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TRANSLATORS ON TRANSLATOR TRAINING: A CANADIAN CASE STUDY

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Abstract

This article examines the partial results of a comprehensive, three-month study carried out in three Canadian translation firms and services. It specifically focuses on translators' perceptions on initial translator training in the Canadian context. In the first part of the article, I will briefly discuss translator training in Canada as a whole (history, context, training institutions and types of programs) and provide details on the study I conducted in the workplace (description of the work settings, methodology and participants). In the main part of the article, I will focus on the translators themselves and more specifically on their perceptions of their initial training (strengths and areas for improvement). This examination will not be limited to junior translators, but also seasoned translators, more specifically senior translators and revisers (editors) who are called upon to supervise junior translators. I will conclude by interrogating the usefulness of the data gathered for designers of professional translator-training programs and point out to future directions for research.

Keywords: Translator training; curriculum design; workplace studies; Canada.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, translator training has become an increasingly important area in Translation Studies. A lot has been written on professional translator training, especially with regards to the balance between the practical and the theoretical components of initial translator-training programs as well as to the content – course curriculum and design – of such programs (see Pym 2009 for a summary; see also Kelly 2010a, 2010b; Gambier 2012). The academic/vocational dichotomy in translator training has in fact been the object of much debate and discussion for a number of years (see Kearns 2008, among others). These questions are of interest not only to researchers and scholars in the field of Translation Studies, but also to translator trainers, professional translators, professional translators' associations, as well as language service providers. One of the main questions of interest is whether institutions are, as a whole, training translators who are ready and well equipped for the translation market. In other words, do newly minted translators possess the skills and knowledge required to work in translation? As we know, in the field of professional translation, there

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have been dramatic developments over the course of the last 20 years. Technological innovation, for example, has brought about new tools and new processes, to which language service providers, freelance translators and clients have had to adapt. Those changes have meant that translator-training programs have had to keep up with the profession's rapid development and the changing demands of the workplace, all the while striving to strike a balance between the academic aspects of the programs and its more vocational core.

What we know very little about, however, is how professional translators view their initial training. More specifically, what do the graduates of such translator-training programs have to say about the training they received in university? According to Henter, while translators are in general happy with “large parts of their studies” (2016, p. 53), there are “specific fields in which (...) they would have liked further training” (2016, p. 53). In fact, not only do we know very little about how translators perceive their initial training, but we are sometimes, as researchers, unaware of what exactly goes on *inside* translation firms and translation services. Much of the evidence remains unfortunately anecdotal. As Li (2000, p. 128) pointed out over a decade ago,

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“several [...] important aspects of translation teaching have been un- or under-explored” (see also Li 2002). To keep up with the changes the industry has been witnessing, Li suggests (2000, p. 129), “[we have to] find out what practicing translators think and experience in their daily work, and ask them to compare what they were trained to do at school with what they are actually required to do at work.” Moreover, studies of the workplace – where we can observe translators in their “habitus,” working with their tools – are few and far between, as Mossop (2006) and Cronin (2003) have already pointed out. As Li adds (2000, p. 129), “(...) the contribution of professional translators has been virtually left out of translator training, although in some disciplines (e.g. teacher-training) practicing professionals have long been instrumental in providing information for teaching purposes”. And yet, Translation Studies could undoubtedly benefit from research conducted in the workplace, among translators, as such insight could possibly serve as a means to bridge that all too common misconception regarding the divide – or even schism – between theory and practice, among other things. While I agree with Mossop (2003, p. 20) that universities must continue to distinguish between “education” and “training” and that they must thus “resist the

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insistent demands of industry for graduates ready to produce top-notch translations in this or that specialized field at high speed using the latest computer models,” I also agree with Kearns (2008) that universities cannot simply disregard the marketplace and refuse to adapt to change at all costs. We need to know more on how translators see their initial training (Henter 2016). As Li points out (2007, p. 105), “[t]here is an increasing interest in the relationship between translator training and market demands” (see also Durban et al. 2003 and Vienne 1994). Research into the workplace should perhaps receive more attention as it could help us shed some light in this regard. Granted, gaining access to the workplace is not an easy feat, with all its required authorizations and guaranties of anonymity, but once one makes it inside, the amount of data that can be gathered can be very rich and revealing. Such regular incursions into the workplace can allow researchers to gain a better understanding of the environment in which translators work, the tools they use, the processes they follow, the pressures they are under, and so forth. Moreover, they can, in the end, provide valuable feedback for curriculum design (Kelly 2005).

