate an endemic feature, which would become an interesting subject for further research. Less tentatively, it can be taken to indicate an additional element of complexity in translation teaching in tertiary foreign-language education, namely the fact that translation appears to have been reduced to just one

single thing, fulfilling just one single function. In other words, it seems to have been attributed a particularly restricted and restrictive sense. This appears rather puzzling, especially if considered in light of two aspects. First, as described at length in section 5.1, the pooled survey data yielded an extremely fine-grained and composite portrait of translation in FLT/L. The idea that clearly emerged was one of multiple identities and countless functions: translation-based activities can be relevant in a very wide range of areas concerning language both as a system and as a bundle of skills, from vocabulary, to syntax, to semantics, to cross-cultural pragmatics as well as from the productive to the receptive abilities. Further, it can accompany the teacher and the student across the whole teaching/learning process, lending itself well to a progression from a more language-oriented to a more communication-oriented work, all the way to becoming a skill in its own right with currency outside the classroom. Finally, it caters not only for the learning of knowledge and skills but also for the modality in which learning occurs, speeding up certain processes or impacting on those areas of the affective dimension of the learning process that are believed to facilitate it, such as self-confidence or co-operation (Arnold 1999). Against this backdrop, there appears to be something paradoxical about the significant concentration of opinions and attitudes around the partial meaning of translation as tool for form-focused contrastive work. Secondly, this widespread mono-concept is suggestive of the fact that the extensive scholarly work attesting to the recent communicatively-oriented (re)conceptualization of translation in FLT/L has only minimally trickled down to the teaching community. All this leaves one with an overall sense of perplexity: the current use of translation in tertiary foreign-language education seems to fall far short of the full potential this multi-faceted, multi-purpose activity can have in linguistic and cultural education in general, and at this level in particular.

Overall, the survey provided ample evidence of narrow and partial notions of translation. For example, the free-text responses to question 9 yielded three central understandings of this activity: (1) as an automatic L2-L1 mapping; (2) as a vehicle for form-focused contrastive practice; and (3) as purposeful production of communicatively appropriate translated texts (see 5.1.1.2). In these three conceptions, I identified the gradual progression from translating to translation discussed by Witte (2009), i.e. from a more instinctive and elementary activity to a more sophisticated interlingual work, each with different, equally legitimate functions, suitable for specific phases of the learning process. Yet it must be pointed out that the responses concerning these meanings

invariably touched upon only *one* of these three identities and uses. As in several other cases of concise responses, this might be seen as dependent on the hasty way in which open-ended questionnaire items tend to be answered. However, the fact that this feature was so generalized seems to suggest that among the respondents there is relatively little awareness of *all* the different functions translation can serve throughout the language acquisition process.

Similarly narrow, partial, even misconceived understandings of translation can be found to underpin different reasons the respondents gave for not incorporating this activity in their L2 teaching, or for doing so only rarely (see 5.2.1.1 and 5.2.1.2). The absence of translation from foreign-language curricula is something I discussed also in relation to the Italian context in section 1.2. The free-text responses to question 12 (“Other reasons [for using translation Never or Rarely]”) provide numerous examples. The following reply—mentioning the learners’ proficiency level as the main constraint—is one: “I think translation is not beneficial when teaching beginner and intermediate levels” (Q12-14), where translation seems to be understood only as the complex, integrative text-processing activity more appropriate for advanced classes. Similarly, another respondent argued that “translation is a further step once language learning is completed” (Q9-51), which among other things leaves one wondering whether it is possible to ever “complete” language learning. The opposite case is reflected in the following response: “I use basic translations in the beginners’ classes to make sure students understand a text and have learned their new words. The students have to translate the texts with my help. I don’t use translations in higher level classes” (Q12-22). This respondent only sees translation as a check on understanding and vocabulary memorization. Accordingly, s/he only uses it with low-level learners and not with advanced ones. Although this is a sensible methodological choice in itself, it points to an underlying lack of awareness of the numerous other activities that can be offered in advanced classes. Beyond restricted understandings of translation, the reasons for resistance exemplified in these excerpts seem to originate indeed from a lack of familiarity with the rich resources increasingly available nowadays, which suggest exercises of different levels of difficulty, from self-contained ones to task-based and project-based activities, to be used with different groups of learners (e.g. Deller and Rinvolutri 2002, González-Davies 2004, Kerr et al. 2008). So to claim that translation is for beginner or advanced learners only sounds more like myth than reality.

Other reasons for resistance coded into the “constraints” category (see Figure 5.8) find an explanation in similarly biased conceptions of translation. As regards the constraint of time, for example, not all translation activities are necessarily long and time-consuming. The three resources mentioned above, to name but a few, suggest an array of short, targeted, entertaining exercises. Further, the constraint regarding the learners’ diverse linguistic background in today’s increasingly multilingual classes also tends to be somewhat overrated, for at least two reasons. First of all, it is unlikely that *all* learners in a class have different mother tongues; there will certainly be at least two with the same L1. These can be asked to work together, comparing their translations into their L1 and maybe reporting back to the whole class on some interesting aspects. Second, the plurality of mother tongues in the classroom can be an impediment in language-learning environments in countries that are targets of extensive mobility and migration and where students attend to learn the dominant language spoken in those countries for integration purposes. Here the students are likely to be speakers of different languages, some also of limited diffusion, which the teacher is most unlikely to know. In such a classroom, translation activities would take place in small linguistically homogeneous groups, with the teacher being hardly involved. But the problem with multilingual classes is partially mitigated in situations where the L2 to be learnt is not the country’s dominant language but another language altogether, like for example English in Italy. The non-Italian students studying modern languages in Italy are treated on the same footing as their Italian peers during all classroom activities and are expected to have a level of Italian suitable for academic studies, in other words to have it as their second mother tongue. This means that there are situations in which learners work with languages neither of which is their mother tongue, and where the fact that their mother tongue is unknown to the teacher does not represent a real problem (for a more detailed discussion see Cook 2010: 151-153).

Restricted concepts and misgivings also seem to inform the reasons for resistance coded into the “nature of translation” category (see Figure 5.8), in particular those that depict this activity as non-communicative, as an impediment to fluency, and as a teaching technique incompatible with the espoused method(s). Some examples are the following: “I find it very appropriate that there are classes specifically for translation, as most students don’t take [L2] here to translate, but first to communicate. Then, later, they can translate” (Q12-32). This respondent, who also finds translation suitable for advanced learners only, seems to argue that it is something other than communication,

with no impact whatsoever on the acquisition of communicative competence. Other respondents adopt a similar perspective, attributing their choice not to use translation to the following reasons: “My theoretical background as far as TEFL is concerned advocates in favour of the communicative language teaching method” (Q12-29) and “I tend to focus rather on interactive use of target language using communication tasks etc.” (Q12-37). Both suggest a concept of translation as an activity *not* fitting the communicatively-oriented classroom, and also fundamentally passive and solitary. These views reveal little awareness of the variety of exercises involving interlingual and intercultural meaning transfer in authentic communicative contexts. Also, although there may be some logic in the claim that translation does not favor fluent, fast production, the responses defending this claim seem to overlook the ways that fluency and accuracy can be complementary. There is little value in fast production if the product is replete with errors. Particularly relevant in this respect is Cook’s (2010: 101) view that “speed is not a virtue in all tasks, nor fluency the be-all and end-all it has been held up to be in [Communicative Language Teaching]”. And he goes on to argue that translation may sometimes be helpful to learners in formulating what they want to say or write, “precisely because it slows them down [...] and provides them with a resource to be as exact as possible in understanding what they encounter, or formulating what they want to say”. I believe that this level of precision and command of the language should be expected of students at university level.

