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ABSTRACT

The analysis of particular experiences in the light of academic thought is bound to help us understand the impact of educational approaches on real people living in real contexts, while shedding light at a macro-level on translator education at large. This article addresses the analysis of one particular case of project-based learning on AVT for Access, in the MA in Audiovisual Translation programme offered at Hamad bin Khalifa University (HBKU), to show how academically motivated Participatory Action Research projects may lead to the development of 'social transformative competence' in translation students. This competence is the ability to identify areas for action and to operate social change in the process of developing and providing translation and mediation services. Socially invested professionals will be people who proactively interact with society towards change, in the search for creative solutions for existing problems. In so doing, not only will they be positioning themselves as service providers, but they will also be promoting social justice and empowering the communities they engage with. Furthermore, they could be shaping environments for emerging mediation modes, outlining new professional profiles and creating new communities of practice.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the topic of translator training or education has gained the special interest of translation scholars and teachers given the need to educate translators for a constantly changing market. Presently, translator training is seen 'as a subcomponent of a wider conception of education' (EMT E. G 2013), and translator education is expected to achieve nothing less than the development of competencies that will turn students into 'well-rounded', 'well adjusted' and 'adaptable' professionals, as advocated by Tan (2008), in line with the principles of 'whole-person education' (Bligh 1990, 11).

In a similar guise, translation scholars and professionals have engaged to clarify their understanding of the nature of translation and the competencies required for the activity; the role of higher education and professional contexts, and that of theory and practice in the development of such competencies; as well as the instructional approaches taken in translator training or education. The debate on how to 'create' translators, it may be argued, dates to ancient times and has been ongoing since. However, it has intensified

and gained momentum as a result of the rapidly changing knowledge-based society we live in and the acknowledgement that preparing such professionals may be a complex endeavour, given the variables that come into play in the making of a proficient translator.

This discussion over teaching translation and translator training or education has become more visible as researchers, teachers and trainers have taken an interest in pedagogy. In so doing, they have analysed programmes, syllabi, and teaching approaches, and activities are addressed in the light of specific viewpoints, mainly drawn from theories and perspectives set forward by Translation Studies, and from that of other scientific disciplines, such as Linguistics, Psychology, Social Anthropology or Education Studies, among others. In all instances, there is a clear urge to prepare students for their future in a professional world which, although highly stratified, is in a constant state of transformation and thus poses distinct challenges in each new context.

Every educational setting has particularities that make it unique. These micro-cosmoses need to be analysed to gather the elements that contribute to effective learning experiences. As suggested by Kiraly (2005, 1110), the analysis of such experiences will help us understand the impact of educational structures and approaches on the educational, professional and personal development of all those involved. Should such contexts take learners and teachers/trainers beyond the classroom to engage with the community in co-created projects that are meaningful for all stakeholders, opportunities are created towards shaping 'new' professional and social realities, while contributing towards educating translators that are socially engaged and committed to change.

In this paper we will address the process and the outcomes of project-based learning in a course on audiovisual translation for access, in Qatar. The reflection allows one to conclude that by taking part in 'real' projects that entail collaboration with external stakeholders and an output that is subjected to public scrutiny students are exposed to learning opportunities that go beyond the acquisition of professional skills. Such experiences lead to all-rounded persons, who are aware of their transformative competence to shape their professional setting and the social tissue they engage with.

2. Socio-constructivist approaches to competencies development in translator education

In the late twentieth century, and particularly in the last two decades, the focus on translator training/education at university level has shifted in a number of ways – from text to process; from object to person; and from teaching to learning – all aiming at developing students' translation and translator skills. These are most often referred to as 'competencies' (Campbell 1991; Kiraly 1995, 2000; Risku 1998; Neubert 2000; Schäffner and Adab 2000; Kelly 2002, 2005, 2007; Hurtado Albir 2007, 2015 ; Beeby et al. 2009; Göpferich 2009; EMT Expert Group 2009 and 2013; Wu, Jun Zhang, and Wei 2019), 'an umbrella term to cover the needs of translation business' (Eser 2015, 4). The EMT E. G (2009) defines such competencies as a 'combination of aptitudes, knowledge, behaviour and knowhow necessary to carry out a given task under given conditions.' If any shift is telling of recent developments in this domain, it is the move from objectivism towards social constructivism. This approach, in which the learner and learning become

central, is seen by Kiraly (2005, 1099) as a means to cover 'the competence gap in translator education' in equipping students 'with the essential intellectual and interpersonal skills and capabilities they need upon graduation.'

