# Creative skills development: training translators to write in the era of AI

#### **Abstract**

Developers of generative artificial intelligence systems promote the idea of personal assistants for various tasks, including translation and authoring creative content. As a consequence of these developments, the topic of "human" creativity has moved centre stage. Acknowledging similarities between translation and creative writing, this article offers a critical discussion of intersecting areas and suggests a framework for creative skills couched in the tradition of social sciences research. As a practical application with pedagogical impact, the paper presents a new module on writing specifically designed for translators. As is argued, the conceptual design, content, mode of delivery and evaluation of potential pedagogical benefits may be replicable in other pedagogical settings at undergraduate or postgraduate level. The role of technology is also problematised, indicating how writing may be augmented by using tools. Ideally, this is to be done in a context where creativity upskilling can equip students with the ability to (de)select context-appropriate solutions, that is, to use convergent and divergent thinking, ultimately preparing them to play a fundamental role in a rapidly evolving digital world.

### **Keywords**

creativity, AI, translation training, creative writing, creative skills

#### 1. Introduction

In the last fifteen years, the commercialization of machine translation (MT) and its addition to the localisation industry workflow have created the need to include modules or subjects with a focus on MT technology in translator training. These modules have typically followed different MT paradigms, from ruled-based, to statistical, to neural, with post-editing practice featuring prominently (Doherty & Moorkens, 2013; Kenny & Doherty, 2014; Guerberof Arenas & Moorkens, 2019).

Initially, developments in neural MT (NMT) technology, improved output quality, claims of human parity (Hassan et al., 2018), and research that challenges such claims (Toral et al., 2018), led translator trainers to ponder about skills required by future generations of translators. More recently, the introduction of Generative Large Language Models (LLM), such as ChatGPT, Bing Chat or Bard, in the form of conversational agents available in the public domain for the general public, has reinforced the idea that the translation profession, among many others, will be highly impacted by technology (Eloundou et al., 2023). OpenAI launched ChatGPT in November 2022, that is, only six months from the time of writing this chapter, and there are already studies showing that LLMs perform better than existing NMT engines (Hendy et al., 2023; Peng et al., 2023), at least in certain language combinations and subject to strategic prompting.

Regardless of assurances by translation practitioners and academics that machines are not going to replace translators any time soon, there is a perception in society (and in the classroom) that a certain "rise of the machines" is inevitable. This is coupled with an affective response of fear, as training might allegedly become superfluous once arbiters of full automation oust translators from

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the workflow. Most importantly, recent technological developments highlight the need to rethink curricula, focusing on two main objectives: a) develop technical skills that will help students understand and work in a prominently digital world; and b) develop creative skills that will help students differentiate themselves from automatically generated text and allow them to analyse and critically assess such output against human-generated text. In terms of general professional prospects, the consensus is that, as machines perform effectively and with minimal human intervention in translation of standard and simple texts (mainly from restricted technical domains, or with a lower creative potential), translators themselves can turn their attention to more unusual, complex texts (King, 2019). This is precisely the scenario where creative translators will show their superiority over machine systems. Recent research on literary translation offers a glimpse of this potential, as translators who operate unaided by said systems repeatedly produce more creative output than when they resort to NMT and post-editing (Guerberof-Arenas & Toral, 2022).

The development of technology and the subsequent improvement in the quality of the output, combined with its almost seamless availability to users and translators, have placed creativity as a unique advantage for translators; thus, a relevant question to ask at this juncture is how creativity can be taught in the classroom. For those embarking on a translation degree or those who train translators, it is becoming increasingly clear that different approaches may be needed. In this chapter, we describe the conceptual planning and delivery of a module that teaches creativity to translators. This is achieved through exercises that focus on writing fiction (and nonfiction) texts and ultimately aiming at developing divergent and convergent thinking, that is, creativity. Exercises that entail using artificial intelligence (AI) tools are also proposed, so that students can reflect on how technology may help or constrain their creativity. Thus, the chapter aims at stimulating pedagogical discussion and innovation, taking creativity and technology as focal points.

### 2. Definitions

Human beings have always been creative; the Altamira Caves in the Iberian Peninsula, for example, stand as an irrefutable witness of the human ancient desire to explain and communicate the world through novel forms. The scientific study of creativity is much more recent, however, and it can be dated back to the inaugural speech of J.P. Guilford as president of the American Association of Psychology (Guilford, 1950). In his speech, Guilford outlined the need to distinguish between intelligence and creativity, and to dedicate more resources to study the latter in depth. Since then the field of psychology has opened different avenues of research and Translation Studies has followed in these footsteps, in trying to describe the characteristics of the translation process and how translators are or are not creative during this process. It is therefore important to provide a definition of creativity according to experts in that field and then combine this with definitions in Translation Studies.

