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**SOME PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATION TUITION PRAXEOLOGY  
WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF NEWLY ESTABLISHED  
TRANSLATION DISCIPLINES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

**НЕКОТОРЫЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ ПРАКТИКИ ОБУЧЕНИЯ ПЕРЕВОДУ  
В РАМКАХ НОВЫХ ПЕРЕВОДЧЕСКИХ ДИСЦИПЛИН В ЧЕХИИ**

*Аннотация:* За последние десять лет возник в чешских региональных университетах ряд магистерских переводоведческих учебных программ. Их необходимым элементом принято считать ознакомление учащихся с практикологией письменного и устного перевода. По сути, существуют два источника таких знаний: проведение обязательной практики в течение обучения и прохождение специального курса. Для составления такого курса считаются основными следующие области: ознакомление учащихся с категориями профессиональных компетенций; формой заказа на перевод, принципами управления качеством переводческих услуг и так называемые примеры лучшей практики; отдельными видами организаций, предоставляющих заказчику письменный и устный перевод в виде его прямого исполнителя или посредника этой услуги; спецификами переводческих услуг в рамках заказов органов Европейского Союза; принципами профессиональной этики и отдельными профессиональными организациями переводчиков. Безусловно, что обучение данному предмету должно гибко реагировать на изменения в профессиональной практике.

*Ключевые слова:* учебная программа, дидактика, практикология, славяноведение, перевод, переводоведение.

**Introduction: Specifics of the situation in tuition in new translational disciplines**

Since the 1990's, a shift in foreign business accompanied by cooperation on a scientific and technological basis, opening-up of the national market, joining

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the structures of the EU and development of the so called multi-media society, have created an increasing demand on professional employees with language skills, including those with the ability to translate and interpret. In the Czech Republic at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, there came a significant change in the preparation of translators and interpreters; regional universities with the necessary professional background were enabled to accredit their own new programs of translation studies. At Palacký University Olomouc, Masaryk University Brno and the University of Ostrava, follow-up study programs leading to a Master's degree (and Bachelor's degree at Palacký University) were devised, that followed on from the previous tuition of translation disciplines within the framework of the philology of particular languages. Their parallel situation reflects the problems that they have to deal with today.

In this article we focus on one existing problem from the spectrum. Conversations with graduates and their employers — some of them were published in research papers — and discussions at a Translation Summer School held in Slovakia confirmed that in the Czech and Slovak Republic we are having to face the fact that without any doubt whatsoever, fresh graduates of translation studies have the theoretical knowledge, ability for creative translation, different levels of experience with translation of various text types (according to the focus of the university and teacher), are able to use some technical means but, at the same time their idea of how to market translating and interpreting services and the legal, economic, and operational framework of their professional activities after school, is very vague. In our article we attempt to describe ways of avoiding this deficiency.

**Ways of familiarizing students with practical aspects of translational activity.**

The gap between theoretical knowledge and orientation in the practical field where graduates will perform their profession, can be filled during their studies in two ways. Either by taking translation practice as an option during their studies, or by gaining the knowledge within the framework of their course, where we recommend offering the students a specialist study option with an emphasis on familiarization with translating-interpreting practice.

**Obligatory practice during study.** One way of gaining a basic insight into the operations of practical translating and interpreting activity is a short term simulation of performance in a professional situation under the control of an experienced consultant, i.e. engaging in a period of 'work experience' with a translation agency or in a specialized translation department of a company or institution. During that time students can learn or at least partially learn about the real activity of a translator in the market and they gain professional skills as well as knowledge. Study programs of individual universities and their departments differ in the length of such work experience sessions which can vary from one to two or three weeks.

**A subject focused on praxeology.** A substantial amount from the field of praxeology that candidates entering the translating profession should gain before they embark on translation activities consists of knowledge that can be gained only by a combination of study and discussion with more experienced colleagues. This includes topics from the field of law, economics, tariff policy, quality management and also professional ethics — even the professional literature describes such areas as an indispensable part

of the translator's curriculum (e.g.: [2; 4; 8; 10]). Yet for such topics, there is usually no space allocated in common translation seminars.