In a similar manner, Tan (2008) posits that the aims of translation teaching at the tertiary level are 'to turn out students who are not only equipped with enhanced translation skills and techniques, but [who] also have all the makings of a cultured, *whole person, qualified to serve society both as a translation/translation specialist and as an innovative person*' (emphasis added). Tan's proposition has added a new layer to the profile of the translation graduate by going beyond that of a 'translation specialist' with specific skills to that of a 'whole person', even if such 'all roundedness' is mainly seen to revert to the profile of a professional who 'should have a broad translation-knowledge and skills base, be able to think critically and creatively about the process and product of translation, have command of the basic translation competence and techniques, and be equipped with general occupational skills in addition to job-specific techniques' (Tan 2008, 597). Echoing Risku's (1998, 2002) views on 'situatedness', Tan hints at a higher-level (sub-)competence when discussing the so-called 'cognitive competence', which is said to be 'the level of knowledge about the world and all factors involved in communicative situations where translation comes in and how those factors operate in these situations, inclusive of the translator's aptitudes such as creativity, emotional qualities and attention-span, etc.' (Tan 2008, 600–601). However, Tan fails to expand on what I would like to call '*social transformative competence*' or the ability to interact with society towards change.

The concept of 'social transformative competence', as applied here, differs from the notion of 'transformative competence' or 'transformative learning', advocated by Mezirow (1997). According to Mezirow (1997), adult learners undergo a process that 'involves transforming frames of reference through critical reflection of assumptions, validating contested beliefs through discourse, taking action on one's reflective insight, and critically assessing it.' It is equally not seen in the light of 'educational transformation' that Kiraly (2000, 23) describes as 'a personal, holistic, intrinsically motivating and socially effectuated construction process.' Both these positions relate to the transformations that take place at the learners' level. Social transformative competence even goes beyond the transformative learning processes that develop 'leadership attributes' or 'produce enlightened change agents' (Frenk et al. 2010, 6). In various ways, social transformative competence draws closer to Göpferich's (2009) understanding of 'social responsibility', and Muñoz Martin's (2014, 9) understanding of 'adaptive expertise', which is said to be 'the ability to develop new strategies to cope with novel situations.' In many ways, too, it aligns with Mertens (2021, 1) understanding of the transformative role of the researcher 'as a social change agent, learning from social activism, and employing specific strategies for culturally responsive inclusion, addressing power differences, and planning for sustainability.' But it also goes beyond Mertens (2021, 1) advocacy of the engagement with members of marginalised and vulnerable communities to 'value the knowledge they bring and addresses power inequities' to include *all* the agents involved in any action that promotes social change. In short, it is mainly about the transformative power that is generated through projects that are led as Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Kemmis and McTaggart 2005). As it is used here, 'social transformative competence' is the ability to change the

environment in which the learning and the action take place. Here, the learners are not necessarily the main recipients of the transformations that occur, but rather active agents in transforming themselves and the social, political and organisational environments in which they operate, in a critical living praxis, as described by Ledwith (2017).

The ability to intervene in the social tissue in which active learning happens – be it in the classroom, the workplace or in specific social contexts – makes the translator-to-be an agent of change. This social transformative competence will certainly draw from all the competencies and sub-competencies that have been identified by the scholars mentioned above; but will, above all, grow out of personal and social ethics and a commitment to improvement in situations where the translator becomes more than a linguistic and cultural mediator to identify him/herself as an integral member of the community(ies) in which the translatory action (Holz-Mänttäri 1984) takes place. By community(ies) we understand the social (linguistic and cultural) environment requiring translation services as well as the existing (or non-existing) communities of service providers.

It may be argued that translator training/education institutions have made great efforts towards making their translators fit into the professional communities in which they are expected to find a job. This is done by 'preparing' the students for the market needs, by making them use the standards set by the industry, and by providing them with work placements so that they might internalise and follow the norms in place and become part of established communities of practice (Wenger 1998). In fact, much effort is put into turning students into 'experts', detached practitioners that, in Pym's (1996, 5) critical perspective 'have no personal, emotional or immediately intuitive involvement in the communication situation.' Seldom do those same institutions take their students beyond their personal comfort zone and that of established academic and professional environments to think of new solutions for translation problems that are situated within uncharted or lesser-known challenging social contexts. This effort towards conformity can even make the educational system hostage to professional environments, limiting its own transformational force. Universities, in their commitment to research, are expected to challenge the establishment, by being innovative and pushing boundaries. However, as far as translator education goes, they appear to strive to prepare graduates for an immediate placement in a stratified market that will only absorb those that conform; and much of the research that is taking place is still based within traditional frameworks, in which text and process are central, and in which context is addressed mainly in view of its impact on translation proper. While much has been researched on the cognitive aspects of the translation process – through research with TAPs, eye tracking or MRI scanning, for instance – most research is still very text-based, and very little has been done to address any movement in the opposite direction: the study of the impact of translation in the context in which it occurs. Reception studies are very difficult to carry out given their dependence on reliable informants, and when done, they are still very bound to the reception of particular texts in specific contexts. Very seldom do studies address the impact of translation on society, a macro-level type of research that requires longitudinal multi-disciplinary approaches with a strong socio-anthropological base, which are difficult to carry out, given the systemic and fluid nature of transformation.