Researchers in psychology agree that "creativity requires both originality and effectiveness" (Runco & Jaeger, 2012, p. 93). And this means that for something to be considered creative, it needs to be new, or a new combination of old factors, but also useful for its intended purpose. Further, "[c]reativity is a generation of a product that is judged to be novel and also appropriate, useful, or valuable by a suitably knowledgeable social group" (Sawyer, 2012, p. 8). Sawyer's view is that creativity is not only new and useful, but that it is also judged by a group of people that have knowledge in that specific domain. This group can also be diverse: from experts in a subject matter to the general public. Such a state of affairs implies a certain degree of relativity when creativity is assessed. What was once seen by some as uncreative might be considered to be creative or acceptable by another group of experts or non-experts. More recently, the dynamic nature of creativity has been recognized (Corazza, 2016), with the addition of the qualifier *potential* to "originality and effectiveness". This modification arguably addresses the fact that creativity is not a static concept. Instead, it is influenced

by time, and therefore engaging in a creative process might not immediately yield "evidence of success, but [may be seen as] trying to generate and maximise a potential for future creative achievement" (Corazza, 2016, p. 260).

In Translation Studies, a creative translation is "a translation that often involves changes (as a result of shifts) when compared to the source text, thereby bringing something that is new and also appropriate to the task that was set, i.e. to the translation assignment (to purpose)" (Bayer-Hohenwarter & Kussmaul, 2020, p. 212). Such wording captures the essence of the definition in psychology; a translation is *original* by means of "shifts" and also *effective* by addressing what should be appropriate, according to the original translation brief and typical target-culture (TC) rules. According to Rojo, "creative solutions have to be novel and depart from conventional translation behaviour, but should also render meaning accurately and give solutions appropriate to a certain textual, situational, and cultural context" (Rojo, 2017, p. 353). Rojo is also in line with the dynamic concept of creativity as she includes "situational and cultural context", which encompasses a target audience as well as the time or context this translation is embedded in.

To address the creative process and its reception by social groups, Guerberof-Arenas and Toral give their own definition: "creative translation is the process of identifying and understanding a problem in the source text, generating several new and elegant solutions that depart from the source text and choosing the one that best fits the target text and culture to provide the reader the same experience as that of the source reader" (Guerberof-Arenas & Toral, 2022, p. 207). Seen against the context of machine translation (MT), this definition casts in sharp relief on one of the main weaknesses of MT, namely, the fact that it does not identify the specific problems in the ST that will generate a veritable creative process in translation, nor does it always provide alternatives that depart from the mere wordfor-word equivalence between ST and TT. The definition also highlights user experience, that is, the social dimension in creativity. In other words, MT systems have a tendency to offer mechanical solutions, or *reproductions*, whereas creative translators use new and elegant solutions to convey the same meaning in the target culture.

In summary, a creative translation entails the ability of producing several new options that have never been explored before and to choose one that best fits the TT. This new option should be free of errors (as it has to be effective, as described earlier in the definition) and it should be one that target audience accept and presumably enjoy. Far from being the result of pure inspiration, the ability of trainee translators to generate creative translations can be developed, as in the translator training activities we recommend below. We do not focus here on the intrinsic or innate aptitude levels the students might have already, but on the development of the creative aptitudes that we all have. For more information on the influence of personality traits in the translation process, see Hubscher-Davidson (2006).

## 3. Mapping out translation competence

Incalculable amount of ink and digital information have been used in discussing maps in translation studies. Maps indicate change: from the path-finding maps of the 1970s-80s (Holmes, 1988) suggesting the applied-theoretical branch distinction, to the ever-expanding tree diagram logic of conceptual maps in the noughties (van Doorslaer, 2007), which suggest nuance in linguistic transfer, field of activity and expanding borders in theoretical approach. The change is instigated by complex roles in the language services industry and the protean form of translation practice, including audiovisual translation, interpreting (van Doorslaer, 2007), project management (Dunne & Dunne, 2011) and adaptation-oriented activities such as transcreation (Echeverri, 2017).

With the evolution of Translation Studies (TS), distinctions between theory and practice eroded further and didactics came to the fore: curriculum development, teaching approaches, exercise

deployment and competence building (van Doorslaer, 2007, p. 229). Indeed, pedagogical approaches in TS have explored the idea of a translation-specific competence. The now widely quoted European Masters in Translation (EMT) competence framework (updated 21.10.2022) has distilled profession-facing, practice-oriented abilities in deploying technological/cultural capital and translation methodologies, all of which are needed in order to boost employability of postgraduate students. The framework is wide-ranging, covering sensitivity to linguistic norms (*language and culture*), mastery of all stages in the lifecycle of a text, from ST analysis to translation quality assurance (*translation*), the efficient and responsible use of documents, workflows and machine translation (*technology*), resilience in managing workloads and judicious self-development (*personal and interpersonal*) and optimal delivery in a professional setting (*service provision*). The framework contains no overt mention of creativity, although there are implications of creative problem solving in managing technology, in developing linguistic acuity/cultural sensitivity and in understanding translation to be a strategic process involving a pre-translation, translation and post-translation phase with human interactions being at the centre of it; ultimately, translation is a service by people for people.