In some cases, the boundary between narrow understandings and misconceptions becomes very blurred, as shown for example in the following excerpt: “Translation is sometimes necessary, but language teachers had better not use it in the language teaching classes. The reason why we learn a language is that we can use it in real situation [sic]” (Q9-107). Apparently, for this respondent, translation is something that is performed in *unreal* situations, something artificial, and an ability that has no currency in the real world outside the classroom. A similar example reads: “[Translation] is occasionally useful and entertaining but, as it’s a separate skill and not really essential to effective communication abroad, I wouldn’t recommend using it on a regular basis” (Q9-155). Apart from sustaining that translation is exclusively a separate skill, and one with no bearing on the language-learning process, this respondent seems to suggest that languages are learnt with the sole objective of communicating *abroad*, and that communication abroad occurs exclusively in monolingual mode. Along similar lines, another respondent maintained that “translation allows teachers to evaluate the

ability to reformulate in one's mother tongue, but does not show whether the students can really speak" (Q12-15), which seems to support the idea that the main rationale behind learning an L2 is developing speaking skills, or that what one learns in written mode cannot inform oral production. Further, this response reveals a partial understanding of translation as an exclusively written activity.

As to the responses to question 11, where respondents had to select among five given reasons for not using translation, or for using it only rarely (see 5.2.1.1), 17 out of 87 respondents (i.e. 20%) chose the option "I have never considered it seriously". This is probably an effect of the sample being weighed in favor of more experienced teachers, possibly educated and trained during the heyday of the communicative approach and/or possibly unwilling to experiment with more innovative forms of translation. I commented that this was an expression of apathy and lack of knowledge. More constructively, the choice of this option—alongside "I do not feel qualified" (chosen by 4 respondents out of 87)—can be seen as the expression of a felt need for more practical and usable teaching materials involving translation, as well as for more quality training on how to incorporate it in innovative ways. In fact, it may be assumed that although an ever-growing body of literature does exist, teachers may perceive it as something too theoretical, not for them but only for the rarefied world of scholars. With regard to training, I strongly agree with the DGT researchers when they comment that this need concerns the teachers who responded "Never" or "Rarely" to question 10 ("Do you use translation in your language teaching classes?"), but it may well be that the higher percentage of those who do use it with some frequency "would also like to know more about it" (Pym et al. 2013: 40).

A final word should be said about transferable generic skills, the issue around which a substantial part of this thesis revolves together with issues of skills transferability. Apart from not being explicitly addressed in the research instruments, the respondents' scarce acknowledgement of these learning outcomes—so strongly advocated in recent thinking on higher education—may be found in the resistance as well as frustration that such calls for curriculum reforms or for pedagogical innovation tend to generate in the teaching community, if they reach it at all. Some early analyses of the TGS agenda might be regarded as still valid in this respect. Gubbay (1994), for instance, highlights how academics often reject these calls for TGS incorporation in their courses on the grounds that teaching them is not properly part of their job. He explains this not so much in terms of snobbishness as in terms of "the product of their

own socialization” (ibid.: 49). In other words, academics think that their knowledge was hard-won and, accordingly, their teaching efforts should be directed to transmitting it to students. And even if they recognize that incorporating TGS is a proper task for them to undertake, they believe that they “lack the expertise, experience, and confidence to adopt new approaches to teaching”, especially in the case of those who have not been trained as teachers, as Drummond et al. (1998: 24) point out. Gubbay (1994: 49) argues further that, even if academics may feel willing and up to the challenge of integrating TGS in their teaching, they often insist that assessment should be based entirely on subject-specific contents, which relates back to the definition of their role mentioned above as “inculcating students into the disciplines they profess” (ibid.). Reluctance to assess TGS is then strengthened by the challenges imposed by their nature (Hager 2006) as well as the impracticability of observing how students go about their tasks, outside the classroom of course, but also inside. More reluctance, Gubbay (1994) goes on to argue, derives from the doubts about the students’ self-reports of TGS development, a typical assessment tool adopted for these learning outcomes. Fairly or unfairly, it is argued that the students’ self interest and lack of skill in evaluation make such assessments at best dubious (Jackson 2014). These difficulties with and opposition to TGS assessment are often responsible for academics abandoning the enterprise altogether. Finally, a major inhibiting factor emphasized by both early and more recent analysts of the TGS agenda (Gubbay 1994, Drummond et al. 1998, Green et al. 2009) is the fact that embedding TGS in one’s teaching is often perceived as an additional time and management burden on an already packed, discipline-centered curriculum, as well as a distraction from academics’ other duties, in particular improving research ratings. High research output in fact continues to define current payment systems and career advancement patterns in many societies, although maybe not to the same extent in all. These pressures often lead to situations in which academics attribute only relative importance to innovation and excellence in teaching, and the establishment of individual teaching awards does little to change academics’ perceptions about the greater relevance of research. It may well be that calls for attention to TGS have encountered these kind of reluctance and skepticism also among the DGT survey respondents, hence making little explicit impact in their discourse.

Probably the main element of complexity in this discussion of TGS and their limited presence in the respondents’ data has less to do with the respondents or the questionnaire than it does with TGS themselves. In section 2.3, I have outlined some of

the theoretical problems related to this notion and what they imply for the conceptualization of these skills and their concrete incorporation into instructional practice. These are not to be neglected and further research energies need to be invested prior to formulating any TGS-based proposal for translation pedagogy in foreign-language curricula. What could possibly survive the criticisms, however, is the notion of transfer of translation-related skills discussed in section 1.3.

6.3. Conclusion

This chapter has attempted a synthesis of the DGT survey data that were selected and analyzed to address the three main areas of interest identified at the beginning of this study as well as the three related hypotheses. In general terms, the analysis has highlighted an overall scenario of complexity. Probably the most conspicuous element of complexity, or rather contradiction, is the existence of a very broad qualitative variation in the understandings of translation and its roles in FLT/L, alongside the quantitative preponderance of a restrictive conception and use of translation as a tool for formalistic, contrastive language work. Another major element of complexity that has emerged from the analysis is the existence of rather narrow, often misconceived, and biased understandings that stand in sharp contrast to the recent reappraisal of the benefits translation can bring to the process of learning a foreign language and to the development of communicative and intercultural skills. Finally, the analysis has yielded only limited explicit evidence of the respondents' awareness of and work with transferable generic skills, but at the same time it has identified signs that suggest acknowledgement of the probably less problematic concept of transfer of translation-specific skills. On close analysis, all the elements of complexity highlighted in this chapter appear to be deeply linked to an underlying problem of conceptualization. Overall, the issues discussed here have cast light on some areas where future concerted action and further research are needed. These will be the focus of the next, concluding chapter.