A question will be begging at this point: how might translator education institutions continue to prepare their students for the marketplace (translation and translator competencies), while leading them towards active participation in the framing of a 'new world' for themselves and for society at large (social transformative competence)?

The answer to this question has been partially given by socio-constructivism and by the work of those – Jean Delisle, Daniel Gile, Donald Kiraly, Dorothy Kelly, F. G. Königs and Paul Kussmaul, among others – fostering 'a more process-oriented, learner-centered approach to translation training' (Baer and Koby 2003, ix). It is also provided by our attempts to understand learning and cognitive development as the construction of knowledge through shared experiences in specific environments, a social endeavour that requires scaffolding, exposure to risk and emotional involvement in the construction of 'dynamic, viable understandings of the world on the basis of experience, the inter-pretation of our sense perceptions, and the resolution of conflicts with our existing beliefs' (Kiraly 2003, 9).

Building upon the philosophical thought of theorists such as Dewey, Freire and von Glaserfeld, paladins respectively of critical pedagogy, experiental education and con-structivism, on the one hand; and of that of the psychology of learning, as proposed by Vygotsky, Piaget and Bruner, on the other; social constructivism posits that groups actively construct knowledge together, by collaborating in social action in specific environments. It is on this basis that advocates of socio-constructivist approaches to translator education propose 'situated learning' (Risku 2002; González-Davies and Enríquez-Raído 2016) and 'project-based learning' (Kiraly 2003, 2005, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016). Yet, while advocating student-centred educational environments, where students are exposed to authentic learning experiences, through real projects that are to be delivered to real 'clients', the projects described by Kiraly (2005) and by Krüger and Piqueras (2015), for instance, take the real world into the classroom, rather than making the real world a transformative learning space in itself. In fact, authentic experiential learning in translator education is extensively debated in Kiraly (2016) to be, and despite some dissonant views, summarised in Kiraly's Preface (2016, 9) as 'an effective platform for learning', worth being considered as a 'pedagogical option.' However, the real world that is taken into the classroom is very much in line with the dominant industry, where students are led to produce outputs that are consistent with mainstream practices. These projects will certainly contribute towards better prepared translators, for these will have been given the time and space to carry out authentic tasks in educational environments that foster reflexive practice. This will not, however, have contributed much towards developing social engagement or experimentation and it will still have given very little licence for trial and error, for all will be conducted within prescribed norms. Furthermore, the output of such practice will have very little or no influence on society, because the action will still be carried out within an existing professional/educational framework with a remit to 'normalize' practices.

In line with socio-constructivism, and in an effort to take the classroom into the real world while making the real world a 'classroom', attempts at using Action Research (AR) in translator education have revealed much potential in the development of 'whole-person education', as described by Tan (2008). The personal and professional trajectories

(Eraut 2000, 2009) of the translation students involved in the projects described in Cravo and Neves (2007), Neves (2007a, 2007b, 2016a), show that they have become 'all-rounded' both as translators and as citizens.

This AR-based educational approach has been consistently used for over ten years in teaching Audiovisual Translation (AVT), and more specifically, Media Accessibility (MA), at undergraduate and graduate level. At first, this happened in European contexts, where translation education is well established and both the field of AVT and the MA types, such as Subtitling for Deaf and Hard of Hearing audiences (SDH) and Audio Description (AD) are reasonably known and acknowledged. The application of a similar approach in a completely new educational, social and cultural environment – that of Qatar – brings to the fore the multiple challenges and opportunities of this teaching/learning approach, providing evidence of the transformative power it entails. In a context where disability has for long been addressed as a marginal issue, the faculty and students of the Master programme in Audiovisual Translation took it as their personal and collective commitment to actively contribute towards changing the existing social order. Simultaneously, they worked within the principles of social justice to empower social fringes, while engaging in the very process of setting up still unavailable services in environments where these are conceptually novel to the communities that are bound to require/use them.

3. The context

The MA in Audiovisual Translation programme offered at the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS), Hamad bin Khalifa University (HBKU), is the first MA of its kind in the Gulf region. One of its strongest components is training in Audiovisual Translation (AVT) for Access, provided in three courses, across two semesters.

By deciding to offer an MA in AVT alongside another MA in Translation Studies, CHSS-HBKU took on the social commitment to prepare professionals for a market that is still shaping itself in the region. As it is, the AVT industry is almost non-existent in Qatar, while thriving in countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, even if most of the practitioners will have had very little formal training in subtitling or dubbing, the main domains in the field. It is also part of HBKU's remit to educate potential researchers and teachers in translation, contributing towards Qatar's 2030 National Vision (QNV), which envisages providing citizens 'with excellent training and opportunities to develop to their full potential, preparing them for success in a changing world with increasingly complex technical requirements' while encouraging 'analytical and critical thinking, as well as creativity and innovation' (General Secretariat for Development and Planning 2008, 13). CHSS (2018, 83) echoes the QNV in its own Vision by stating: 'We aspire to nurture a diverse body of academically grounded and socially responsible global citizens whose versatility will enable them to navigate the complexities of today's world and become the leaders of tomorrow.'