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This is what brings us to the question of training. Having had the chance to spend three months, full-time, in three different translation environments, I will, in this article, look at *what translators have to say about translator training*, more specifically initial translator training in the Canadian context. My goal is to provide, through an examination of the workplace, interesting and useful data on initial translator training in the hopes of shedding some new light on the debates surrounding translator training and its relevance in today's marketplace. The article will be divided into four parts. First, I will briefly discuss translator training in Canada before providing details about the study I have conducted in the workplace (settings, methods, participants, etc.). In the main part of the article, I will focus on the translators themselves and more specifically their perceptions of their initial training. This examination will not be limited to junior translators – who are often in a better position to compare learning outcomes with real-world expectations – but also seasoned translators, more specifically senior translators and revisers who are called upon to supervise junior translators. I will conclude by examining how the data gathered can be used by designers of professional translator-

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training programs and by suggesting directions for future research.

2. TRANSLATOR TRAINING IN CANADA

Although the first courses in Canada focusing on professional translation were taught in the late 1940s, full, autonomous programs were not launched until the late 1960s (see Mareschal 2005 for a comprehensive overview of translator training in Canada). The need for translation – more specifically English-French translation – was borne out of necessity as a result of Canadian language legislation. In 1969, Canada adopted its first *Official Languages Act*, which gave French and English equal status in the government of Canada. As official languages, English and French would have preferred status over all other languages. This new legislation meant that Canadian citizens would be able to access government services in the official language of their choice. Moreover, the law declared that English and French had equality of status as well as equal rights and privileges with respect to their use in Parliament and federal courts, as well as throughout the federal administration. At the same time, the province of New Brunswick adopted a similar law, the *Official Languages Act* of

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New Brunswick (1969), which also gave English and French equal status. In Québec, the *Charte de la langue française* (French Language Charter) was enacted in 1977, making French the sole official language of Québec. Together, these laws created a huge demand for translation and thus professional translators, mostly in the English-French and French-English combinations. Although the most important players were governments – more specifically the government of Canada, the government of New Brunswick, the government of Québec and the government of Ontario – private sector translation also increased sharply as a result of language legislation. Alongside the expansion of the Canadian government’s Translation Bureau, private translation firms were also created, mostly in the large urban centers of Central Canada (Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto). Private businesses and corporations also set up their own internal translation services, and more and more freelance translators, working out of their homes, were able to make a living translating for governments, private businesses and translation firms. The situation is very similar today, although the industry seems to be experiencing a slight downturn as a result of the recent economic recession. Nevertheless, translation remains an important sector in Canada.

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Currently, the main languages of work remain the official languages, English and French, especially in the English-into-French combination as a result of French being a minority language in Canada.

As for professional translator training, the first universities to offer full-fledged training programs were the Université de Montréal, Université Laval (Québec City) and the University of Ottawa (Mareschal 2005). In the years to follow, other universities would follow suit. Today, over a dozen universities offer translator-training programs. From East to West, we have the Université de Moncton (Moncton), Université Laval (Québec City), Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (Trois-Rivières), Université de Sherbrooke (Sherbrooke), Université de Montréal (Montreal), Concordia University (Montreal), McGill University (Montreal), University of Ottawa (Ottawa), Université du Québec en Outaouais (Gatineau), York University (Toronto), Université de Hearst (Hearst) and Université de Saint-Boniface (Winnipeg). Professional training is, in Canada, focused at the undergraduate level (B.A.) as opposed to Europe (see Valentine 2013 for a description of translator-training programs in Canada), where professional training is done at the

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graduate (M.A.) level. That being said, many Canadian universities offer M.A. programs in the fields of translation, translation studies, interpretation, etc. Ph.D. programs have also been created. Because of industry needs, programs focus almost exclusively on the teaching of English-French translation and, to a lesser extent, French-English translation (Mareschal 2005).

3. THE STUDY

3.1 The main objectives of the study

The current study was conducted entirely in the workplace. More specifically, it involved on-site observation in three different workplaces. All located in Canada, as previously mentioned, the workplaces selected for this study were quite similar in nature in that they employed professional translators who translate non-literary, pragmatic texts destined for the French-Canadian market and work almost exclusively – in 98% of the cases – in the English-French combination. The study was focused entirely on the translators who worked in-house, full-time.