The EMT framework has been informed by developments in the industry, as well as prior research in translation studies. Here it is worth mentioning a similar model as a precursor to EMT, because one may find more overt references to creativity in it: the so-called PACTE model. This model suggests a similar collection of sub-competences: bilingual competence (understanding SL and writing TL texts of a given complexity), extra-linguistic competence (world, domain-specific, bicultural or encyclopaedic knowledge), knowledge about translation (managing professional practice), instrumental competence (using documentation resources and technological tools); the model also includes psycho-physiological "cognitive components" such as memory, "attitudinal aspects", such as intellectual curiosity and "abilities" (see section 4), such as creativity and logical reasoning (Beeby et al., 2009, p. 208–9). Updated versions of the model are slightly more streamlined (PACTE Group et al., 2018) and still tackle a similar constellation of declarative knowledge (knowing *what*), skills (knowing *how*) and personal attributes; examples of texts mentioned by the group include literary genres (comics, fiction), audiovisual translation (subtitling, dubbing) and access services (audio description and SDH subtitling) (PACTE Group et al., 2018, p. 118).

Rossi (2018) echoes the PACTE approach in the so-called *PETRA-E Framework of Reference for the Education and Training of Literary Translators*, listing transfer, language, textual, heuristic, literary-cultural, professional, evaluative and research competence. She claims that *transfer competence*, or knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to relay a source into the target language, depends on the ability to find adequate translation solutions; this ability she dubs *literary creativity*, adding that because creative writing replicates the reading and writing process of translation, it helps develop literary creativity (Rossi, 2018, p. 385). Arguably, creative writing is an even more encompassing teaching tool, fostering knowledge, skills and attitudes feeding into most, if not all, competences covered by PACTE/PETRA-E, including, research competence and professional ethos in managing writing tasks. Before we demonstrate a proposed way of achieving this, some theoretical foundations for the *skill* of creativity (and its constituent *abilities*) must be laid.

# 4. Creativity: skills and abilities

We could look at creativity as a skill, taking the creative dimensions defined by Guilford (1966) as a starting point. These dimensions entail: fluency, i.e. the (great) number of options generated for a given problem; flexibility, the variety of these options; originality, how unusual such options are; and elaboration, the degree of detail provided when these options are created. Further, recent studies

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-11/emt\_competence\_fwk\_2022\_en.pdf

in psychology have shown, through factor analysis, that from all the factors that are associated with intelligence, creativity is mainly associated with one particular factor called Glr (long term storage and retrieval) that contributes to creativity and encompasses the following abilities: Ideational fluency that is the ability to rapidly produce a series of ideas, words, or phrases related to a specific condition or object; Associational fluency, the ability to produce a series of words or phrases associated in meaning to a word or concept with a limited range of meaning; Expressional fluency, the ability to rephrase an idea without losing its original meaning; Word fluency, the ability to produce words that have given characteristics; Figural fluency, the ability to draw as many things as possible when presented with a set of visual stimuli; Sensitivity to problems, the ability to think of a number of different solutions to problems that are practical in nature (e.g. naming all the uses of a particular tool); and Originality/creativity, the ability to produce original and unique responses to a given problem and to develop innovative methods for situations where there is no standard/convergent way to solve a problem (Sawyer, 2012, p. 55). Being creative is tantamount to knowing how to 'switch on' these abilities and to having novel and different ideas relevant for resolving an existing or new problem.

Guilford's (1966) dimensions have been used by TS scholars, most notably Bayer-Hohenwarter (2010), who lists four main characteristics for translational creativity: acceptability, or absence of errors; flexibility, as seen in the number of translation shifts or "the ability to produce shifts" (2010, 86); novelty, the uniqueness of the solutions; and fluency, the number of translations for one given problem when looking at the final product of translation.

If the above are characteristics of creative translation, and can be observed in the final product, the question of how they can be taught remains. A scholar who addresses this question more directly is Paul Kussmaul, most notably in his discussion of visualization (Kussmaul, 2005). He notes that visualizing a scene for a given translation problem in detail in the ST generates another image or frame in the TT that can help students find creative solutions. He suggests using real pictures as aids for students as well as using verbal stimuli (frames) to help them visualize the translation problems in the source culture; then students can imagine how a similar scenario (e.g. doctor-patient interaction) would unfold in the target culture, including the verbal frames that can be best slotted into this TC reality. Although he does not label the skills overtly as such, Kussmaul encourages flexibility, in re-verbalised frames in the target language, fluency, in considering alternatives for each reconfigured frame slot, and novelty, which he playfully refers to as 'luck' when unique TC frames are activated. Creativity is thus achieved by consecutive steps of understanding a problem and (de)selecting context-appropriate solutions for the TC, all whilst being aware of plurality in solutions.

In her PhD thesis, Bayer-Hohenwarter (2012) suggests a number of didactic activities: A) promoting flexibility by 1) inviting students to strategically "think in all directions" to create abstractions, generalizations, modifications and reproductions, 2) carrying out deverbalization activities (e.g. interpreting), 3) activities for developing routine (fluency) so that more capacities are freed for creative translations (sight translations, interpreting), 4) fostering imagination while translating; B) promoting "switch competence" (ability to switch efficiently between routine and creativity tasks): 1) e.g. asking students to translate texts as fast as possible in a first run, then review them without time pressure in a second run; C) process-oriented approach to translation teaching: a) analyzing each student's individual set of strengths and weaknesses and giving them feedback b) modular lessons for individual skills such as flexibility, switch competence, evaluation competence etc.; D) emphasis on motivating students so that they can exploit their full creative potential (Bayer-Hohenwarter, 2012, p. 320 available in German).