It is in this context that, on a yearly basis, PAR projects are proposed to students and the community in an effort to make Qatar an open learning space, while developing the social transformative competency that will allow translation students to be agents of change in a conservative yet young and thriving country. The circumstances in which

project-based learning happens at CHSS-HBKU is revealing of the value of founding an educational approach in Action Research that, according to Reason and Bradbury (2001) is

> a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.

PAR projects, which entail 'actionable knowledge that in turn informs action and change with a measurable impact' (Foth and Brynskov 2016, 573), have been part of Audiovisual Translation courses since the inception of the MAAT programme, in 2014. These courses offer ample space for socially motivated project-based learning, given their practical nature and the ease with which they can incorporate socially oriented projects.

Every year, new projects are proposed to students as a component of pre-established syllabi, in which explicit aims, learning outcomes, content, a timeline, and assessment criteria are provided, even if it is known that every project may evolve in ways that may not have been foreseen. Anchored in the educational context of a conventional research-oriented university, it is expected that in each course students acquire the knowledge and skills that will contribute towards the educational outcomes established for the pro-gramme. During the first year, students are introduced to the basic components of media accessibility, as they learn how to create subtitles for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers and audio description for blind audiences in the Subtitling and Voicing Courses. Then, in the second year, they take this further in 'Audiovisual Translation for Access' (AT4A), a course that is totally dedicated to access, at an advanced level. As they end their studies, students are expected to have acquired expertise in Audio Description (AD) and Subtitling for Deaf andf Hard of Hearing Audiences (SDH) for film; audio descriptive guides and tactile materials for access to cultural venues and tourist sites; multiformat books; and the development of creative multisensory experiences for the performing and visual arts.

Further to the acquisition of knowledge inherent to the technical course content mentioned above, implicit learning opportunities (Reber 1993; Eraut 2000) are drawn into every project by having groups of students leading the organisational process of setting up, producing, delivering and evaluating their final outcomes made available to the community in public events. This happened, for the first time, in the project that led to an inclusive film session with a local film, 'Hero and the Message', at the Ajyal Youth Film Festival, one of the most important cultural events in the country, promoted by the Doha Film Institute (DFI). In the same year of 2015, another PAR project, 'Art Translates' led to a multisensory visit to the Arab Museum of Modern Art (Mathaf), where 10 paintings were mediated by enriched descriptive guides (Neves 2016b) both for blind and sighted visitors. These two projects – the first in the context of media accessibility and the second in that of cultural heritage – set the ground for many others in the years that followed, opening new avenues for community engagement in colla-borative projects with local museums, schools, and public libraries. Among them we list the cultural heritage projects: 'Ektashif' (Mathaf, 2016), 'Giacometti and me' (Qatar

Museums, 2017), and 'Art 4 U' (Qatar Foundation Art trail, 2018); the multisensory story-telling project, (Qatar Reads, 2020); and, more recently, the delivery of live audio description in football games, namely during the FIFA Arab Cup (Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, 2021). In such projects students have been learning, doing, testing, failing, and achieving in public; working in and outside class; sometimes with guidance, other times autonomously; individually and in groups; with their peers, alumni, and professionals of different fields; keeping to strict timelines while being sole administrators of their time and personal learning processes. Co-responsibility was clearly understood by all, and a motivational motto – 'Here to change the world' – added ethical drive to what would otherwise be seen as simply another project.

While providing opportunities for both explicit and implicit learning, there is a clear educational aim to further develop the students' life skills. These are, in Kwauk and Braga's (2017, 5) words, 'the mix of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and cognitive skills (what one has), coupled with knowledge (what one knows) and attitudes (what one believes and values)'; in other words, the competencies that determine 'what one can do'. In fact, planning, designing, and carrying out every project is ongoing and dialogic, and a very important component of the learning process itself.

Given the educational nature of the various projects, they are necessarily carried out within 15-week semesters. Even if each course is expected to take place during 3-hour sessions that are set on an institutional timetable, project-based learning requires a greater flexibility to allow for the social engagement that does not necessarily fit in with organisational impositions. In project-based learning, in which multiple partners are involved, the conventional classroom soon gives way to less conventional educational settings. Whereas the classroom is always seen as a 'safe' environment and a useful meeting room, in the PAR projects that happen at CHSS-HBKU, it is in the AVT labs, production studios and the partners' venues – as in the case of a museum or the deaf and the blind communities' social clubs – that the most valuable learning takes place.

Students are always asked to determine their own working rhythm, to establish where and when to meet and to carry out the tasks that are assigned to them. They are also encouraged to establish personal and collective goals at each stage and to account for their achievements in an ongoing research-based reflective attitude (Dewey 1933; Kelly 2008; Eraut 2009) that provides them with clear evidence of their progress and equally prepares them to become reflective practitioners.