Chapter 7. Conclusions and suggestions for future action and research

After presenting some concluding remarks on the empirical study reported and commented on in Chapters 5 and 6, as well as on the theoretical underpinnings of this research as a whole, this chapter attempts to delineate areas where concrete action and further research may be carried out, with a view to favoring the proposed mode of translation pedagogy in foreign-language curricula.

7.1. Concluding remarks

The analysis of the DGT survey data regarding attitudes to translation in tertiary linguistic and cultural education has yielded an overall scenario of complexity, where conflict and contradiction—articulated in different forms—seem to be the common denominator. One of these is certainly the fact that a widespread and frequent use of translation activities, coupled with generally benevolent, approving attitudes, exists against a backdrop of latent antagonism and sense of misgiving, largely informed by traditional adherence to monolingual, immersive, and communicative language-teaching principles dating from the second half of the 20th-century. This points to the fact that the current reappraisal of translation in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning (FLT/L) and especially the considerable interest in communicative-oriented forms of pedagogical translation needs more time and more concerted teacher training efforts to reach the classroom. Partially grounded in these traditional principles are several narrow and misconceived understandings of translation as a non-communicative, artificial, static, and solitary exercise, which result in the almost total exclusion of this activity—in all its possible manifestations—from foreign-language classes. Further limited understandings rest not so much on predominant methodological tenets as on a number of biased positions related to sometimes overrated constraints. Among these are, for example, the time required by translation work, the learners' diverse linguistic backgrounds, and their level of language proficiency.

A second element of conflict lies in the fact that data about such narrow understandings and uses of translation coexist with data that are indicative of a

peculiarly diverse phenomenology of what translation is and what functions it can serve in multiple areas of FLT/L. This wide-ranging conceptual and interpretative variation also includes a view of translation as a vehicle for the development of broadly applicable and adaptable learning. This idea is conveyed not so much through explicit mention of what, for the purposes of this thesis, I have labeled “transferable generic skills” (TGS)—although some mention was indeed found—as rather through the inferred acknowledgement of a potentially transferable dimension of translation skills, intended as their possible usability and adaptability, at different levels of competence and adherence to source-text features, across different situations in the personal, public, educational, and employment domains.

A final element of conflict contributing to the overall complexity mentioned above is that, against a broad consensus on translation as a skill in its own right, involving interlingual transfer of meanings and the guided production of socio-pragmatically appropriate texts, the predominant understanding and use of this activity is still largely as an exercise for the consolidation of metalinguistic knowledge of the L2. This suggests that the way translation in foreign-language education at university level is currently conceived of and used in actual instruction falls far short of the full potential this multi-purpose, multi-faceted activity can have in linguistic education in general and at this level of instruction in particular.

In section 1.2, I discussed a similar scenario characterized by traditional, predominantly formalistic uses of translation and attitudes of resistance also in relation to the Italian context. In the latter, however, I perceived a peculiarity that has not emerged from the analysis of the DGT survey data, i.e. the provision of vocationalized translation training with a view to offering students a wider range of opportunities to apply their language skills in the language services industry. This might be interpreted as an idiosyncratic trait of foreign-language curricula in Italy. However, since my initial analysis of translation education in foreign-language degree courses in this country is based on limited resources, such considerations as well as any inference of convergence or divergence between Italy and the areas surveyed in the DGT study must be taken with many grains of salt.

A final word may be said about the general argument presented at the outset of this study concerning possible approaches to the teaching of translation in university foreign-language curricula. Initially, I was literally enticed by the notion of a set of transferable generic skills, explicitly embedded in academic courses, which would serve

students in the range of career paths they may have to pursue in an increasingly changing working world, and which would prepare them to participate actively across multiple life spheres such as education, lifelong learning, and society at large. They seemed like an intriguing pedagogical pursuit for tertiary foreign-language education in general and for translation education in particular, as well as a possible focus that might cater for language students' empowerment and employability better than training in highly technical, profession-based translation skills. In other words, I imagined that an emphasis on these general skills might respond in relevant ways to the growing trend towards vocationalization in foreign-language programs. Moreover, after reading theories about the peculiar overlap between areas of translation competence and general skills, my interest was stirred even more. By reviewing the literature on TGS, I became aware, on the one hand, of the considerable attention these learning outcomes have attracted in international discussions on tertiary education over the past thirty years, especially in certain academic environments; on the other, I came to realize a series of contentious, partly unresolved issues surrounding these skills, which range from their very existence, their relation to domain knowledge, the possibility to operationalize them in practicable ways, and above all the expectation that they can be transferred across contexts. Although most radically critical positions have been counterbalanced by more moderate and optimistic ones, and some of the most pretentious claims made by TGS have been reduced to some extent, if not sidelined (e.g. transferability), the incorporation of TGS in university curricula still represents, if nothing else, a highly intellectual challenge for education systems, which calls for further research efforts (see 7.4).

Having acknowledged the criticisms and doubts raised by some educationalists towards the construct of TGS, I was brought to realize that what may possibly be able to survive the criticisms is the notion of learning transfer in and of itself, in this case transfer of translation-related learning. In other words, I pondered that the presence of translation in foreign-language education at both classroom and curricular level might be interpreted through the lenses of learning transfer, i.e. the impact that knowledge and skills acquired in one context can have on subsequent learning and performance in other contexts, inside and outside education. On close analysis, the whole spectrum of identities and functions of translation in FLT/L can be seen through such lenses. The most elementary use of translation for scaffolding purposes, i.e. the mapping of L2 words, phrases, structures onto L1 equivalents, can actually be read in terms of

prior/acquired learning supporting subsequent/new learning. Further, the contrastive exercises focused on certain L2 structures are intended to impact on the acquisition or consolidation of the L2 as a formal system. On yet a further level, translation tasks—in both directions—may be carried out with a focus on the naturalness, interconnectivity, pragmatic adequacy of language, in the hope that such focus impacts on the development of communicative competence in the L2. This can be articulated in specific skill areas, so for instance translation into the L2 can be seen as a form of developing L2 writing skills or L2 speaking skills, whereas translation from the L2 can be seen as a form of honing text comprehension skills, and so on. This may then be expected to have a far-reaching remit, i.e. to impact on the learners' ability to actually use the language (monolingually) *outside* education. Further, the teaching of translation may be seen as an opportunity to develop interlingual, mediating abilities to be applied in one's normal functioning in our multilingual societies, that is yet other abilities with a far-reaching transfer potential. Finally, these abilities may be seen as useful in employment settings where job duties involve interlingual and intercultural exchanges, hence the need to produce translations or to assist in encounters between people unable to communicate with each other directly. This skills-transferability-oriented approach to translation teaching in tertiary foreign-language education might thus be seen as a more expansive way to respond to issues of vocationality, and to understand vocationality *not* necessarily in terms of preparing students to fill specific slots in the industry. A research focus on learning transfer in tertiary translation teaching and its relation to vocational training could make a decent contribution to current scholarship on translation in FLT/L as well as on translator training.

To recapitulate, the main conclusions of this study can be summarized as follows:

- In tertiary foreign-language education, translation is used widely and frequently, though in a context apparently characterized by latent monolingual dogmatism and restrictive, misconceived notions of what translation is and what it can contribute to the language learning process.
- Data reflecting partial views and mono-concepts of translation coexist with data indicating a peculiarly broad spectrum of understandings. Some transcend the concept of language-enhancing activity and point to the acknowledgement of notions of translation as widely applicable and adaptable learning.