According to Hewson (2016), there are four main difficulties that students face when training in creative translation: a) comprehension of the ST; b) the "hypnotic effect" of the ST on the

reader/student; c) what he calls 'the expectancy norm' of trainees assuming that the TT should closely resemble the source; and d) their target-language proficiency. In the face of these problems, he says:

Creativity is the ability to exploit the resources of both source and target languages in order to produce unpredictable micro-level translation solutions that are coherent with the macro-level interpretation given to the text and compatible with external parameters. (Hewson, 2016, p. 20)

In order to resolve these difficulties, Hewson suggests exploiting alternatives in the ST first by identifying what constitutes a problem in the ST to be able to resolve it.2 He explains that one of the main problems for students is to recognize when a problem exists in the ST, and hence avoid generating erroneous alternatives or perhaps translations that are too close to the ST. Thus he suggests exercises to rephrase those difficult parts in the ST, i.e. paraphrase that unit in a more comprehensible way for the student in order to "free a source text from the rigid, textual form in which it is presented and to see it in a more creative light by envisaging other ways that the author could have chosen to write." (p. 21). This paraphrasing helps with the so-called hypnotic effect whilst rewriting in the target text may help to improve this further, in harmony with the macro-information of the source text and. The trainer should encourage the translation student to seek different possibilities so that they hone their creative skill and translation fluency. He suggests that the more 'outrageous' these choices, the better they serve the purpose of increasing confidence in the language, so much so that exploratory choices can subsequently compete among optimal solutions.

Rojo and Ramos Caro (2016) and Rojo and Meseguer (2018) address the issue of how students receive feedback and how the atmosphere created in the classroom can help students be more creative. They do not find conclusive evidence, but these studies point out two interesting findings: a) although creative intelligence does not correlate directly with a higher final quality of the translated product, it plays a role in the translator's attention (focus) and in fostering flexible thinking (Rojo & Meseguer, 2018); and b) the way in which feedback is given to translators does play a role in their self-confidence and thus in their creative skills (Rojo & Ramos Caro, 2016). The implication of the above, and a view we adopt in this article, is that some students might already have a creative personality, and thus be inclined to follow a given approach towards the ST and TT, and that going further by creating a certain atmosphere in the classroom can productively encourage this creativity.

Distilling the creativity and creative translation points in this section, the core idea is to encourage iterative mutual activation and (de)selection of alternatives for a given stretch of text in a classroom setting. Such an approach allows for certain freedom and playful attitudes towards the texts and towards translations. The module we propose is aimed at training students to understand the skills required for creative and technical writing to have a better and more flexible comprehension of a ST (sensitivity to problems), look for different possibilities (ideational, associational and expressional fluency), visualize new scenarios (figural fluency), generate a new text (word fluency, and originality and creativity) and be critical of their own choices in order to optimize coherence and cohesion in the texts they produce (evaluation). We think that by 'switching on' these abilities, we are training students on creativity in their own languages as well as building their self-confidence in their writing in another language which is also a key aspect of creativity. Even if we have not yet conducted specific experiments to test longitudinal benefits of running such a module, our experience in the classroom may offer some indirect evidence as well as strengthen the rationale for extending writing provision in translation programmes.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> This is also referred as "units of creative potential" in the literature, see Guerberof-Arenas and Toral (2022)

## 5. Translation in creative writing, creative writing in translation

Recalling conceptual maps (section 3) and the changes they herald, an underlying assumption has been the impetus to see translation as an inter-discipline (availing itself from tools imported from the outside), if not a post-discipline, where translation in a different area adds to and increases our understanding of said area (Gentzler, 2014, p. 19). Creative writing is a case in point. Creative writing and translation have affinities. This uncontested statement has taken the combined voices of creative writing and translation studies scholars to consolidate. Straddling both fields, Fiona Doloughan has argued that all crafting of text, be it a book translation, a script-soon-to-be-a-film, or a novel with multicultural perspectives, requires regimenting distinct linguistic, cultural, social and technological capabilities (Doloughan, 2011, p. 5). Even when 'simply' writing in English, she argues, a rich reading experience may be guaranteed when authors tap into the diversity of (previously) translated or textually transformed content (Doloughan, 2011, p. 70) and, generally, of cross-cultural experiences (Quigley, 2009).

An apt example in fiction is Xiaolu Guo's *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* (Guo, 2007), a novel written as dictionary entries telling the story of a Chinese-speaking woman in the United Kingdom, who presumably struggles with English, but in essence translates Chinese and English languages and cultures, thus revealing a deeper understanding of both (Doloughan, 2009, p. 111; 2011, p. 81–84). Here linguistic and cultural translation is used as a scaffold for writing.