In all instances, a dynamic and open exchange atmosphere is fostered from the start. Just as the partners welcome students to their venues, so are they welcomed into the classroom. A sense of belonging and shared responsibility grows early in the process where all those involved exchange roles, making it difficult at times to define who is leading and who is being led. All those involved draw on their personal knowledge and experience to contribute towards the whole, based on personal abilities and interests, while others bring in their families and friends, who soon become active partners in the process. This articulated co-creation leads to a growing sense of trust and belonging (Follett and Rogers 2015, 12), a dynamic that grows among all those involved. This snowball effect is consistent with the collective energy that derives from the understanding of shared 'values of equality, respect, dignity, trust, mutuality, and reciprocity in a process of critical consciousness' (Ledwith 2017, 50), the driving force behind the social commitment and a sense of active citizenship.

Furthermore, it fosters the action and reflection praxis suggested by Freire (1970, 149), reinforcing the notion that 'reflection without action is sheer verbalism or armchair revolution and action without reflection is pure activism or action for action's sake.' Engaging the community in research and providing (young) academics/professionals with opportunities to research while 'doing' stimulates continual and spiralling AR cycles which generate further knowledge and leads to greater action.

4. Development of 'social transformative competencies'

A deeper analysis of the long-term impact of projects, in which students are seen as 'agents of change', would require a clear framework, such as that of the Theory of Change (Weiss 1995) to capture, in a dialogic manner, the ultimate goals, intermediate outcomes, activities, causal links and assumptions that underpin each causal link. Such a framework would provide us with a more holistic overview of the various factors that contribute to multi-level change; however, given the focus of this reflection, that is qualitative and phenomenological in nature, we will only try to identify the indicators that suggest that social transformative competencies have been developed in the students who engaged in several of the above-mentioned PAR projects. This will be done by analysing students' performance and feedback from various vantage points. Various elements were addressed in the study described below, namely students' engagement and performance during the project (observation); students' self- and activity evaluation immediately after the project (logs and portfolio reflections); students' perception of the value of the projects after graduation (surveys); and identification of students' social engagement in related issues, 3 to 5 years after the projects (interviews). In so doing, we hope to have gained insights into the impact of the given PAR projects on (1) students' acquisition of (AT4A) translation skills while shaping the market; (2) students' development of soft skills (translator competencies); and (3) their perception of social engagement and active citizenship. Furthermore, it will allow us to better understand the implications of working towards the development of social transformative competencies in translator education.

4.1. Acquisition of translation competencies while shaping a market

One may argue, as does Tan (2008), that 'it seems to be a universal phenomenon for translation teaching to be skills-oriented'. One of the main goals of translator training will ultimately be to provide students with linguistic and technical skills to allow them to perform proficiently when faced with a translation task. The development of such skills will be the basic component of any vocational programme and will be integral to the translation competencies that translation students are to acquire as part of their translator education. When evaluating the students' outputs in the various projects, these were aligned with the standards proposed for such translation/mediation practices in the industry, in the instances where conventional approaches were taken. In so doing, we can affirm that they abide by the linguistic, stylistic, and technical norms in use at international level. This statement may, however, be questioned, given that these experiences were the first of their kind in the Arab context and such norms, now perfectly established in countries where these services have been available for some time, are yet in the making in this specific context.

The lack of local references in terms of professional standards for the provision of SDH or AD in Arabic, for instance, allowed the students to engage as 'researcher-practitioners' forging their own guidelines and setting up conventions that will influence the local industry in the future. In so doing, these students were creating the 'norms' to be followed by the industry, with the advantage of making decisions based on enquiry. Within an AR framework, the problem to be solved was the non-existence of norms for AVT for access in the Arab World. These projects responded by ing research setting the cornerstones on which such guidelines are built. While learning 'how to do it', students drew up professional norms (Chesterman 1993), built 'a learning community' (Bielaczyc and Collins 1999), and started what will most certainly become a 'community of practice' (Wenger 1998). In the cases where creative licence was given, as happened with the 'Ektashif' and the 'Qatar Reads' projects, for instance, rather than following existing norms, totally new and rather creative translation/mediation approaches were developed and tested, leading to the expansion of knowledge and the proposal of innovative services, both in the Arabic context, and to some extent, at a global level.