- Despite high agreement levels on translation as a language skill per se, the prevailing understanding and use of this activity is largely as a tool for the exploration of L2 formal features.
- Pending empirical confirmation, the vocationalization of translation teaching in foreign-language programs in Italy appears to be an idiosyncrasy of this country.
- The transferable generic skills agenda in higher education is a significant pedagogical pursuit although a number of complexities have to be acknowledged. Transfer of learning could open up interesting research avenues for translation teaching in FLT/L as well as translator training.

7.2. Suggestions for future action

The main findings of the empirical part of this work, as well as some issues that emerged from the literature review, provide suggestions for future action. The elements of complexity inferred from the DGT survey data and briefly summarized above may be traced back to a problem of conceptualization of translation in FLT/L and to a kind of short circuit between theory and practice, whereby actual teaching practices have only partially acknowledged most recent scholarship in the field and have remained fossilized in traditional or antagonistic positions. In my view, all possible actions aimed at addressing these complexities need to start from concerted sensitization and (in)formative initiatives about the full range of identities and functions that translation in FLT/L can assume, across the whole spectrum from formalistic to communicative approaches. The fine-grained portrait emerging from the DGT survey data can undoubtedly provide an invaluable starting point for this. More precisely, concrete steps should be taken—in terms of professional development opportunities—to familiarize foreign-language teachers with a wider and less biased concept of translation and the functions it can fulfill at different stages of the language-learning process, with special emphasis on the specific needs of higher education students.

So, for example, translation as an automatic process of L2-L1 mapping should be presented as a resource for scaffolding purposes at initial levels, to be used judiciously for sure, but not necessarily to be discouraged. Similarly, interlingual exercises used as an awareness-raising, diagnostic, or remedial tool for form-focused contrastive practice need not be seen as a resurrection of the bad old days of Grammar Translation. As a

matter of fact, the translation of individual sentences into L2 or L1 found substantially in the DGT data could be seen as akin to Grammar Translation activities or to exercises inspired by the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Lado 1957). However, there is no evidence to entirely dismiss it for this reason, not least because it is not the *only* technique used in the language classroom, no evidence exists that such exercises slow down production and communication, and above all they have been largely “purified” from the “excess baggage” (Thornbury 2010: unpaginated) they had accumulated in their passage through the 19th century, i.e. their typically inauthentic, over-literary, nonsensical traits. This type of language work does play an important role at that stage of the language-learning process when the L2 is explored atomistically in depth, in all its formal components and uses, or whenever a targeted focus on form is needed for remedial or consolidation purposes. Interesting scholarly contributions and methodological resources specially dedicated to these uses have become increasingly available in recent years (e.g. Laviosa 2005, Rojo 2009, Tsigari and Floros 2013). Yet, once again, a judicious use of such exercises is always recommended. In other words, an exclusive or prolonged resort to form-focused work for reflective practice on structural/textual features, with the only aspects that change over time being text length and lexical complexity, means underplaying the full pedagogical potential of translation and risks reinforcing the hostility against this activity premised on arguments of incompatibility with the communicative mainstream. In the case of students in higher education, this claim appears clearer if we consider that their learning environment would be ripe for different uses: on average, university students are supposed to have had a minimum of 5-8 years of language instruction when they begin their academic studies, so they can be expected to be at least at a fully intermediate level (B2+). As such, they would be ready for more comprehensive and sophisticated language work, not least for more *communicative* interlingual activities, which would be perfectly in line with the prevailing methodologies. And those who start a language ab initio at university can rely on their previous experience of learning other languages, so even though they may need a more extensive initial focus on form, they should be allowed to benefit from a progression towards more communicatively-oriented activities too. In my view, this is where a major contradiction of current translation use in tertiary language education lies: the conditions would be right for more challenging and engaging communicative activities, yet the predominant tendency to take recourse to formalistic approaches cramps the pedagogical potential of translation work.

With a view to mitigating this contradiction, concrete action should be taken to mainstream more widely the understanding of translation as a dynamic instance of language use and intercultural meaning transfer in authentic communicative situations. Classroom activities based on this understanding (e.g. translation of blurbs, synopses, comics, sketches, video-clips, documentaries, recipes, photo captions) require extensive thought on not only structural features, but above all on issues relating to socio-pragmatic equivalence, encyclopedic knowledge, and cultural adaptation. All this is expected to wean learners off overdependence on formal aspects or literalism, and to enhance their communicative competence, understood as the ability to actually use the language in a socially adequate manner in production and interaction activities.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the recent rehabilitation of translation in FLT/L rests largely on the above conception. A vast literature is available nowadays, with new publications coming out as I write (Tsagari and Floros 2013, Kerr 2014, Laviosa 2014). Among these can surely be included the DGT survey as well, which at the end of its analytical discussion offers a list of innovative and engaging classroom activities to experiment with. The problem seems to lie in the dissemination of these resources, which are still largely confined to monographs or journal articles and comparatively less present in actual didactic materials, where translation (pending empirical confirmation) seems to feature more in the form of grammar consolidation or vocabulary memorization exercises than as communicative tasks of the type discussed above. It is to be hoped that materials developers and publishers actively respond to the rehabilitation movement currently underway. The fact that distinguished materials writers and FLT/L scholars, such as Philip Kerr and Guy Cook, have provided online teacher training resources even under the aegis of popular ELT publishers¹ may be seen as encouraging evidence that things are changing. On the other hand, more action should be taken to organize professional development initiatives and methodology refresher courses for the teaching community, which are still in exceptionally short supply at university level. This can and should take place at different levels, from worldwide non-profit organizations like the British Council, the Goethe Institut, the Instituto Cervantes or similar associations, to national bodies in charge of education (ministries and their representative institutions at regional level), to universities or

¹ Cambridge English Teacher Resources by Guy Cook and Philip Kerr, March 4 and February 27, 2014. <http://www.cambridgeenglishteacher.org/resources>. Macmillan webinar by Philip Kerr *The Return of Translation* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ReVwucwF-s>. Accessed March 2014.

networks thereof, all the way to national and international language teachers' associations (e.g. ANILS, IATEFL). All this may sound too ambitious a plan in the face of the die-hard traditional uses of translation or of the constraints imposed by publishers. Yet these need not be perceived as insurmountable challenges, especially because the conceptual and methodological foundations have already been laid and the climate has never been more favorable for translation in FLT/L.