In the area of poetry, creative writing scholars highlight the defamiliarizing, innovative effect of appropriation, with linguistic, cultural and social context playing a crucial role. For instance, *mistranslation* of Classic Chinese poetry may advocate a particular aesthetic theory (as Ezra Pound did) (Fang, 2021, p. 170) or can be used to query narratives of national cultural identity and tradition, as with Tay composing poems in English, in Singapore (Tay, 2009, p. 10). There are further possibilities: *self-translation* (see Iris Fan's work), where the latest version becomes a second original (Fang, 2021, p. 171), or even *intertextual conversation* (see Ian McMillan's 'response' poems to imagist poetry), where tone and content purposefully swerve away from a chosen source (Fang, 2021, p. 172).

Then there is the reverse side of the writing-translation coin, so to speak. Translation Studies scholars see translation and creative writing as interrelated modes of *context-sensitive writing* because they both presuppose textual precedents and a profound critical engagement with the text (Perteghella & Loffredo, 2006, p. 4–5). Iterative research, engagement with the material form of words and constant drafting leads to a fit-for-purpose text characterized by originality (Bassnett, 2006, p. 174; Bush, 2006, p. 27–28). Like writing, translation entails a dialogue of voices, setting contextual priorities and working with others (publishing field agents, co-translators) (Perteghella and Loffredo, 2006, p. 9).

More often than not, the source text, the stable linguistic material of translators, already contains diverse linguistic and cultural perspectives, vestiges of previous acts of (non-)translation. These may entail cultural references and dialects (Bandia, 2012), code-switching (Baldo, 2011), lexical/grammatical experimentation (Määttä, 2016; Wright, 2010), intercultural irony (Asimakoulas, 2016). Apart from a trigger for critical engagement with social themes (power dynamics in a globalised, postcolonial world, truth, mutual understanding), linguistic diversity in a source text constitutes an invitation to deploy exceptional writing skills when translating such texts into another language.

Links with translation have been explored more concretely, in tailored exercises for translators. Pattison (2008), for instance, has suggested a day-long workshop format (originally designed for the French Network of the Institute of Translation and Interpreting in the United Kingdom). The workshop progresses from focused word associations and detailed/concrete description exercises, to

comparative discussion of literary techniques in originals and their translations (e.g. repetitions, 'hooks' in a story), to bilingual keywording for character creation and, finally, to writing for a specific audience.

The module we are proposing aims to cultivate knowledge of the richness of language and theoretical ties between translation and writing over a course of eleven weeks. This proposal is intended to explain how to create a basic course that could, of course, be adapted to different institutions and time lengths or even be adapted to individual seminars. Overall, it is designed to encourage students to weigh risks and opportunities in crafting text for different audiences, by switching on their linguistic, cultural, social and technological capabilities. The module format envisaged will be the topic of the following section.

# 6. A writing module for creative translators

The module, worth 7.5 ECTS credits, is an optional module that may be couched within a postgraduate translation programme with the usual (varied) configuration of modules on theorybuilding and practice-based learning. It can also, however, be part of any BA and MA programmes in translation as a compulsory module, depending on the distribution of subjects in a given university or institution. The module was created by the authors and initially launched within such an MA programme designed to encourage standard translation competences and concomitant metacognitive awareness. Crucially, the module was deployed alongside other optional modules with an emphasis on technology, (business) management or cultural awareness. Thus it exists in a non-silo configuration where digital capabilities and cultural mediation capabilities are promoted.

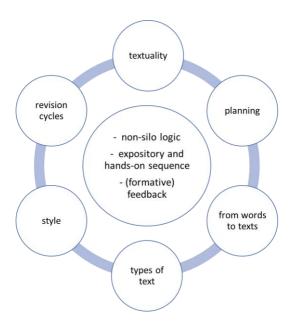


Figure 1: Module content and Teaching & Learning strategy

The module consists of interrelated thematic units (eleven 2 hour-long classes). Again, the number of hours and thematic units are presented here as a proposal that other translator trainers can adapt to their needs, i.e. number of topics, number of hours per topic and even number of practicums. It starts with the standards of textuality, focusing particularly on coherence and extending the concept to semiotic coherence. For example, when writing text for a wordless comic, students are encouraged to find adequate and effective solutions by exploiting links between (sub)modes, a skill they can extend to other multimodal documents and cultural settings (Valdés Rodríguez, 2008, p. 42, p. 54).

This is followed by planning writing tasks: building a theme, topic and character, also resorting to mind-map visualizations. The module subsequently progresses through different levels of textual organization, text types (fictional, poetic, journalistic), style (rhetorical figures of speech, orality, easy-to-read language varieties, dialects). It concludes with editing and revision and a formative feedback session. See Table 1 for a more detailed overview of the module.