The study had two main objectives. Its *first objective* was to better understand the effects of

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translation technologies on translator satisfaction and on translator status. It involved looking into the use of technology and examining translators' perceptions with regards to new tools and changing business and administrative practices. In a recently published article, I have reported on translators' perceptions of translation memory software (LeBlanc 2017). The study's *second objective*, as mentioned, was to examine perceptions with respect to initial translator training and, to a lesser extent, to continuing professional development. In the end, I gathered a sizeable amount of data not only on translation technologies and translator satisfaction, but also on translator training, translator status and shifting business practices. In this article, I will focus *exclusively* on initial translator training given the amount of data I was able to gather in this area.

3.2 The settings (workplaces)

The study was conducted in three, medium-sized translation firms and services. As per Canada's policy on ethics in research involving humans, I am not free to divulge the names and locations of these firms due to the confidential nature of the data. This, however, is of little relevance, as the objective of this study is certainly not to describe the practices of

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one particular translation firm or service and to make those results known publicly. The aim is to gather as much data possible, in different – yet similar – firms and services in order to have a better grasp of the types of practices that are prevalent. For example, how do translators work? What do they translate? How are they supervised? How is their work evaluated? What tools do they use? What are the main challenges they face? More specifically, for the purposes of this article, how has their initial training prepared them for the real world? What are their perceptions of their initial training? What do their supervisors – senior translators and revisers – have to say in this regard? Above all, what can we learn from this? In what way can this be useful to translator-training institutions, and more specifically curriculum designers? Before we answer those questions, I will provide some details on the firms and services where I conducted my study.

The first firm/service I studied was **TSP-A**. It is comprised of 55-60 full-time employees, including 28 language professionals (i.e. translators and revisers). It specializes in the translation of general, administrative, technical and specialized texts, mostly from English into French. In total, I

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conducted 17 semi-directed interviews (see 3.3) which lasted anywhere from 25 minutes to over one hour. I also conducted seven shadowing sessions with translators at work; shadowing sessions lasted a half-day on average. In total, I spent about 100 hours on site (approximately one month).

The second firm/service I examined was **TSP-B**. Slightly smaller, it is composed of 22-25 employees, 14 of which are language professionals (i.e. translators and revisers). It also specialized in the translation of general, administrative, technical and specialized texts, mostly from English into French. I conducted a total of 19 semi-directed interviews (see 3.3) of similar duration (see above), and seven shadowing sessions (see above). In total, I spent about 100 hours on site (approximately one month).

The third and last firm/service was **TSP-C**. The largest of the three, it employs 77-80 employees, including 36 language professionals (i.e. translators and revisers). It too focuses on the translation of general, administrative, technical and specialized texts (in this case exclusively from English into French). Sixteen semi-directed interviews were conducted (see 3.3), as well as seven shadowing

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sessions (see above). A total of 100 hours were spent on site (approximately one month).

Not all language professionals interviewed were retained for this specific part of the research. As I was interested in initial translator training, I focused, for the purposes of this article, on what I considered “junior” translators, i.e. those who had less than five years of professional, supervised work experience. I also focused on senior translators or revisers, who are called upon to supervise the work of junior translators (see 3.4). While the former were in a good position to evaluate their program’s relevance and their own preparedness for the job market, the latter were well placed to determine the extent to which junior translators possess the required skills and knowledge to integrate the workforce. I also conducted interviews with senior managers, all of whom had previously worked as translators and revisers and were thus familiar with the tasks to be performed by junior translators.

3.3 Methodology and data analysis

As stated above, the case study comprised of three separate incursions into three different workplaces. The methods used are ethnographic in nature and

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include participant observation (i.e. shadowing sessions of translators at work at their workstations, general observation of the workplace, etc.); in-depth, semi-structured interviews with translators, revisers and managers; and many hours spent in the workplaces gathering information (contextual data) and taking part in various activities (staff meetings, staff activities, lunches, coffee breaks, etc.). This approach allowed me to immerse myself completely in the work environments, to study translators in their natural setting, doing real work. As a research method, ethnography is gaining ground in the field of Translation Studies (see Koskinen 2008; Hubscher-Davidson 2011; Flynn 2010) as it allows for flexibility and versatility in gathering data, and pays attention to context (Saldanha and O'Brien 2013, p. 205).

More specifically, participant observation, in this case, allowed me to observe translators at work, in their “habitat,” which provided invaluable data with respect to the workflows and the tools they use and, especially, how they use them. With respect to training, most of the data was collected through the semi-directed interviews, which included, as mentioned, questions about the translators’ initial training and their transition to the workforce.