The communicative approach to translation in FLT/L discussed above should also be mainstreamed as supporting a gradual progression towards what, in section 1.3, I discussed in terms of “transferable” and “socially responsive” understandings and uses of translation in language-learning environments. As already discussed above, all translation activities across the spectrum from the more formalistic to the more communicative can be seen as “transferable” in themselves, in as far as the learning they generate is believed—and partially proved—to impact positively and support further learning and performance, i.e. the acquisition of an all-round communicative language competence—“comprising several components: linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic” (Council of Europe 2001: 13)—and its concrete application in all instances of language use. At the same time, this communicative translation work should be seen as laying the foundations for the development of a multi-faceted interlingual ability that has an increasingly wide currency outside the FLT/L context and supports language learners'/users' functioning in our multicultural societies. From this perspective, translation skills are transferable in the sense that they can be applied beyond the language classroom in a variety of contexts pertaining to the private, public, educational, and occupational domains (contexts that obviously learners should be made or become aware of). Depending on the communicative situation at hand, these transferable applications of translation skills can require variable levels of competence and can assume different forms, more or less adherent to the contents, format, and channel of the source text. They can range from more “traditional” acts of translation proper, though intended as non-specialized and non-professionalized, performed for example in employment settings for internal purposes, to acts of spoken and written mediation (interlingual summaries, paraphrases, adaptations, relaying of information) performed in countless everyday communicative exchanges, not confined to the occupational domain. In none of these cases are transferable applications of translation skills to be equated with traditionally conceived professional translation.

As discussed in section 1.3, a mode of translation teaching in foreign-language programs based on the notion of transferable learning with a forward-reaching application and adaptation potential in the social and occupational domains might constitute a possible alternative to excessively vocational curriculum inclinations, as well as an interesting evolution of the communicative uses of translation aimed at perfecting the learners' language competence. As already argued, however, these transferable applications of translation skills require accurate concretization and definition if they are to carry the force of curriculum design and actual implementation. Most importantly, such operationalization cannot be carried out in abstract terms. In other words, the nature of these projections needs to be determined societally, through an analysis of the needs of different curriculum stakeholders, with learner factors and societal factors possibly being placed at the center of such analysis. These considerations touch upon fundamental aspects of curriculum development and renewal (see Kearns 2006) that have not been specifically addressed in this study but that need to be taken into consideration if we want broadly conceived transferability issues to be acknowledged in foreign-language curricula. Further investigation in this area cannot ignore this type of analysis.

Thus, for example, careful thought ought to be given to identifying those language professionals who might need translation skills apart from professional translators (Calvo 2011) and to devising an open-ended "bank of situations" (Jonnaert et al. 2006: 17-20) in which they might need to carry out non-specialized, non-professional translation tasks. This operation clearly requires keeping abreast of the world of language-related professions. The next step should then be to determine what skills are required in order to deal competently with such situations. Though apparently suitable, the method suggested by Jonnaert et al. (*ibid.*) of using "competent action in situation" as an organizing principle for the development of programs of study presents some problems. First of all, there is the challenge of trying to capture a very diverse and rapidly-evolving scenario; second there is the issue of how to establish competent action aprioristically, without knowing the contextual factors characterizing each situation. But perhaps the main problem involved in this operation is that of insisting on finding hard and fast boundaries in a territory that is rather characterized by a continuum of competent action. So a better way to go about this may be to concentrate on establishing a common ground, rather than on differences separating categories of professionals, and to identify what might constitute a possible route towards the development of an

essential skills base for transferable translation performance in employment settings. As already suggested in section 1.3, a possible candidate might be the approach presented in Colina's (2003) handbook aimed at the development of communicative translation competence, and in the vast literature on translation teaching grounded in the principles of functionalism and Skopos theory.

A comparatively less extensive body of scholarly work is available to support the other transferable projections of translation skills discussed in section 1.3, namely those presented in terms of mediation activities. The notion of mediation, introduced in FLT/L through the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, has attracted the attention of FLT/L scholars and practitioners as well as policy-makers only in some cultures, for example Germany, as was confirmed by the DGT survey data. It clearly represents an area where more efforts than those currently in place (see 1.3) are needed, in terms of conceptualization and pedagogical operationalization, as well as curriculum development. What would be particularly desirable is the nurturing of synergies between intellectual forces from the FLT/L camp *and* the Translation Studies camp, so as to avoid the common—and not necessarily productive—tendency to discuss mediation in unconditionally oppositional terms to translation, without considering the ample common ground and often emphasizing differences that seem rather unsubstantiated (see Pfeiffer 2013: 46).

Another area that similarly requires extensive definitional work is a mode of translation pedagogy in tertiary foreign-language education that explicitly incorporates the learning outcomes here defined as TGS. Although some theoretical issues have been identified, a focus on these learning outcomes may still be worthwhile. In section 1.3, I hypothesized that an explicit focus on these learning outcomes might further amplify the transferability potential of the learning emerging from translation work, thus positively contributing to the employability of language graduates, possibly more so than what might be the case with strictly vocational translator training. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, however, the explicit integration of TGS into translation teaching within foreign-language education still represents relatively uncharted ground, or at least this is what appears from the literature. The same applies to the neighboring field of translator training. This may well be attributed to the significant challenges intrinsic to the nature of TGS as well as to a number of interrelated factors identified as responsible for the as yet limited implementation of the TGS agenda worldwide and for the still scarce empirical studies conducted in this field (see 2.4). In the following

section, I put forward some suggestions for further research deemed necessary to prevent this field from becoming a territory of sheer theorizing and thus from being abandoned altogether despite its significance. Before moving on to that, however, the main indications for future action discussed above are presented here in a more succinct form:

- Teacher training initiatives for tertiary foreign-language teachers are needed to heighten awareness of the multiple functions translation can serve in terms of:
 - (1) development of all-round language competence;
 - (2) development of an interlingual ability that can be applied beyond education, in a variety of contexts, at different levels of competence, not necessarily to be equated with the translation profession.
- For purposes of curriculum design, transferable projections of translation skills need to be carefully operationalized and determined societally.
- Synergies would be desirable between the FLT/L camp *and* the Translation Studies camp.

7.3. Suggestions for future research

A mode of translation pedagogy that explicitly incorporates transferable generic skills requires, in my view, further research in a number of areas. An essential first step is to achieve as deep an understanding as possible of the TGS that can realistically be assumed to emerge from translation activities in the context of tertiary foreign-language education. As discussed in section 2.4, existing inventories of these skills generally contain a varying number of abilities and attributes that are described at a high level of abstraction. Further, they appear to ignore the peculiarities of single fields of study, adopting a one-size-fits-all approach. As such, they hardly ever amount to useful operational reference tools for pedagogy or research. In recent years, the awareness of these weaknesses, coupled with a growing consensus that TGS are strongly shaped by disciplinary knowledge, has prompted scholars to direct their research efforts towards the definition of TGS repertoires that are specific and meaningful to single academic subjects. To my knowledge, no such efforts to do this have been made in any systematic way in the field of Translation Studies or by advocates of translation education in FLT/L.

Another essential step, I believe, is the informed development of methodological guidelines to orient a translation pedagogy that explicitly incorporates the identified TGS. These are not to be intended as ready-to-use syllabi or step-by-step tips on classroom instruction but rather as an anthology of guiding principles and activity frameworks that will inevitably be interpreted according to context-specific features and needs. Work on this aspect can avail of the body of literature on teaching and learning processes supporting TGS development in general (e.g. Luca and Oliver 2002, Yorke and Harvey 2005, Kember 2009), which in turn largely draws—and further elaborates—on well-researched principles like student-centered, process-oriented, and collaborative learning, as well as on the development of learning settings that nurture reflection, self-regulation, and authenticity.

