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SIMULATING JOBS OF THE TRANSLATION INDUSTRY: ON THE SPECIFICITY OF ROLE-PLAYING IN A TRANSLATION PROJECT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF TRANSLATION STUDENTS

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Abstract

This article is a qualitative attempt of a phenomenological nature to contribute to the area of simulation-based learning as deployed in translation didactics. More specifically, the objective of this paper is to focus on translation trainees' views on the implementation of projects during which students are tasked with simulating professional translational activities specific to the translation industry. The fundamental two-fold research question posed in the study is 1) how the subjects interpret their experience with the project and 2) what the experience is like for them. Although in translation studies literature one can find a plethora of remarks and suggestions on the benefits of such teaching methods, very few studies have so far focused on how translation students, or students in general, perceive such activities

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and whether they find them useful for their future professional career in the translation industry. In an attempt to contribute to the discussion, the author of this paper applied the simulationist approach in the academic year 2019/20 at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Bialystok to 11 MA translation students. Upon the completion of the course, the author conducted a focus group interview with the students in order to inquire into possible advantages and disadvantages of this type of learning translation. Results have revealed that translation trainees were generally satisfied with the method. The study has expanded our knowledge about the potential of the simulation-based approach to translation pedagogy as seen from the student's perspective, as well as going some way towards enhancing our understanding of the image and specificity of the translation jobs the trainees hold at the very beginning stage of their learning process.

Keywords: simulation, playing roles, teamwork, translation project, focus group interview

1. INTRODUCTION

The simulation approach to translation teaching, sometimes also discussed within the frame of the so-called learner-centred paradigm, situated, collaborative¹ learning

¹In this paper, collaboration should be understood as an activity in its most basic sense, namely, as a situation in which “two or more agents cooperate in some way to produce a translation” (O’Brien, 2011, p. 17). Within collaborative learning translation trainees could either realize a real translational task ordered by the client or simulate such projects with the translation trainer acting as the client or the commissioner. In this paper, emphasis is placed exclusively on the latter. For various definitions of “collaboration” in the translation process see Thelen, 2016. The author offers the following features of collaboration in a translation project: “(1) applies to an activity to produce (or create) something/ to accomplish a task or project; (2) there is multi-

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(for more see O'Brien, 2011), professional realism (see e.g. Biel, 2011; Kelly, 2005) or *in vivo* translation (see Krüger and Serrano Piqueras, 2015), consists in having translation students assume different roles for various translational tasks, such as project manager, translator, reviser, terminologist, editor, proof-reader, etc., and working together in a team, mimicking the real-life jobs performed within the translation industry. It mostly follows the principles of social constructivism in that it is viewed as a “social act that helps to construct knowledge and takes the form of a collaborative explanation of the translation process and product” (González-Davies, 2017, p. 71). Without too gross a generalization it could be said that in the last three decades, simulation-based learning has become an increasingly crucial area in translation teaching. As Kiraly claims, “. . . the kind of collaborative, authentic-project based pedagogy . . . has begun to flourish in 21st century translator education” (2019, p. 12)².

Simulating jobs in the translation industry seems crucial in the development of both translation competence³ and

participant synchronous and/or asynchronous interaction; (3) it involves negotiating/discussing between participants; (4) there may be a division/distribution of labor; (5) it can (but need not) be decentralized and self-organized; and (6) mutual agreement is required between participants” (p. 261).

² Of note here is the use of the term *translator education*, and not *translation training* by the author. The rationale behind this terminological decision is that the former pertains to “the integration of translation students into the community of translation professionals” (Konttinen et al. 2020, p. 154).