The necessity to clarify praxeological questions is proved by the fact that many students try to translate and find a use for their skills in the market during their studies and thus, because of a lack of knowledge they make various mistakes, (for example: they know the term 'standard page', but are uncertain or in complete ignorance of the parameters of a 'standard page'; they do not know how to start their own business or how the work of the court interpreter differs according to current legal regulations; they cannot manage frequent ethical conflicts, etc.).

Within the framework of tuition for translators at the Department of Slavonic Studies in the University of Ostrava, students take a specialist course component focusing on the praxeology of translation and interpreting so that they can start with a training employer with at least a basic familiarity with the problems of the practice of translating and interpreting. The subject is integrated in the second year as a compulsory, one-semester long study, consisting of a single lecture and one practical training session per week; it is completed with an examination. We provide the students with a certain information minimum that is broadened during their set period of work experience. The subject contents, as we have refined them over time, and in the form they are taught today are described below.

#### **Contents of the course component focusing on the praxeology of translating and interpreting**

**Professional competence as a starting point.** Within the framework of the contents of this specialist subject course component, it is possible to identify a few basic problem areas. As a starting point for tuition we consider the revision of kinds of professional competence for translators and interpreters to be important. According to some authors one of the competences (sometimes they are also listed as sub-competences with regard to superior translating competence) is the knowledge and skills that belong to the field of praxeology of translation [6]. Moreover it is important for the students to clarify the differences and demands on the quality of performance when translating written and spoken texts.

**Translation order, quality management and models for best practice.** It is necessary to start by listing the range of services that translators and interpreters provide so that students can realise that besides standard translating and interpreting, representing the core of their future work, frequent reviews and editorial revisions of texts in a foreign language are generally necessary. Based on this knowledge, there can be compared translations and interpreting, as students are accustomed to them from their university seminars, with practical translating-interpreting activity that is more complex and, in some respects, rather different.

The tuition begins with the process of order acceptance and its processing, its essential parts (especially those that beginners often omit and which could be a cause of conflict with the client), efficiency of certain particular provisions and agreeing the rules for communication with the client. Students are also familiarised with models of contracts

in the sphere of translating and interpreting. Later the tuition continues by contact with the client immediately before starting the activity and its performance later. Later there are the requirements of professionally performed work to consider, communication with the client during handing over of the finalised order and obtaining feedback. As not all clients who demand translating services are accustomed to working with translators, it is necessary to draw their attention to the usual norm for translator's comments so that misunderstandings can be prevented.

Providing professional services comes hand in hand with summarising and confronting quality requirements. The tuition is focused on a revision of general quality standards that students master in other seminars and on realisation of the similarities and differences when translating and interpreting. Since the passing of the statutory norm ČSN EN 15038:2006, Translation services – General requirements for provision of services, students have been acquainted with the processes and terminology which the norm recommends (e.g. differences between the language of the translation, focused on the relationship between the target and source text and revision and review, which focuses only on the language quality of the final text).

To illustrate how the provisions work, as examples of good practice we can present the mechanisms of some agencies and DGT. Although the certification of translators and interpreters is not obligatory in the Czech Republic, students are acquainted with the existing non-binding norm «Branch specification for certification of providers of translating services — Processing of translation orders — CEPRES: 2007»), which defines some terms and principles of quality management whose application is fruitful also for subjects that do not go through certification according to CEPRES: 2007.

A special lesson is dedicated to typology of mistakes in translation of non-fictional texts as graduates meet so called pragmatic texts more and more often, during subsequent practice. First of all, we place huge emphasis on enabling our students to reach an awareness of the necessary level of professional competence of a translator. In discussions students look for the necessary range of material competences of a translator, the methods of ensuring the necessary level of terminology and they also deduce which types of texts should be translated by a translator and which should rather be translated by a specialist in the branch with language knowledge.