Another area that would also need further investigation is that of assessment. The belief is widely held (Hughes and Barrie 2010) that explicit assessment is one of the key determinants of the implementation and effectiveness of any TGS-oriented pedagogy, as it promotes full commitment to these learning outcomes from all the stakeholders involved, as opposed to purely declarative compliance. As discussed in section 2.4, the highly complex, often intangible nature of the learning outcomes described as TGS (Hager 2006) means that traditional assessment procedures may not be sufficient or suitable. This implies the need to acquire new knowledge in the field and to explore appropriate methodologies. Some work has been carried out on the subject (e.g. Knight and Page 2007, Villa Sánchez and Poblete Ruiz 2011), which certainly represents a starting point for future research efforts in this area.

One final area where further research—as well as experimentation—is needed is transfer of learning, an issue central to the present study. The mode of translation pedagogy proposed here is based on the assumption that translation skills and translation-related generic skills can stand students in good stead not only in the context of acquisition and for language learning purposes, but also in other settings within and outside the academic environment, across different spheres of their private, social, and professional lives. This assumption is informed by the concept of learning transfer.

A tacit assumption in education sciences is that students will be able to apply the acquired knowledge and skills in other contexts, in education and beyond, by virtue of the intrinsic relevance of such knowledge and skills to performance in other contexts. In other words, the default theory of educational practice has been that all knowledge (declarative and procedural) learnt anywhere will be carried over and used

spontaneously and routinely wherever it is needed. As decades of transfer research have shown, this is unlikely to happen as often as teachers and presumably employers wish (Perkins and Salomon 1992). So if we want the translation and mediation skills we teach in class to be applied outside the class, in social and professional contexts, we should try to structure our teaching in a way that fosters and supports these real-life applications, by trying to make the learning situation *more like* the situations to which transfer is desired, a technique that Perkins and Salomon (ibid.: 208) call “hugging”. This is an extreme simplification of a vast body of knowledge on transfer-fostering teaching techniques that might be interesting to explore and incorporate into discussions and methodological resources on translation education. It can be assumed that some teachers apply these techniques already, more or less consciously. What I suggest here is that this focus be explicitly highlighted in the field of translation teaching.

As briefly mentioned in section 2.3.3, although much of the literature on transfer-fostering teaching presents techniques from a largely theoretical perspective, a growing body of recent research has been investigating transfer mechanisms and methods for supporting it from a practical/empirical perspective (Engle 2012, Goldstone and Day 2012). These contributions report on studies showing that transfer takes place under specific contextual circumstances, in contrast to previous studies in which transfer was largely left to take care of itself and which, not surprisingly, documented nothing but transfer failure (Perkins and Salomon 1992). This encouraging evidence can provide translation teachers with testable ideas on how their instructional practices can help students enhance the transferability potential of the translation skills they learn in the classroom, in contexts inside and outside education. Some theoretical contributions are available on transfer-supporting pedagogies in the neighboring field of ELT in general (e.g. James 2006, Larsen-Freeman 2013) and interesting longitudinal experiments have been carried out on the processes supporting transfer from EAP writing courses to other concurrent academic courses (e.g. James, 2009, 2010, 2012). All this work can provide inspiration for translation educators on how to realize the full transferability potential of the skills developed in translation teaching and can stimulate them to carry out research in this field.

Beyond translation skills per se, the claim in this thesis has been that translation education in language-learning environments could also capitalize on a set of *generic* skills emerging from it, that is TGS, and on their potential to be applied in a range of contexts not necessarily related to translation or languages, inside and outside

education. As discussed in section 2.3.3, the claim that TGS can actually be applied across disciplinary and contextual domains has attracted much criticism. I am aware of the weaknesses in this claim and I am reluctant to support it blindly. I simply like to think of a possible set of skills that, despite their inevitable configuration to contextual features, rest on general principles and common traits that make them relevant across settings, not necessarily in the sense of “applicable unchanged” but “adaptable and supporting thinking, learning, and performance” in more than one context.

As already mentioned in section 2.3.3, this assumption poses considerable challenges for both empirical research and pedagogy, which in turn point to areas where there is more to investigate. Brent (2011), for instance, argues that testing whether and how students’ thinking and performance in one context develop from, or are an adaptation of, knowledge and skills acquired and deployed in another context certainly makes the researcher’s task quite complex. He argues that this type of research cannot rely on directly probing students for explicit instances of transfer, because they may share with the researcher the same difficulties in clearly articulating what transformed (i.e. adapted) knowledge looks like. It follows that the researcher will need to devise appropriate techniques to infer, from field observations or rigorous interviews, or both, “the academic experiences that students are using as background to their new learning” (ibid.: 410). This surely constitutes a complex but intriguing intellectual challenge. Further, Brent claims that researchers and teachers need to learn more about how to provide knowledge and skills that students can transform and adapt to the widest range of contexts. Both these areas call for substantial further investigation.

Meanwhile, Brent goes on to argue, since the classroom cannot possibly wait for all the research findings to filter through to daily instruction, a sensible thing to do might be to devise a tentative pedagogical agenda, suitable to one’s specific academic discipline, that calls attention to what is already known from research on transferability-friendly teaching and to try to experiment with it. As already suggested above, this is something that could be done for translation education as well, maybe starting from the techniques briefly illustrated in section 2.3.3 to foster the transferability of generic skills, namely Perkins and Salomon’s (1988, 1992) “bridging” and Engle et al.’s (2012) “expansive framing”.

It must be pointed out, however, that although the research efforts called for in the foregoing are surely imperative, they are probably best seen as a part of a wider project. More precisely, there is ample consensus that the incorporation of TGS should

be conceived of in terms of program design, not course design (Knight and Yorke 2003), as the progression of these skills is believed to occur incrementally as students integrate various kinds of learning throughout a program of study. The implications for a TGS-oriented translation pedagogy advanced here are two-fold. On the one hand, significant development of TGS is unlikely to emerge from one single module, unit or course in translation. Rather it is more logical to expect it from the experience of *all* courses offered within the foreign-language curriculum. On the other, TGS progress is unlikely to be obtained within the time span of, say, a two-semester translation course in the third year of undergraduate studies, as TGS are thought to be a long journey, ideally a lifelong one (Holland 2006). These considerations suggest that the TGS agenda, far from being fostered at the level of one single curricular component (translation), should be designed and adopted at institutional level. It thus acquires the traits of a wider systemic project of curriculum renewal, which of course cannot be initiated and sustained by translation teachers/experts alone but rather requires the synergies and collaboration of a wider team of interested parties.

To recapitulate, in order to pave the way for the implementation of a TGS-oriented translation pedagogy in foreign-language curricula, further research is required in the following areas:

- TGS that can plausibly be developed through translation teaching in tertiary foreign-language education.
- Methodological approaches to support a translation pedagogy that incorporates TGS.
- TGS assessment criteria.
- Teaching techniques that foster the transfer of translation-related learning—in terms of translation skills and generic skills—beyond the initial context of acquisition.