The module serves the non-silo logic of forging links with practical translation modules (reading, drafting, revision), and modules addressing creative industries challenges. For instance, writing an easy-to-read description for a museum item using an online audio description platform<sup>3</sup> tallies with accessibility topics covered in an audiovisual translation module and museology-informed exploration of museum texts in a module on the creative industries. Thinking relationally across modules may help develop resourceful students and, more crucially, creativity is shown not as a discrete element in one type of activity or text, but as an embedded element in their course. The class is delivered in English, which may be a challenge for non-native speakers, but the type of assessment (portfolio) and length of time for writing and revisions serve as mitigations. Similarly, an argument in favour of working in English is the fact that a considerable amount of future work (or simply communication) may occur in the 'into-English' direction. In terms of pedagogical gains, having a multilingual group with different backgrounds helps achieve different degrees of cultural competence when working or revising the work of others, say, by adopting the perspectives of other cultures and explaining one's own culture to others. Nevertheless, depending on the teaching institution, other language than English can be used as a point of departure.

Students are encouraged to write with different briefs, and thus manage their own linguistic and cultural expectations as well as those of their envisaged audience. A typical class consists of some preparatory reading at home, an expository section, where a relevant theoretical toolkit is presented, followed by a consolidating practical writing task and a feedback quorum. Classes end 10 minutes before the end of the second hour so that students can attend a different class if their options dictate that two classes occur contiguously on their timetable. Work produced in class is discussed further in the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) between the tutor and students. Table 1 offers an overview of themes and practicums in the module together with the primary creative skill associated with each theme. It is important to highlight that the entire module is intended as a way to develop the Originality/creativity skill (Sawyer, 2012, p. 55). The last two classes are focused on evaluating their own production as well as the production of others. This is a fundamental step in the creative process as an initial new idea is tested in the context of the problem we want to solve (Wallas, 1926; Kussmaul, 1995; Lubart, 2018).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> https://unidescription.org/

Week	Theme	Practicum	Primary creative
			skill
1	Standards of textuality: co-	Writing a text to match images from a	Ideational fluency
	herence & cohesion	wordless comic book	
2	Working with words, sen-	Paragraphing when writing about a trip	Word fluency
	tences & paragraphs		
3	Planning and organising	Systematising theme & topic, using a	Sensitivity to prob-
	content	mind map	lems
4	Working with different text	Writing an advocacy journalism piece	Sensitivity to prob-
	types		lems
5	Style matters I: writing for	Composing a poem or writing a short	Expressional flu-
	different audiences	prose piece modelled after the style of a	ency
		specific poet/author	
6	Punctuation and easy-to-	Editing a museum object description on	Expressional flu-
	read language	an online platform	ency
7	Writing dialogue	Writing a piece containing dialogue	Originality/ creativ-
			ity
8	Style Matters II: word	Identifying stylistic features in dialect	Expressional flu-
	choice, varieties of lan-	repository and authoring a text with	ency
	guage and rhetorical ploys	such features	
9	AI tools for writing <sup>4</sup>	Using tools/resources for augmented	Ideational fluency
		writing	
10	Self-revising and revising	Peer assessment of selected work	Evaluation
	the works of others		(peer feedback)
11	Pitching your project and	Discussing projects for creative piece	Evaluation (forma-
	peer feedback		tive feedback)

Table 1: Relation of themes, practicum and main creative skills developed

In-class practical tasks are dialogic, so that brainstorming, drafting and (peer-)revision stages are internalised. As such, the module reinforces respect and adaptability (evidence-based critique, professional communication, listening to others), problem-solving (agile thinking, addressing setbacks), risk-taking (in self-expression) and self-regulation (normalising feelings of exposure to the group, learning from feedback, confidence building, managing group relationships). In-class practice serves as a springboard to self-study; students may further develop what they have started working on, ultimately submitting their material as part of summative assessment. The tutor participates as an equal partner in providing feedback during group discussion, but assumes a more active role in offering individual formative feedback behind the scenes. Students, for instance, upload

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Depending on the other subjects/modules in the entire programme, an introduction to the general concept of AI can be given to cover how and when to use (or not) certain tools when writing. Week 9 will cover writing and interacting with specific AI tools.

work-in-progress pieces in an E-portfolio section of the VLE, which is where they receive individual feedback from the tutor.

The module is assessed with two writing assignments. In the first, students can use one of the pieces they have started to work on during in-class practice, incorporating formative in-class group feedback, as well as E-portfolio feedback. The second assignment consists of a creative piece plus a short commentary. The purpose of the commentary is to allow students to explain their creative process, from planning to final revision and delivery. It is also an invitation to cite sources of inspiration and academic sources. Reflexivity in the second assignment not only stretches students academically, but also instils the idea that creativity sits on a continuum ranging from simple replication of concepts, to redefining or giving a new direction to what is already known, to adopting an entirely new approach (Cropley, 2016, p. 244).

Arguably, it is this artisanship, analysis and metacognitive awareness of creative processes that distinguish human contributions from fully automated processes. As the quality of large language models (LLMs) increases and they become popular tools for writing and translating, we suggest including a dedicated class (see Week 9 in Table 1). In the expository part, the class can cover the following topics: how LLMs are trained to convey the most likely outcome; how they work in practice, with special reference to the fact that some of them offer more creative options (in a black-box scenario); how human annotation and human learning reinforcement works and how these models are trained with the resulting data. Strategic use of prompting can be linked to exemplars of more creative output, such as a story fragments. For the practical part of the class, students may be asked to work with one or several AI tools devoted to creative writing.<sup>5</sup> This equips students with knowledge about how prompting works, and, importantly, with knowledge about the techniques writers employ to create a story: narrative structure (including conflict, change and narrative tension), themes and more detailed topics, types of narrators, characterisation, style and dialogue. The more students know about how human creative writing actually happens, the better placed they will be to judge how creative AI is and to work on the right prompt or interaction with the system.