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However, as is often the case in ethnographic approaches, data was also gathered at other moments, often when least expected. As I spent close to 300 hours in the various workplaces, I often had the opportunity to strike up informal conversations with translators, revisers and managers. Such conversations, while not recorded formally, often times provided rich information not only on the nature of the work, but also on training needs and working conditions. Field notes were thus analyzed and fully integrated into the dataset.

Once all the data was gathered and the interviews transcribed or summarized, data was reorganized according to themes and categories through the process of coding. Close attention was given to the recurrent themes or patterns that emerged from the dataset. As Saldanha and O'Brien posit, “combining multiple sources of data provides a way of compensating for the almost inevitable bias emerging from sources themselves” (p. 217).

3.4 The participants

In total, sixteen junior translators took part in the study. By “junior” translator, I refer to translators who have less than five years of professional,

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supervised work experience. In fact, the majority of junior translators interviewed had two years of work experience or less. All junior translators who took part in the study were still required to submit their texts to either a senior translator or a reviser for approval, although some junior translators were set to become autonomous, which means that their texts would no longer have to be systematically sent to a reviser before being delivered to the client.

Overall, junior translators were very enthusiastic about taking part in the project and answering my questions regarding their use of tools – mostly electronic tools – translator training and other aspects of their work. Most were willing to provide abundant information regarding not only their environments (workstation, tools, firm/service, etc.), but also their working conditions and job satisfaction. The issue of training was one that came almost naturally during interviews, as most of the questions and issues discussed were closely tied to their initial training. Finally, all junior translators had received their undergraduate degree in translation from one of the following universities: Université de Moncton, Université Laval, Université de Montréal, Concordia University and the University of Ottawa.

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Moreover, nineteen senior translators or revisers were interviewed. As was the case for junior translators, the experienced professionals showed considerable interest in my study. During interviews, most provided ample information not only about their duties as mentors and supervisors, but also on the training junior translators had received in university, the challenges they face and the skills they possess.

In the following section, I will present the results of my study with respect to translator training. I will focus first on junior translators (Part 4) and then on senior translators or revisers (Part 5). I will highlight the most salient and recurring themes that emerged from the dataset.

4. RESULTS OF THE STUDY (I): JUNIOR TRANSLATORS

Overall, junior translators agreed almost unanimously that their translator-training programs had prepared them well for the Canadian professional translation market, i.e. the public service and private enterprise. Here are the major recurring themes that emerged.

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4.1 Strengths of programs

4.1.1 A good introduction to the main areas of specialization

Junior translators agreed that, overall, translator-training programs offered a solid introduction to the main areas of specialization, most notably administrative translation, technical/specialized translation and legal translation. While translation programs – as delivered in Canada – do not aim to train specialists within those fields, they nonetheless strive to introduce students, through their curriculum, to a few of the main areas of specialization (law, business, etc.). Talking about this issue, one junior translator said¹:

In university, we had several different courses in specialized translation. We had legal translation, technical translation, among others. They were the most useful, according to me. I was surprised to see – in the real world – how many non-specialized texts contain very specific, more specialized notions (...) I think everyone needs to be introduced to the basics of legal – or paralegal – translation, for example.

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Study participant 09C²

Most participants also mentioned that general translation courses were also useful, and that programs struck a good balance between general translation and technical/specialized translation courses. While some mentioned that they were, upon being hired, called upon to translate in areas with which they were unfamiliar (advertising in some cases, medicine in several others), junior translators were of the opinion that it was impossible, in an undergraduate degree programs, to cover all areas of specialization.

4.1.2 A good introduction to computer-aided translation tools

Overall, junior translators were satisfied with the training they received in university with regards to computer-aided translation tools. The majority felt at ease with the main tools used in the workplace, most notably word processors, term banks, concordancers, electronic or online dictionaries, translation memory software, translation environments, etc. The most common tools taught in university and used in translation firms and

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services were the following: Word, Excel, PowerPoint, TERMIUM, the *Grand dictionnaire terminologique*, various electronic and online dictionaries, SDL Trados, JiveFusion and Antidote. While the specific tools to which they were introduced during initial training were sometimes different from the ones they were called upon to use in the workplace, most felt that the process of adapting to new tools (i.e. a different translation memory software, a new term base, etc.) was for the most part seamless as they had, in school, been introduced to the basics of such tools. As one junior translator pointed out:

If you know how to use Trados, you can easily adapt to another translation memory; the principle is the same. I think it's useless to spend an irrational amount of time focusing on specific software, because by the time you enter the workforce, the software has either evolved or been replaced by another one. I think universities need to focus on how the different types of tools operate, have us experiment with a few of them, but where I really learned how to master various tools was in the workplace. We all have to be ready to adapt.