Attention is paid to standard work conditions for interpreting that a client or agency should provide for an interpreter (e.g. number of interpreters in booths, size, equipment, air-conditioning, right to breaks and other hygiene provisions, length of a translator's working day, etc.).

**Providers and mediators of translating and interpreting services.** The greater part of graduates in translation studies work as freelancers or perform translating and interpreting activities as independent individuals simultaneously with a full time job. Therefore it is necessary for them to be well-informed about the legal conditions for performing their occupation. Currently there are basically two possibilities: freelance translating and court translation and interpreting. Freelance enterprise is the most common method of performing the occupation. Even though the legal system does not impose any qualification conditions, a knowledge of procedure for obtaining a legal licence can be

very useful. Naturally, with court translation and interpreting, the situation is different, here you have to prove reliability and qualifications, according to the current national legal regulations.

An inseparable part of the translating and interpreting market is represented by agencies. For freelancers it is necessary to collaborate with them and, with respect to the long-term insufficient culture of demand for translating and interpreting services in the Czech Republic, graduates in translation studies need to have an idea of the proper operation of such an agency. Students become familiarised with the scope of services provided by agencies, with the usual ways of collaboration with freelancers, with schemes of communication between agencies and clients, the agency and the freelancer, with typical ways of selecting collaborators, the advantages that arise from collaboration with well-run and responsible agencies and also with agencies' tariff policies with respect to the market and employed translators and interpreters.

Performing freelance activities is closely connected with the questions of expenses and yield from the activities. The students become acquainted with the basic categories of expenses, with the degree of their dependence on the amount of the work and also with their orientational proportions. The other side is the question of prices. Managing the methodology of price calculation according to common customs and recommendations (the Czech national organisation Union of Interpreters and Translators — Jednota tlumočnicků a překladatelů) is altogether an indispensable condition for entering the translating-interpreting market. Hand in hand with this goes a knowledge of measuring units for translating and interpreting performance, exact extent of the term 'standard page', minimum charged amounts for translating and interpreting works, and the most common types of extra charges (including the definition of a text's category as general or as one where extra charges should be levied on the grounds of specialization).

For making a real frame idea about professional activity it is important to know the approximate level of performance that a translator is able to manage during a single working day (including confronting the usual agencies' deadlines). Also important are the proportion of time allocated for preparation, main translating and revision activities: different demands for familiarisation with the text, research and looking for parallel texts and terminology, demands on the translation itself and necessary subsequent revisions of the final text.

#### **Translating and interpreting services for the needs of European Union bodies.**

Quite a large and very attractive market for students is represented by translating and interpreting services for the constituent bodies of European Union. Therefore this problem is very current and continues to be subject to numerous discussions among translators, partly because many translators in the Czech Republic have rather vague idea about it.

During tuition we start from the European policy of multilinguality which provides the basis for the right of a civilian to communicate in his/her national language. Students are becoming familiar with the organisation and operation of the Directorate General for Translation (DGT) and the Directorate General for Interpretation (DGI, SCIC), with the specifics of the work, with the tools making translating and interpreting work easier, with variations and conditions for full-time and freelance work with a survey of

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the requirement for selection interviews for potential employees for these positions. As the activities in the frame of the DGT a SCIC are very similar to the activities of commercial translating and interpreting agencies, the principles of operation and management within these bodies may be also taken as examples of the good practice. Attention is paid to public accessible information sources of the EU, such as the multilingual terminology database of the European Union IATE or the legislative web page EUR-Lex which can be used as a collection of parallel texts.

**Rules of professional ethics.** We consider high professional ethical awareness to be a necessary condition for performing translating and interpreting as an occupation [13]. The field is really wide and the related questions have to be solved more often than students of translation studies can imagine. Therefore we must pay great attention to that during tuition, students must adopt it and moreover be aware of the necessity to stick to the adopted rules.