# 7. In the spotlight: writing dialogue

To present the proposed module in a more concrete way, we focus on the specificities of one class: writing dialogue (Week 7 in Table 1). We chose this class because translating dialogues is an aspect of literary translation that is particularly difficult for translators and where the creative skills of a professional are put to the test. The class follows the typical structure (see Figure 2) and students are asked to read a story in advance, *The Dolls's House* (Mansfield, 2016).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Some existing tools that can be used are Novel AI: <a href="https://novelai.net/">https://novelai.net/</a>, Canva: <a href="https://www.canva.com/create/story-generator/">https://chat.openai.com/</a>, Toolsaday: <a href="https://toolsaday.com/writing/story-generator">https://toolsaday.com/writing/story-generator</a>, Rytr: <a href="https://rytr.me/use-cases/story-plot">https://rytr.me/use-cases/story-plot</a>



Figure 2: Class structure exemplar: Writing dialogue

The first part of the class consists of an interactive presentation that covers the following points: 1) definitions of dialogue; 2) the differences between reality and fiction; 3) elements of orality; 4) punctuation and formatting; 5) translating dialogue. During this first part, students are confronted with excerpts of real-life dialogue and fictional dialogue and they are asked to compare and contrast the two. Common aspects – such as turn-taking, ellipsis, contractions, discourse markers, slang – are discussed, followed by differences – in coherence, hesitations, fillers, interruptions, overlaps, order and realism. The main purpose of a dialogue in a story is addressed too, that can be, for example, the imperative to show how the action moves forward or to show the thoughts and emotions harbored by (individual) characters. Students subsequently discussed how the above characteristics and function of dialogue manifest themselves in their preparatory reading sample, by examining the story in groups. To bridge the discussion to translation, degrees of similarity in punctuation and orality features across languages is introduced as a topic of further discussion.

For the practical part of the class, students are given a writing exercise whereby they need to work in pairs and write a dialogue between two characters (20 lines approximately). The two characters find themselves in the same situation yet have markedly different views about it (they are in conflict). Students are instructed to avoid clichés and create unusual situations. They can use visualizations or active dialogue and then jot down the dialogue following the principles discussed in the expository part. Once they are happy with their dialogues, they paste their text in a common repository, and one text is chosen to be read to the rest of the class; in every class a different pair of students read their work so that they can all get live feedback during the class. In this case, two students are chosen to read the dialogue, so that the writers can listen to their creation and then comment on their piece. All students are asked to think if the dialogue moves the action forward, if the characters in the dialogue are clearly defined and identifiable and if the language used is appropriate for those characters. The class ends with this discussion and with the homework for the following class. The lecturers also write comments in the portfolio so that students can read their feedback after the class. Comments

are constructive without losing focus of the technical aspects of writing dialogue, as experienced in the in-class session.

This text is then used in the AI tools class (Week 9 in Table 1) to write a similar dialogue, i.e. following the same situation or writing brief, but using one of the AI tools (see end of section 6). These texts can also be read in class. Alternatively, they can be included in their portfolio to improve the existing dialogue or as the final writing essay. As a follow up, the students can discuss or write a reflective essay comparing the two texts, but also explaining the perceived differences in the creative process and the emotions experienced during both exercises.

### 8. Overall feedback on the module

For the two consecutive years that the module has been running, a satisfaction rate of 100% was recorded in module evaluation questionnaires. Further personal feedback we received informally showed that students acknowledged and enjoyed the variety of genres covered in the module. In the second year of running the module, there were frequent requests to include more examples from poetic genres, feedback that was taken on board. Both content and assessments may be approached flexibly in this or a similar course, as diversification and opportunities to inspire creative practice in different genres seems to be embraced by students.

On a more practical note, students faced some technical difficulties, for instance when uploading E-portfolio items, but these were ironed out after the first few weeks. After this point, they gained confidence in fully exploiting the possibilities of the VLE and in uploading texts as well as images as part of their portfolio.

As we ran the module for the first time, there was a sense that each session was relatively front-loaded. This was perhaps to be expected in a new module and given the ambitious goal of covering an array of topics. As a result, the theoretical exposition part in the beginning of each class was relatively dense. Student feedback was effective in picking this up. For the second year, we resorted to some editing down, which yielded a leaner version without losing content. Students expressed the view that in-class writing was the most difficult part of the module, yet they found it helpful and enjoyable, expressing surprise they could actually do it. More systematic mining of student opinions and evaluation is needed (e.g. via a survey), but the first impressions we collected informally (also given quality assurance procedures in place; see below) indicate that the module stretched students adequately.