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Study participant 03A

Most agreed that while it took them a few weeks to master the specific tools used by their translation service or firm, adapting to new tools was not a problem in most cases. Finally, junior translators interviewed were receptive to technological change and had quickly become accustomed to the type of fast-paced, deadline-driven work environment they were in (see also 4.2 for a discussion on the more negative aspects of such environments.)

That being said, not all junior translators agreed on how and when tools should be taught in translator-training programs. Although all seemed to subscribe to the idea that universities need to maintain a dedicated course on translation technologies, over half of respondents were of the opinion that some of those tools needed to be better integrated into other, practical translation courses. Several junior translators made comments to that effect.

4.1.3 A focus on advanced TL writing skills and language problems

A frequently-cited advantage of university training programs was their focus not only on advanced

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writing skills, but also on specific language problems. All Canadian translation programs offer courses on target-language-specific problems for translators, more specifically on the lexical, grammatical, typographical and stylistic problems to which translators are confronted on a daily basis. For example, students are taught, from the outset, to follow strict typographical conventions, to avoid the most common grammatical and lexical pitfalls of French (or English), and to understand the fundamental stylistic differences of English and French. As junior translators are evaluated on their knowledge of such conventions and rules, among other things, all agreed that the programs' focus of language problems were of utmost help to them, as one respondent explained:

I found most [of the program's] courses to be quite relevant, but I especially found the courses on language problems to be especially useful. Even two years after graduating, I still refer to some of the in-class exercises we did and to some of the textbooks we used. Also, it is worth [in school] going into the minute details of some conventions – typographical, for example – and to force us to memorize some basic grammar rules. We need to develop good

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reflexes. It helps us tremendously once we're out in the real world.

Study participant 02B

4.1.4 Work terms (internships)

While not all graduates of Canadian translation programs have had the opportunity to do a work term – or several work terms – during the course of their studies, all the junior translators interviewed did have the chance to work in the field of translation during the course of their undergraduate studies.

There are essentially two types of work terms in Canadian university translation programs. The first one is an actual work placement whereby students fully integrate a translation service or a translation firm. The placement can be as short as three weeks (full-time) and as long as four months (full-time). Students work under the supervision of a senior translator or reviser in charge of supervising their work. Tasks include translation per se, but also peripheral tasks such as proofreading, editing, term-base management, translation-memory updating, etc. A few Canadian universities also offer coop programs that allow students to complete up to three

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work terms during the course of their undergraduate degree.

The second type of work term is the Federal Government Partnership Program³, a partnership whereby the students, while not integrated into the workplace (the federal public service), are paired with a professional translator for the length of a university semester (3 to 4 months). During this period, the trainee must translate a total of thirteen 700-word texts – one per week – which are revised by the supervisor and marked accordingly. The student and the reviser must meet once a week to discuss not only the final product but also the problems the student was confronted with and the solutions he or she proposed. This type of partnership is considered highly valuable by both students and universities.

In general, junior translators refer to their work term – or work terms – as being one of the most valuable components of their initial training. Most, in fact, deem that these forays into the workplace should be compulsory given their undeniable pedagogical value; that being said, most are fully cognizant that there are simply not enough translation services or firms in a position to welcome students. The main

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advantages of work terms, according to junior translators, are twofold: on the one hand, work terms are the best way for students to gain real-world insight into the professional world of translation: its environment, its requirements, and its challenges. On the other hand, it is also a way for them to put to good use the knowledge they have so far acquired in translation school. Junior translators who experienced external work terms found that they were well-prepared to join the workforce. The following remark is typical of the comments made by junior translators who had a chance to do one or more work terms during their undergraduate studies:

My three work terms [the translator is a graduate of a coop program] are what really allowed me to see if I enjoyed professional translation and to better understand the different environments within the translation industry – in my case a government service, a large translation firm and a translation unit within a corporation. It is really during my work terms that I acquired more confidence, speed and skill. I felt that my program prepared me well for my work terms, and I felt especially well prepared for my translation courses after my work terms

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(...) I think everyone should have at least one work term [during their studies]. They are a great complement to the university program.