These social achievements – a clear case of 'project-based', 'co-emergence' and 'situated' learning, as described by Kiraly (2012, 2013, 2015, 2016) – are undeniable, but what might be asked, in the light of conventional positivist education, is how well individual students perform as subtitlers or audio describers or otherwise accessibility mediators, and how skilful they are as audiovisual translators, given that this is the role they are training for in their MA programme. To this we add, how might such experiences impact on the role they will play in their future professional settings. In fact, given that the products (translations, transadaptations, transcreations, or creations) were produced collaboratively, different students will have achieved different levels of technical competence and, as happens in all group work, those who worked the most will have learned the most. Students were not submitted to formal examination where their knowledge and practical performance (PACTE 2003, 83) or 'translation competence and sub-competencies' (Göpferich 2009), could be gauged; however, the confidence with which they undertook observable translation activities (PACTE 2003) and the way they debated over 'how it is done' or 'how to do' showed they all gained awareness of their translation and translator competencies, and that they have the tools to develop themselves further as AVT professionals working as access providers in both conventional and non-conventional settings. In fact, 3 to 5 years after the projects took place, three students have come together to set up the first company in the region to provide AVT for access services at a professional level. Their drive and commitment to shaping the industry has led them, as female entrepreneurs, to challenge the social order in the region, while creating job opportunities for their peers. At present, more than 50% of the participants in the above-mentioned projects are actively involved as teachers, translators or social activists, in the provision of accessibility services and training in Qatar. And even if not explicitly involved in audiovisual translation or accessibility-related jobs, all the alumni who were interviewed regarding the impact of project-based learning during their studies refer to the fact that such experiences have had a positive impact on their technical/specialised abilities and have provided them with a better understanding of the importance of taking end-user requirements and societal needs into account in their assignments, and of their role as professionals with social responsibilities.

4.2. Acquisition of soft-skills (translator competencies)

No student will ever become a full-fledged translator simply by acquiring translation competencies. This is now recognised and explained in the various competency models available (cf. Tan 2008; Göpferich 2009; Beeby et al. 2009; EMT E. G 2013). By engaging in all the phases of setting up a real service, the students involved in the above-mentioned projects were given an opportunity to develop important soft skills that would frame them both as professionals and researchers and as individuals. Much of the informal learning was imparted by the various members of the group. This co-regulation allowed for the development of the 'learning community' and 'project communities' that acted as a positive form of peer pressure and became the driving force of personal development. By planning, executing, disseminating and evaluating their project, students were exposed to diverse individual, collective and social experiences that boosted the development of transversal competencies, such as leadership, planning, teamwork and collaboration, adaptability, problem solving, conflict resolution, time management and prioritising, and critical observation, among others. These had been conveniently listed as course outcomes in the syllabus, alongside those pertaining to the translation competencies the course aimed to develop, in a clear understanding of their value in translator education.

The acquisition of these skills has also been amply recognised in the answers alumni provided to the online survey in October 2016, and reiterated in a second survey in March 2021.

The answers to 'How much did you learn through the projects about the following issues?' (Figure 1) reveal that soft skills such as planning and organisation, and time, group and stress management, factor as highly as AVT techniques, and come across as far more relevant than language use and general translation techniques.

4.3. Social engagement and active citizenship

Yet another element that deserves to be addressed is the power of social engagement in the activation of societal responsibility and active citizenship. The way in which students took it as their responsibility to work *with* persons with disability rather than for persons with disability in their projects, afforded them learning opportunities beyond any educational setting. 'Co-emergence' and 'empowerment' (Kiraly 2000, 2013, 2015, 2016), two key concepts to social constructivist learning contexts, may, indeed, have been the most important outcomes of these projects and the ones that best account for the confirmation that social transformative competence was acquired. In their logs and self-reflections, students have verbalised their self, social and professional perception of their role in shaping themselves and society in a number of ways (Figure 2).

In their personal reflections, students revealed awareness of the personal and social gains of their participation in PAR projects. They were appreciative of the opportunity and prioritised their learning over grades, a major achievement in a very competitive environment. These comments are also revealing of important paradigm shifts in translator education, in which students gain ownership of their learning processes and where the very sense of achievement is one that is personal and social with repercussions that are difficult to be measured within the conventional academic environment. It is also
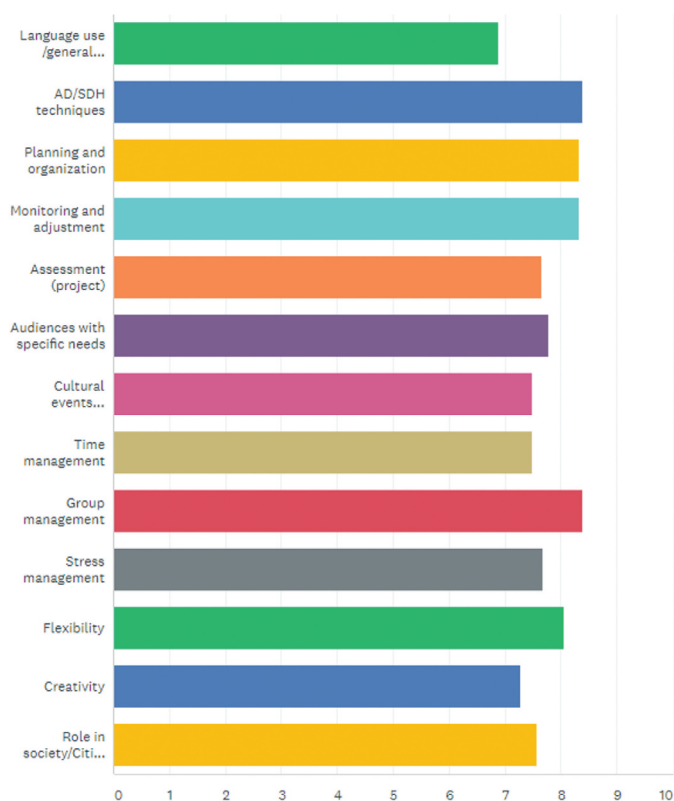
Figure 1. Skills and competencies.