At the same time as running the module, we were routinely in touch with translation tutors, as part of a broader co-ordination exercise (one 'away day' meeting per semester, plus sharing good practice across modules). Translation tutors happen to teach some of the students taking the writing module and proceeded to present the writing module in a positive light. Personal communication with the German tutor, for instance, offers glimpses into how transferable creative skills might be. Whilst commenting on creative types of texts in her module (email 08.11.2021) she reported the following with respect to student performance: "Two of the German students are taking it [the writing module] and although one of them said she found the creative aspect quite difficult to wrap her head around, she is actually doing really well with applying a freer approach in her translations already. (Early fruits?)".

We also sought comments from an external examiner, a formally appointed colleague from another university who is given oversight of modules as part of quality assurance. He characterised the module as "original and very promising". He added:

[the module] requires the students to work on their textual production skills which, while being essential for translation, are rarely taught as part of translation curricula. I saw creative work

and commentaries by students which are of very good or excellent standards. The feedback has been substantial, clear and constructive. (External Examiner report, 14.02.2022)

Apart form praise, he also had some critical comments; first, do students see the connection between this module and traditional modules on the course? Similarly, how do we ensure that the assessment criteria apply equally to native and non-native speakers, given the requirement to use English creatively? These are highly relevant questions. With respect to the former, we responded that the module allows students to forge such links to techniques of writing and unleash their creativity; both writing and translation entail considering alternatives, generate many ideas and select the most relevant one for each situation, using the tools given in each session. Looking at alternative versions of texts (i.e. texts they have been working on throughout the module) in particular hones their expressional fluency. Similarly, some of the techniques (planning, drafting, delivery) are highly relevant to translation, as are key concepts like (semiotic) cohesion, which are revisited in various modules. The module is also intended as a source of inspiration for other related creative acts, perhaps transferrable to dissertation topics where creative texts are explored, or in extracurricular activities, which may form part of a professional engagement portfolio (extra-curricular activities recorded formally with the guidance of personal tutors, for employability purposes). As an indication, one of the students published her piece in an anthology (made of recycled paper and biodegradable twine), whose proceeds went to Greenpeace<sup>6</sup> and 16/22 students with literary texts as dissertation topics (spread over the two years the module runs) were students who had taken this module.

As was noted in section 6, we pondered (at planning stage) whether delivery in English may appeal and give an unfair advantage to native English speakers. The marks achieved by students, however, show a good spread of abilities and level of writing among different groups. This is an impression we have confirmed with a fellow-academic who has run creative writing modules at the Open University in the last 12 years (Fiona Doloughan, personal communication, 02.07.2021): the best-performing students may not be native English speakers.

### 9. Conclusion

This chapter started with the problem-stating question of how creativity may be taught in translation courses, especially as AI continues to cross various thresholds of efficacy. We then offered a critical overview of the literature from intersecting areas: social sciences-inspired creativity research, creative writing scholarship and translation studies approaches to creativity. This allowed us to offer a framework of creative skills, for writing and for translation, as well as to strengthen theoretical and practical links between creative writing and translation. As a practical application of this theorising, we gave an example of the integration of a writing module in an MA degree on translation.

The systematic approach adopted in the module goes against the cliché view of creativity as serendipity and inspiration. The content, types of activities and assessments proposed are geared towards maximizing a student's creative abilities, such as the ability to readily produce ideas in a principled manner, to flexibly produce interlinked stretches of language suitable for a given context, to rephrase freely (and strategically) and to methodically seek original solutions to problems. The above can be productively deployed in different settings of monolingual or, indeed, multilingual communication. We are aware that the effects of training on creativity might not be directly and empirically tested in a pre- and post-course setting when the duration of the course is relatively short (Guerberof-Arenas, Valdez, & Dorst, forthcoming). However, we would like to test how the module impacts the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> https://www.thestagsurrey.co.uk/poetry-makes-nothing-happen/

students' views of creativity and their own views on improvement by collecting data through questionnaires and interviews with the students and translation instructors.

Here lie broader implications for employability and the future of the translation profession. The underlying thread of this writing class is a need to increase said employability. This is especially felt in a digital era where they are required not only to interact with AI tools, and have a considerable technical understanding of how they operate, but also to learn how to be creative in a fast-evolving technological and professional landscape. As was shown, creativity partially consists in (de)selecting appropriate and effective solutions in a given context, be as translators, reviewers, project managers, vendor managers, transcreators, prompt engineers or any of the new professions that new paradigms will bring. The module we presented here works as an independent module. But we have also recommended ways of implementing a non-silo logic, forging links between writing and other modules in a master's programme. Our proposal constitutes what we think is a productive way of stimulating creativity, including creativity via AI tools in what can be labelled as "human creativity supported by robots" (Lubart et al., 2021). There are further methods to stimulate AI-enhanced creativity. These can be fully explored within traditional practical translation or translation technology courses, which need to be aligned with current developments in digital transformation. Although discussing the integration of exercises to enhance creativity within standard translation modules is beyond the scope of our chapter, we acknowledge the creative possibilities for both trainers (in curriculum design) and students (in exploring their adaptability); also, we see that the common denominator in both areas (translation/writing) is this act of harnessing technology with an understanding of the underlying layers of human creativity.

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