Study participant 03A

4.2 Areas for improvement

While comments on general training were on the whole positive, junior translators nonetheless pointed out several areas where there was, in their opinion, room for improvement. Although areas for improvement were suggested by most translations, these did not, on the whole, overshadow the programs' strengths. Here is a list of the most salient and recurring themes that emerged of the interviews.

4.2.1 Little focus on speed and productivity requirements

According to the vast majority of junior translators, the most difficult aspect of their transition to the job market related to productivity requirements. It should, however, be noted that comments varied greatly from one firm or service to another as the requirements for new translators, and especially the timeframes laid out to meet these productivity

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requirements, were not the same at TSP-A, TSP-B and TSP-C. Nonetheless, meeting productivity requirements was, for most juniors, a source of significant stress, an aspect of their work that they felt, in some regards, unprepared for. At TSP-C, for example, all beginners were faced with this challenge, and several had to take concrete steps in order to increase, over time, their overall productivity. At TSP-A and TSP-B, initial requirements were lower than at TSP-C, although they did increase over time (i.e. after six months to one year, etc.). Some junior translators had in fact taken much longer than anticipated to achieve the required level of productivity.

To me, it was somewhat of a shock, I must say. Why is it that I was so unaware of what was expected from me in terms of productivity? I did a four-month work term [during my program], which was great, but during work terms, there is little focus of productivity per se. The emphasis is on quality. When you start working, however, this changes. My employer made it very clear to me that I had to slowly increase my productivity over time and that I would have to attain [a certain number of words] within the end of my first year, and then [a certain

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number of words] by the end of my second year. I was not able to achieve that, and so specific measures had to be taken. On top of it being stressful, I actually wondered if I would not be let go, I wondered if this was the right job for me. Now, two and half years later, I'm ok. No problem. But it was a challenge. My program never really insisted on the importance of productivity.

Study participant 05C

Given those challenges, most junior translators wondered why universities seemed to place so little emphasis on *speed* and *overall productivity*. For instance, some junior translators felt that while it may be impossible for universities to simulate real-world conditions and thus train fully productive translators by the end of their initial training, universities could however better prepare students for the realities of the marketplace by at least insisting more on productivity requirements, by providing them with a clearer idea of what will be expected of them in the near future. Some suggested that more focus should be placed on time-limited evaluations (exams, in-class assignments, etc.), especially in upper-level, specialized/technical translation courses. This would allow students to

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become not only more productive – even slightly – but also more familiar with timeframes and deadlines, which is what awaits them in the real world.

Secondly, with respect to productivity requirements, all felt that the solution would be to make work terms compulsory. Some are also of the opinion that all translator-training programs should be coop programs, as is the case in some other professions.

4.2.2 Little focus on clients

Another oft-cited comment concerned the somewhat ambiguous relationship between the translators – or the firms or services – and their clients. More specifically, junior translators were surprised to see the extent to which clients had decisional power in matters that, in the eyes of the translators, was outside the clients’ realm, i.e. language-related issues. As translators are trained to become language experts above all, this was one area where, according to juniors, they thought they had an upper hand. Many were thus surprised to see that some clients would modify the target text, replacing in some instances “correct” terms with “improper” or more colloquial terms. Other clients

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frequently make stylistic modifications to the target text without consulting or even informing the service/firm or translator, which came as a surprise to new translators, who saw their revised, polished text as a sort of fair copy. The whole issue of the client's overall authority and their ability to make changes to their final TL text was somewhat disconcerting for junior translators. As one respondent put it:

Oh, I was in fact really surprised to see how much power the clients have. They pay for the translation and they basically do whatever they want with it, even add mistakes to it. And modify the target text's sentences to supposedly better adapt them to their clients' needs. In some ways, our work, as professionals, can seem undervalued. I wish we could have at least broached this topic in university.

Study participant 16A

This last comment, which came up in several interviews, raises a series of other questions that go beyond the scope of this article, but it does give an indication of the topics that could be broached during initial training.