clear that emotional involvement led to personal growth, a fact that is often forgotten in traditional translator education environments. People learn better when they are intellectually and emotionally engaged, because, as Sylwester (1994) explains at length, emotion drives attention, which in turn drives learning memory. In their personal reflections, all students mention how committed they were to their projects, how they learned without noticing they were learning, and how hard work was made light in the drive to make an impact in society.

When considering student responses to 'How important was your participation in these projects for the development of certain competencies?' (Figure 3), it is interesting to note that 'social awareness' is the 'skill/competency' with the highest score, followed by 'personal competencies' and 'social responsibility'.

An overview of these students' social engagement at the present date is revealing of the students' active stance in the promotion of social justice in their activism promoting access for all. Fifteen of the 20 students who took part in the 2016 survey are still actively engaged in community projects, either by working with their younger peers attending the programme across the years, or in their own professional and personal settings. They are found to be working towards raising awareness among policy makers and service

Before the semester started, I thought that the Audiovisual Translation for Access course we would have similar assignments like previous courses, but at the start of the semester that wasn't the case. **The students were given an option of doing something that will help Qatar in becoming more accessible.** I am glad that we chose making something truly accessible to the best of our capabilities. (*GET*)

Working on such projects needs patience, time and passion. The patience to fight the obstacles, the time to almost perfect it and the passion to give you the strength. At the end I started to go weak, but I kept remembering a blind girl's sentence: 'this is my first time to see a film'. (*NET*)

From the two projects, **I developed a good idea of the fundamental requirements for completing the planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating phases**. (...) I have learnt that good organization and planning guarantee success. (*TO*)

One of the things I liked most in the project is **working in groups, as it gave us the opportunity to think, analyse, discuss and collaborate**. (*TA*)

One of my best moments was when I saw happy smiles on blind and deaf people's faces right after the experiment. **This joyful moment was priceless and brought tears to my eyes.** (...) In fact, the two projects went beyond my expectations, and **I am proud** to participate in creating the first transadapted audiovisual experience in the Arab World. (*HT*)

One of the things I also liked most was the involvement of our families and friends. I tested out my descriptions of my paintings on them. I discussed with them the importance of such a project to the blind. **They became appreciative of what I am doing**. (...) I was excited seeing them on the Mathaf day struggling walking and trying to understand the painting while they were blindfolded. This is their first encounter with a different world. At this stage they appreciate, then **in the future they will act and do things for the disabled**. (*NA*)

This was the perfect way to get students to learn hands on, drawing their own conclusions and reaching a deeper degree of awareness they would have never been able to learn from textbooks. (*MS*)

Hearing the feedback directly from the audience is a strong motive to continue and improve such works. **It makes me feel jubilant because I can see and hear the effect of my work. This strengthened my belief in the role of the translator and researcher in AVT.** (*SD*)

Figure 2. Excerpts from student logs and portfolio reflections.

How important was your participation in these projects for the development of certain skills/competencies?
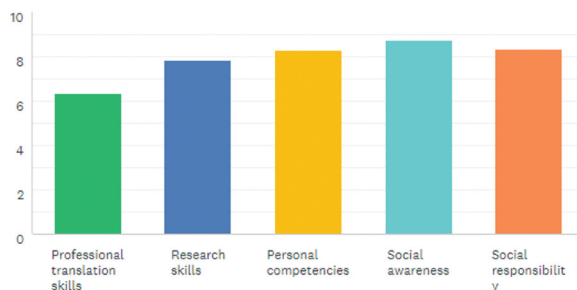
Answered: 20   Skipped: 0

Figure 3. Development of competencies.

providers, proposing person-centred vocabulary to address disability and new terminology for the new services, researching into AVT for access-related topics, and working together and with new partners, promoting training sessions and providing accessibility services at museums and cultural venues, schools, and public and private entities.

4.4. Teaching/learning awareness

No AR research project is complete without self-enquiry. In this case, the teacher-researcher too was given an opportunity to address personal and institutional educational approaches. Letts (2013) summarises the importance of the 'practitioner as researcher' by stating that 'professional contexts are the sites of study; there are blurred boundaries between inquiry and practice; community and collaboration are important constructs; and they act to make new knowledge public and have this new knowledge lead to improved practice.'