Students must be acquainted with main rules of professional ethics, responsibility, for putting the translated work into a suitable context, differentiating between the one who is responsible for the quality of the original work and who is responsible for the quality of the final text, problems of so called polemic translations when the translator is in inner conflict with the contents of the translated text, cultivating an awareness of professional solidarity (full collaboration with colleagues, passing of orders, not commenting on colleagues' performance, not using the means of unfair competition). The study is based on the ethics codes of international (FIT, AIIC) and national (Czech and the countries of the studied language) organisations of translators and interpreters and international documents, for example the Translator's Charter. At the same time we believe group discussion to be essential for the forming of ethical awareness, the topic being either particular rules or examples of ethical conflicts. In its frame the most popular question is the one concerning translating texts for harmful products (cigarettes, narcotics), human rights (weapons) or animals (admissibility of translator's role as a certain ethical filter), polemic translations in the field of philosophic-religious texts. One practical form of training is dedicated to the interesting field of generation translations, their evaluation and setting into context exclusively from the viewpoint of professional ethics. It is mainly focused on the conflict of necessity and admissibility of the taking over of translation solutions from previous translators, which is a good exercise for thinking about the ethical framework of the profession and for practising the argumentation of the chosen translation solution.

**Professional organizations.** The professional organisations have a great role as sources of current information, opportunities for qualification maintenance and, last but not least, for protecting the interests of translators and interpreters. Students become familiar with the largest international organisations (FIT — International Federation of Translators, AIIC — International Association of Conference Interpreters, CEATL — European Council of Literary Translator's Associations) but also with Czech national unions and organisations — Union of Interpreters and Translators (Jednota tlumočnicků a překladatelů), Czech Literary Translator's Guild (Obec překladatelů), Chamber of Court Appointed Interpreters and Translators of the Czech Republic (Komora soudních

tlumočnicků České Republiky) and ASKOT — Association of Conference Interpreters of the Czech Republic. After a brief overview of their history and role, attention is paid to the conditions of membership, opportunities for maintaining and improving the professional qualification, periodicals, web pages, sources of terminology and information provided by these organisations.

### **Final Remarks: Trends for the future within the framework of professional reality in the Czech Republic**

Within the framework of legal awareness that is necessary for the performance of translating activities, important is not only a knowledge of legal regulations in particular, but also a basic overview of the application of copyright. Translating activity is directly based on the production of copyrighted works and not infrequently, publishers breach the rights of the translator as an author (starting with the right of the translator to have his name published, which is guaranteed by the Charter of Translators, ending by the breaching of ownership laws in respect to the translated work). As the legal questions are very complicated, it will be necessary to pay more attention to this field and thus increase legal awareness of future translators. At the same time we can expect that the following year will bring a significant change in the performance of translating activities. The change will concern the activities of court translators and interpreters. The Ministry of Justice has been preparing an amendment for a few years. The new leaders of the Ministry set it as one of the goals.

In 2011, the Ministry presented the new amendment project to the public and thereby restored the legislative process. The current legal state is to be significantly changed in the area of performing the activity (separating of court translating and interpreting activities) and also with respect to the conditions for licensing its performance (modification of requirements for performing the activity and unification of qualification requirements, see the discussion contribution [12]). After 40 years it will be such a significant change that it will be necessary to reflect it in praxeology tuition.

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*Abstract:* Over the past decade several MA programmes in translation theory appeared in the Czech Republic. Within their framework is necessary an adoption of knowledge from the praxeology of translating and interpreting, which is considered to be a necessary part of the educational curriculum for future translators. Basically, there are two sources for gaining knowledge of praxeology: engaging in controlled practice during one's studies or taking a special subject. When designing a program for such an area of study, it is essential to define familiarization with the categories of occupational competence, form of translation order, principals of quality management and models for best practice; with particular categories of providers and mediators of translating and interpreting services; specific translating and interpreting activities for EU bodies; rules of professional ethics and familiarization with professional organizations.

*Keywords:* Curriculum, didactics, praxeology, Slavonic studies, translation, translation studies.