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4.2.3 Little focus on the critical role played by CAT tools

As mentioned earlier, junior translators felt at ease with the computer-assisted tools they were called upon to use in the workplace. However, what surprised most of the new entrants – except perhaps those who had graduated from a coop program and had thus acquired the equivalent of almost one full year of work experience – was the centrality of tools in the translation process and the translation work environment. What translators meant by “centrality” was the primary role the tools occupied in the process and, to varying degrees, the extent to which they were subjected to certain tools and certain practices. (This was most notable at TSP-C and TSP-B.) For example, many junior translators were surprised by the degree to which they were subjected to pre-existing translations provided by the translation memory, for example (see LeBlanc 2017 for a detailed analysis of this). While the translation memory was introduced, in university, as a tool that was at the translator’s disposal, it was used in a very different fashion in the workplace. Many junior translators commented on the limited autonomy they had over the “machine” in those instances where the translation memory provided perfect or near-perfect matches. The following

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translator's comment summarized what was expressed by several other juniors:

It's funny. In school, and in fact even during my last work term, the translation memory was presented and used as a tool. I loved it. I do think it has many advantages. But here, at TSP-C, it is used in a much more restrictive way. If it's [the sentence or segment] in the [translation] memory, you have no choice but to use it. A term, a segment, a whole sentence, it doesn't matter. It's very restrictive. I didn't know translation memories could be used in such a way (...) It's funny that this was never a topic of discussion in university. What is the translator's role in all of this? Do we have a say? Who decides?

Study participant 04C

What we see here is that technology's effect on translation practices was something most, if not all, junior translators were to a large extent unaware of before they actually entered the workforce. Although they are familiar with most tools – and quickly learned to master new ones – and that they had had a chance to use them during their work

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terms, they nonetheless were unaware of the tools' potential downsides. The sort of disconnect that we observed here was not so much with the technology or the tools, but rather with the business practices that are enforced by translation firms and services. This, too, seems to be an aspect that receives very cursory treatment in university training programs.

5. RESULTS OF THE STUDY (II): SENIOR TRANSLATOR AND REVISERS

In this second part of the Results section, I will, in a similar fashion, look closely at what senior translators and revisers had to say about junior translators' preparedness for the market.

5.1 Strengths of programs

Two aspects emerged from the data. First, senior translators and revisers claimed to be, overall, impressed by the resourcefulness of newly minted translators. The consensus view was that junior translators have, upon graduating, a good knowledge of online resources, on the one hand, and were skilful in finding answers to questions and problems posed by the source text, on the other hand. As one reviser points out:

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That's where I see a difference between "us" [seniors] and "them" [juniors]. They grew up with the Internet, always looking for answers and resources online. Their ability to find answers – and good answers at that – sometimes surprised me. In fact, I have learned a lot from them, although I must point out that they do not all possess the critical judgement that is needed to determine whether a resource is reliable or not. That will come. And that's my job, too.

Study participant 05B

The latter portion of the respondent's comment is worthy of attention, as several other senior translators and revisers alluded to the same concern. In other words, while it was acknowledged that junior translators were indeed very resourceful, it was also recognized that they sometimes need to be more critical of the information they locate. This, however, was not always seen as a concern, but as a skill that needed to be developed over time under the guidance and supervision of more senior translators.

The other aspect that emerged from nearly all interviews and discussions with senior translators and revisers was the technical savvy of junior

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translators. The comments made to this effect were similar to those made in reference to the resourcefulness of junior translators and to their overall openness to new technologies. The following is typical of remarks made by senior translators and revisers:

As for their knowledge of tools, I have nothing much to say. They [junior translators] are all pretty knowledgeable from the get-go. We give them training that is more specific to the tools we use here, for example [name of translation memory], but for the rest, they seem to know as much as we do and sometimes more. I like working with the younger ones [junior translators]. I've learned from them and as a result I've become more open to new tools.

Study participant 08B

Others, while in agreement with the preceding statement, are slightly more cautious in their remarks, pointing out to certain errors in judgement on the part of junior translators, errors that are again due to their lack of experience in the real world.

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5.2 Main areas for improvement

As for areas for improvement, no particular themes emerged from the dataset, except for the programs' need for more stringent target language standards. A little over half of the senior translators and revisers made comments to the effect that some junior translators still had some deficiencies in French – the target language of all junior translators – which needed to be remedied quickly. Senior translators and revisers were however cautious in their remarks and mentioned that this was not a generalized problem. It varied from one individual to another. That being said, all were of the opinion that if universities were to impose higher standards – for example allowing for a maximum number of spelling or syntax errors in translations, especially in upper-level courses – junior translators would be better equipped upon entering the job market.

Others made specific reference to the tightening of productivity requirements in recent years, indicating a possible link with the number of language errors that can sometimes be found in some translations produced by junior translators:

I sometimes wonder if it's [the types of errors found in texts] not linked to the

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pressures that are being exerted on junior translators nowadays. When I started translating, our productivity requirements were a fraction of what they are today for the new generation. We had time to translate our texts, read them over again, etc. Now it's not the same. So are we comparing oranges to apples here? Were we really better junior translators 20 years ago? Let's be careful in our assumptions.