AVT lends itself to educational innovation and experimentation, given the nature and diversity of potential teaching/learning materials, the technical and technological developments, and the contexts in which it is used. Using project work or 'real assignments' to teach/learn AVT is frequent and has been amply documented (see Kiraly 2005; Neves 2007a, 2007b, 2008; Meseguer and Ramos 2015, for example). Even if I may be a firm believer in social constructivism, I also agree with González-Davies (2004) in that translator education requires 'multi-facetted approaches' combining project work with more conventional positivist or transmissionist approaches. Students need to see their teachers as sources of information and knowledge and as role models. They need the planner, the facilitator and the mentor (Kelly 2005), but they also look up to their teachers for instruction and structured knowledge (Nord 1991; Kussmaul 1995).

In the field of translator education, there is a clear need to train the trainers/educators. The EMT E.G (2013) provides a competence list of requisites to be considered in the profile of the translator trainer. The various competencies have been carefully described while being listed under five main domains: field competence, instructional competence, organisational competence, interpersonal competence, and assessment competence, all of

which are duly developed in project-based projects such as these. But as Massey, Kiraly, and Ehrensberger-Dow (2019, 212) put it, referring back to the work by Haro-Soler (2017), 'the interwoven processes of learning, teaching and doing research might also serve as a strategy for (self-) educating the educators themselves' and 'developing translation and translator competence goes far beyond the routine cognitive activity that the term "training" might imply to include extensive and sustained reflection and a capability to tackle new and unexpected tasks and problems.' A reflexive teacher will easily understand how important it is to shape the teaching activity to the group's learning needs as a shared learning process. By swapping roles with the student and coming back whenever necessary to impart conceptual knowledge and share practical experiences, or becoming a simple partner in the PAR process, the teacher will also be empowered, while gaining the students' and the community's appreciation and respect. In these PAR projects, as in many others, what became clear is that the role of the teacher is to 'set the tone', to take on the role of the learner, to accept the fact that hand-in-hand with the scholar/specialist, comes a person with feelings, beliefs, strengths and weaknesses, and the best of its his/her teaching will be achieved through dedication, empathy and the ability to lead by example.

5. Concluding remarks

This attempt to describe a learning environment that fosters the development of all-rounded future professionals of translation – translators, researchers, and teachers – may fall short of its intentions, given the need to further conceptualise the full meaning of what here is proposed as 'social transformative competency', that ability to shape society and the professional environment, while shaping oneself.

The acknowledgement that such a competency can be learned and developed will have been only a tentative step. Further reflection, drawing upon large-scale longitudinal studies, may be needed if we are to arrive at a clearer understanding of how collaborative socially oriented educational projects may impact the world of professional translation/translators. Greater knowledge is also needed about how the students evolve into professionals and how aware they remain of their roles as mediators and service providers with a responsibility towards society. This can be achieved by following alumni across the years to gauge how they may be impacting on their social environments, perhaps by offering new services, creating new markets, establishing the norms for the industry and developing communities of practice, particularly where that very market is still in the making.

Furthermore, in the fast-paced globalised and dehumanised world we live in, there is a need to nurture personal and professional ethics and a sense of social responsibility and active citizenship. The projects described above are clear examples of 'authentic experiential project-based learning,' that in Massey and Brändli's (2016, 181) words 'provide an ideal pedagogical context in which to sow the seeds of expertise emergence amongst pre-professional students.' But they are also examples of how such 'seeds' may be of a non-tangible quality and of deep and slow growth. This will be the case with the qualities that grow out of personal commitment to social causes, all of which are clearly present in the new generation of audiovisual translators emerging from the educational context where learning is grounded in the needs of the contextual social fabric.

This reflection will also be a small contribution towards understanding translation teaching/learning. The projects' outcomes revealed, again lending from Massey and Brändli's work (2016, 181), 'the complex relationship that exists between pre-professionalism and, for instance, the professional expertise of translation teachers and other actors.' This allows us to underline the importance such exercises may have in the design of translator training curricula. In fact, should various teachers come together to share experiences and collaborate with each other in project-based learning, they too will acquire transformative competencies that will change the way mainstream translator education is structured. By sharing projects and taking down the fictitious fences around courses and course contents, and by making learning a continuum between personal and academic life, authentic learning experiences will emerge, where knowledge will be shared and built collaboratively on the strengths of all those involved. These will be the 'highly authentic and naturally complex translation situations' that Kiraly (2005, 1110) says 'would allow us to observe the interplay of authenticity, emerging autonomy and developing competence both within groups and individuals,' to conclude that '[i]n fact, it is plausible that investigating the genesis of translator competence can lead us to a deeper understanding of the nature of that very competence', a challenge that is left for further inquiry.

Disclosure statement

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