7.4. Shortcomings and limitations of the study

As indicated in the foregoing, the definition and selection of translation-related transferable generic skills, their teaching, and their assessment constitute areas where further research is needed if any TGS-oriented translation education is to be implemented and experimented with. The still limited knowledge about these three areas posed considerable challenges during the planning of the empirical part of this study. For example, of the research designs I initially proposed, one relied on Kelly's

(2005: 34) claim that translation offers access to TGS in a way that “is difficult to find in other academic fields”. I thus considered analyzing the role played by translation activities in the development of these skills in foreign-language students. I thought of a possible experiment design where a group of students takes part in translation activities, a control group does not, a pre-post test focusing on a number of TGS is administered, and the two groups’ performances are compared. But a number of factors posed challenges for the feasibility of this research. The most influential one regards precisely the selection of the TGS to be taught and tested. As one of my supervisors rightly observed, “we don’t really know which transferable skills and attitudes will be enhanced by translation education more than by any other language activity or discipline, and it would be risky to suppose that we did” (Pym, personal communication, September 2012). Equally problematic is the fact that we do not know what the TGS involved in translation activities in language education look like at all. As discussed in Chapter 3, my assumption of translation as a transferable and generic type of learning rests on Kelly’s (2005, 2007) identification of substantial convergence between her model of translation competence and the generic competences devised within the Tuning Project. It must be pointed out, however, that Kelly’s claim concerns the skill-set the author identifies as being the desirable outcome of a typical *translator-training* program. It may well be the case that the generic competences trained and developed through translation education as part of a broader foreign-language program are of a different nature, despite the commonalities between the two fields. Over-reliance on the skill categories that Kelly highlights as convergent with the Tuning Project’s model should therefore be avoided and the design of TGS repertoires specific to translation in FLT/L should be an important precondition of any research in the field.

Further, when planning the empirical part of this study, the experiment proposals that were put forward stagnated and were eventually abandoned not only because the essential precondition discussed above did not obtain, i.e. a clear understanding of the TGS that can be developed through translation pedagogy in foreign-language education, but also because these experiment proposals involved the actual teaching of TGS. As such, they would demand that significant research energies be invested in the exploration and piloting of TGS-fostering teaching methodologies prior to carrying out the experiment itself. This was felt to be an impediment, not only in terms of time but mainly of intellectual demands.

More problems with experiment design emerged in connection with TGS assessment, as any experiment aimed to test the actual development of TGS as a result of a certain type of pedagogical intervention needs to rely on clearly defined measurement criteria, an area which is still largely under scrutiny at present. Finally, the complexity involved in testing for transfer of generic skills or for previous learning being transformed and adapted to support new learning was felt to be rather overwhelming when I considered the idea of embarking on transfer research.

The above challenges imposed not infrequent changes to the original research trajectory, until I finally settled on a research design that did not involve direct experimentation with TGS. These challenges, however, appeared as such because the issues involved can be a rather daunting prospect if tackled by a single person. The needs for further research illustrated above are probably best addressed by a team of researchers, comprised of different stakeholders such as experts in translation in FLT/L, Translation Studies scholars, language teachers, as well as learning specialists, curriculum developers, and materials writers.

The present time appears to be particularly favorable for this kind of concerted research endeavor. Among the factors that seem to augur well is surely the general climate for a revival of translation in foreign-language education, a climate in which the transferable dimension of translation skills in terms of TGS might arouse the intellectual curiosity of scholars and researchers. Another factor is the very recent interest in TGS demonstrated by some quarters of FLT/L. Although over the past fifteen years some work has been carried out on these skills in foreign-language learning, both in general (King 2000, Fay 2003) and in tertiary foreign-language curricula in particular (Curry and Sherry 2004, Sherry and Curry 2005), recent years have witnessed a flowering of initiatives—mainly promoted by FLT/L publishers and organizations—that are geared to reaching out to the wider teaching community and supporting it with concrete resources for both instructional activities and professional development. For example, in January 2014, Macmillan launched a dedicated website called Macmillan Life Skills² where language instructors can access weekly practical tips for developing TGS (here designated “life skills”) in their foreign-language classes, as well as free monthly articles, video interviews, and webinars providing discussion opportunities. Also, Macmillan has updated its course-book series and has created new ones (e.g. *Open*

² <http://www.macmillanenglish.com/life-skills>. Accessed March 2014.

Mind 2014)³ with a specific focus on these learning outcomes, embedded in different types of language-related contents, from grammar skills to Business English, from primary to adult levels. Other ELT publishers (e.g. Pearson ELT)⁴ have been following the same path and it might be assumed that similar initiatives are currently underway for other languages beyond English as an L2/FL. This focus on transferability issues and student empowerment has also been taken up and promoted at international events (e.g. IATEFL annual conferences),⁵ where presenters have emphasized how language students should be placed in a position to develop much more than language in a narrow sense (i.e. a decent grasp of grammar, a reasonably broad vocabulary, functional language, and exam skills); they should also be involved in a learning process that, through language, fosters the development of a range of skills transferable across their current and future academic, professional, and social lives. The heightened emphasis on these pedagogical goals in FLT/L—or their increased explicitation—and the work that is being carried out towards their attainment may provide a fruitful environment for similarly oriented research in the neighboring field of translation education. Finally, another factor that seems to bode well for the establishment of the research synergies invoked above is the current resurgence of interest in learning transfer in education sciences.

A final word has to be said with regard to the limitations of the present study, which point to possible follow-up research. Undoubtedly, one of the major limitations is the fact that the account of translation education in Italian foreign-language curricula provided in Chapter 1 was based on limited and indirect sources, as well as on personal experience and perceptions. With a view to obtaining a more reliable portrait of the status quo and gathering data to substantiate or amend my initial judgments, a follow-up survey of Italian tertiary language instructors, faculty heads, and other relevant stakeholders would be worthwhile. The DGT survey certainly represents a valid methodological model to these purposes. A second major limitation regards the research instruments used. The opportunity to access the DGT survey data was welcomed as a sort of “lifeline” at a time when the problems with experiment design mentioned above were seriously compromising the chances of bringing this project to completion. Yet the

³ www.macmillanopenmind.com. Accessed March 2014.

⁴ <http://www.pearsonelt.com/21stcenturylearning>. Accessed March 2014.

⁵ “21st Century Skills for ELT”, paper presented by Vicki Hollett, Gareth Rees, and Lewis Lansford at the 46th Annual International IATEFL Conference, Glasgow, March 22, 2012. “Study, Work, Life: Developing Transferable Skills Across Domains”, paper presented by Steve Taylore-Knowles at the 48th Annual International IATEFL Conference, Harrogate, April 2, 2014.

fact that the questionnaires did not specifically address my third research question (relating to transferability issues) meant that the study of this aspect could rely only on non-elicited information and inferential work. Again, this is another area for possible follow-up work. One final limitation to be highlighted has to do with the account of the TGS agenda (Chapter 2), which was considerably biased towards education in the Anglophone context, where ample literature is available. It may be worth carrying out follow-up research with a view to situating the identified Anglophone tendencies in the context of more international trends or, in line with my personal interests, in the Italian environment.

This study has highlighted possible avenues for innovation in translation pedagogy in university foreign-language curricula. Without distinction, the approaches discussed advocate an expansive understanding of translation in learning environments. Some of these have been explored and promoted for some time now—reaching a possible peak in the current reappraisal movement—and simply need to be disseminated with more vigor. Other approaches, notably those informed by the concept of skills transferability, have attracted less scholarly attention and still require substantial research efforts. Overall, the perspectives emerging from this study call for some kind of renewal, of greater or lesser proportions. Though daunting, there are reasons to believe that they point to an enterprise worth investing in.

UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA I VIRGILI

TRANSLATION IN UNIVERSITY FOREIGN-LANGUAGE CURRICULA: AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDES, WITH REFERENCE TO

Costanza Peverati

Dipòsit Legal: T 765-2015

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Questionnaire for experts

Translation and Language Learning. The Role of Translation in the Teaching of Languages in the European Union (DGT-2012-TLL)

A research project for the Directorate-General for Translation of the European Commission, carried out by the Intercultural Studies Group, the European Society for Translation Studies, and the University of Leicester.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT DECLARATION

In completing this questionnaire, I freely and voluntarily consent to be a participant in the research project Translation and Language Learning (http://www.est-translationstudies.org/research/2012_DGT/tll.html) conducted 2012-13. I understand I will not receive monetary payment for my participation.

I understand that the purpose of this research is to investigate the use of translation in the teaching of languages, that I am providing information on my personal knowledge and opinions, and that I am free to discontinue or withdraw my participation at any time.

I understand that some of my responses may be cited in the Final Report of the project, with my name as author, only once I have read and revised the sections of the report in which my responses appear. I will authorize a separate Consent Declaration for such uses of my responses, and no citation of my responses may be made until such Declaration is authorized.

I understand that all other responses to the questionnaire will be confidential, and that only Dr. Kirsten Malmkjær, Dr. Anthony Pym, Dr. Mar Gutiérrez and their paid research assistants will have access to these data. The data will be used over the next three years although they will be retained indefinitely as records. I further understand that information from all the respondents will be grouped together to provide general information about translation and language teaching.

I understand that I am free to ask questions concerning the research procedure. I understand that if I would like more information about this research, I can contact Dr. Anthony Pym at anthony.pym@urv.cat.

Country referred to in this report:

Your name:

Pertinent job title:

Institution where you work:

Language(s) you teach or have taught:

Years of experience in language teaching:

Today's date:

All questions refer to courses where the main aim is the acquisition of a second language.

Please name any laws that regulate language teaching in your country.

Please name any current government policies or guidelines that regulate language teaching in your country.

Please name any current policies or guidelines in educational institutions that regulate language teaching in your country.

What language-teaching methods are popular in your country now?

Have the popular language-teaching methods changed since you started teaching?

Are translation activities present in the teaching of a second language in primary education? (In textbooks, for example?)

Are translation activities present in the teaching of a second language in secondary education? (In textbooks, for example?)

Are translation activities present in the teaching of a second language in tertiary or higher education?

Does the presence of translation activities depend on the language being taught?

In your country, is there increasing willingness among teachers or policy-makers to introduce translation activities in the teaching of second languages? If so, at which level?

If attitudes to translation have changed in your country, to what would you attribute the change?

Do you personally favour the use of any kinds of translation activities in the language-learning class?

Are you aware of any empirical research on the positive or negative effect of translation activities?

Could you give references?

Any additional information would be much appreciated.

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for teachers (revised version April 2014)

Translation and Language Learning. The Role of Translation in the Teaching of Languages in the European Union (DGT-2012-TLL)

In completing this questionnaire, I freely and voluntarily consent to be a participant in the research project Translation and Language Learning (http://www.est-translationstudies.org/research/2012_DGT/tll.html) conducted 2012-13. I understand I will not receive monetary payment for my participation. I understand that the purpose of this research is to investigate the use of translation in the teaching of languages, that I am providing information on my personal opinions and teaching practices, and that I am free to discontinue my participation at any time. I understand that all my responses will be confidential, in the sense that my name will not appear in any public records or publications, and that only Dr. Kirsten Malmkjær, Dr. Anthony Pym, Dr. Mar Gutiérrez and their paid research assistants will have access to these data. The data will be used over the next three years although they will be retained indefinitely as records. I further understand that information from all the respondents will be grouped together to provide general information about translation and language teaching. I have been told that I am free to ask questions concerning the research procedure. I understand that if I would like more information about this research, I can contact Dr. Anthony Pym at anthony.pym@urv.cat.

1)

- Yes
- No

2) What country do you teach in? (If you teach in one of the schola europaea, please select that as a country.)

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Albania | <input type="checkbox"/> Germany | <input type="checkbox"/> Sweden |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Australia | <input type="checkbox"/> Italy | <input type="checkbox"/> Turkey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> China | <input type="checkbox"/> Lithuania | <input type="checkbox"/> United Kingdom |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Croatia | <input type="checkbox"/> Poland | <input type="checkbox"/> United States |
| <input type="checkbox"/> France | <input type="checkbox"/> Spain | <input type="checkbox"/> Schola Europaea |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finland | | |

3) What is your teaching context?

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Primary | <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary | <input type="checkbox"/> Tertiary |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|

4) Which languages do you teach?

(Box for free-text response)

5) For how many years have you been teaching?

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 7-10 | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 | <input type="checkbox"/> 11-20 | |

6) How are these language-teaching methods viewed in your institution at the level at which you teach? (If a method is unfamiliar to you, please do not indicate any preference with respect to it.)

Very negatively – 2 – 3 – 4 – Very positively

- Audiolingual method
- Audiovisual language teaching
- Bilingual method
- Communicative language teaching
- Direct method
- Grammar-translation method
- Humanistic language teaching
- Immersion
- Suggestopedia
- Task-based learning
- Total physical response
- Other

7) (If 'other' selected) Please name the additional teaching method or methods.
(Box for free-text response)

8) To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Strongly disagree – 2 – 3 – 4 – Strongly agree

- Translating is a fifth skill (in addition to reading, writing, listening and speaking)
- Translating brings the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking together
- Translating takes time away from more valuable learning activities
- Translating is for professionals only
- Translating does not allow the student to think in the new language

9) In addition to the above, do you think there is another relation between translation and language learning?

(Box for free-text response)

10) Do you use translation exercises in your language-teaching classes?

Never – Rarely – Frequently – Almost always – Always

11) If you have answered Never or Rarely, please say why:

- The curriculum forbids it
- I have never considered it seriously
- I think it is detrimental to language learning
- I do not feel qualified to use translation in my classes
- Other (please specify)

12) Other reason

(Box for free-text response)

13) If you have answered "The curriculum forbids it", would you use translation if you were permitted to do so?

Yes

No

Don't know

14) Please say how often you use the following activities:

Never – 2 – 3 – 4 – Always

-Translating into L2 of individual sentences

-Translating into L1 of individual sentences

-Translating into L2 of longer passages

-Translating into L1 of longer passages

-Translation analysis/criticism/discussion

-Watching subtitled films

-Watching dubbed films

-Working with machine-translated texts

-Other (specify below)

15) What other translation activities do you use?

(Box for free-text response)

16) Please say why you prefer some activities.

(Box for free-text response)

17) Many thanks for your participation! If you would like to receive the results of the survey, please indicate your e-mail below:

(Box for free-text response)

UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA I VIRGILI

TRANSLATION IN UNIVERSITY FOREIGN-LANGUAGE CURRICULA: AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDES, WITH REFERENCE TO

Costanza Peverati

Dipòsit Legal: T 765-2015