Study participant 17B

Incidentally, on the topic of productivity requirements, none of the senior translators and revisers implied that junior translators were not productive enough. While they all acknowledged that productivity requirements had indeed gone up in the past years and that some junior translators had had difficulty meeting the set requirements, none were of the opinion that concrete steps had to be taken, at least at the university level, to make translators more productive. In fact, the vast majority agreed that firms and services sometimes require too much too quickly of junior translators, and that neither translation schools nor employers can bring a newly minted translator to a level of

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productivity that is equal to that of intermediate or senior translators in the space of one or two years.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Overall, the data yielded by this study of translators in the workplace has, I believe, provided useful insight on initial translator training in the Canadian context. It has shown that incursions into the workplace, through ethnographic methods, provides researchers with rich and interesting data that, when analyzed, offers a better picture not only of the realities of the different working environments, or the translators' habitus, but also of the perceptions held by the professionals who spend their days translating. In this case, the data allows us to better apprehend the strengths of initial translator-training programs – at least in the Canadian context – as well as the areas where there is potential room for improvement. Above all, it allows us to “talk to translators,” to interact with them, to engage them.

Taken together, the results suggest that Canadian universities are training translators who are ready for the Canadian translation market. Junior translators were of the opinion that, on the whole, they felt well prepared for the workplace and that

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their training program was responsive to market needs. According to junior and senior translators, programs fared the best in the following areas: introduction to the main areas of specialization; introduction to computer-aided translation tools; knowledge of online resources in general; focus on TL writing skills; inclusion of work terms. The results however show that there are some areas that seemed lacking, i.e. a better knowledge of market realities (speed and productivity), relations with clients, and the central role of CAT tools in the translation process.

Interestingly, however, none of the senior translators and revisers were of the opinion that junior translators needed, upon graduating, to be *more productive*, i.e. translate with greater speed. This is contrary to what is sometimes held by representatives of the translation industry. What we are witnessing, perhaps, are changes within the industry, especially those related to increasing productivity requirements, including for junior translators. However, senior translators – and sometimes management – acknowledge that training programs cannot produce graduates that are fully productive from day one; it is during the first years of professional practice that improvements on

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the levels of speed and quality are achieved. This is where the firms and services come into play. Nonetheless, junior translators feel the squeeze, the constant pressures to perform.

Another interesting aspect that emerged from the dataset is the central role played by computer-assisted translation tools. While junior translators – as well as the senior translators who supervise their work – agreed that training institutions provided them with a good knowledge of tools and that they were able to adapt to new ones quickly once in the workforce, they were nonetheless surprised to discover the central place those tools occupy in the process. This is contrary to another common assumption that holds that graduates have an insufficient knowledge of tools. What they seem to lack, rather, is a knowledge of the tools' central role in the whole process. Institutions could perhaps integrate, in their curriculum, a more *critical* look at tools with a focus on the more problematic and divisive aspects (tools used with the sole aim of increasing productivity or for calculating productivity, for example).

Overall, this foray into the workplace is one way at bridging the (apparent?) divide between academia

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and the real world, as some see it. From my experience as a researcher, integrating the workplace for a certain period of time serves another important purpose: bringing professionals and academics closer together. This can be a productive way of maintaining – or initiating, in some cases – an enriching and much-needed dialogue between the two. It is a way for us, as academics, to better understand the needs and challenges of translation professionals and language service providers and, in return, a way for us to better explain what we do in universities, what we can realistically achieve in the span of three or four years, and how we can all better manage expectations.

Finally, as is the case with all research, the current study has its limitations. Since it was focused on translation firms and services, and thus in-house translators, it did not take into account the realities of freelance translators, which would warrant another study altogether. The current study is also a reflection of the Canadian model. That being said, I do believe that, as Li pointed out in his study on the views of administrators of translation services, “the discussions can be a point of reference for many translation programs elsewhere” (2007, p. 121). What could now add further to our knowledge are

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other, similar studies carried out in different workplaces, in other geographical areas, in different translation environments. The findings of such research could be of great value to both researchers and professionals.

NOTES

1. The interviews were conducted in French, the main language of work in the three translation firms/services. The excerpts are my translations into English.
2. Participant codes.
3. It was officially announced in 2014 that the Federal Government was suspending the Partnership Program due to lack of funding.

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