³ *Translation competence* should here be understood in accordance with the European Commission’s competence framework for the European Master’s in Translation (EMT) Network. In this document, *translation competence* is defined as “the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or

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translation expertise. A number of researchers have reported the benefits of the approach. As Kiraly rightly puts it, “[Translators today] make meaning as they work” (2000, p. 12). It might also be underlined that today translation trainees make meaning as they simulate working in the translation profession. In a similar vein, Wang claims, “Scenario simulation approach emphasizes on constructing real translation project scenario in class . . . the approach narrows the gap between classroom practice and occupational practice. It effectively stimulates students’ internal motivation improving participation and responsibility” (2011, p. 204). Also, the beneficial effect of the approach has been underlined by Newmark, who said that “simulation exercises”, or “role-playing” could result in “profitable teaching” (1980, p. 130). This view has been echoed by Gonzáles-Davies (2017), according to whom “[t]eamwork helps students resolve both translational and social issues, supporting those who feel more confident if allowed to voice their opinion in small groups” (p. 72). Such an approach to teaching enables trainees to “move away from a literalist approach to translation towards an approach that encourages creative,

study situations and in professional and personal development” (online, p. 3). The EMT framework is based on “the premise that ‘translation’ is a process designed to meet an individual, societal or institutional need . . . The framework therefore considers that translator education and training at Master’s degree level should equip students not only with a deep understanding of the processes involved, but also with the ability to perform and provide a translation service in line with the highest professional and ethical standards” (online, p. 4). In the document, five following areas comprising the notion of *translation competence* have been delimited: language and culture, translation, technology, personal and interpersonal, and service provision.

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motivated choices informed by a specific translation assignment” (ibid.).

The potential effectiveness of the simulation-based learning situation might also be explained by resorting to the hypothesis of embodied simulation (see Bergen 2012), according to which people understand language, other people’s behaviour and emotions by simulating in their minds what it would be like to experience that which the utterance, or behaviour refers to. The hypothesis itself, although controversial, might be said to be empirically confirmed (see Barsalou 1999; Bergen & Wheeler 2005; Zwaan 1999). It also posits that simulations might be deployed in our everyday life in order to practice certain actions, which remains in harmony with Risku’s embodiment cognitive theory, namely that the learning process is always situated, rather than “decontextualized”, and that practicing real-life situations should become one of the most important goals in translation didactics (2010, p. 101). Recently, this view has been adopted by Kiraly (2019), who by discarding positivist reductionism and moving through social constructivist principles has finally turned towards post-positivism “which encourages us to view cognition itself as . . . an emergent adaptive system . . . It does not involve static *knowledge* as much as it does dynamic *knowing* . . .” (ibid., p. 11). In this respect, the enactive component of the post-positivist educational philosophy pinpoints the importance of emergent epistemological pedagogy. In light of this, learning, according to Kiraly, is quite rightly described as an activity

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“emerging incessantly through lived experience in an ever-changing environment that both simultaneously hosts learning and is changed by and through that learning” (ibid., p. 14). It means, then, that by engaging trainees in doing exercises bearing close resemblance to activities carried out by professional translators, the trainer becomes a mediator who connects the learning side with occupational practice. That is why so much emphasis has recently been placed on so called authentic situations in the translation classroom. As Risku, a vocal proponent of Situatedness and Embodiment in Translation Studies, convincingly puts it,

An authentic learning situation is achieved by enabling students to manage the whole range of tasks involved in the translation process: information research, terminological work, project management and teamwork. This includes the ability to organise their working environments and to claim their place in it. . . . Universities can provide students with situations in which they learn and exercise social roles. Later, in professional life, translators become ‘social experts’ through constant training on the job. Thus, professional identity and competence are not associated with the individual, but with social processes or other processes which involve a strong social element. (2010, p. 105)

So far, the importance of the issue of collaborative, including near-authentic experiential teaching, has been raised by many translation scholars (see Cordingley & Frigau Manning, 2017; González-Davies, 2004; González-Davies, 2017; Hu, 2018; Kiraly, 2012; Kiraly, 2013;

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Kiraly, 2019; Mitchell-Schuitevoerder, 2013; Newmark, 1980; Vienne 1994; Wang, 2011). In light of the above it is also worth mentioning research projects that pertain to collaborative learning in translation didactics. One of them is the OTCT Project (for more see the website of the project: <http://www.otct-project.eu/>), standing for Optimising Translator Training through Collaborative Technical Translation and capitalizing on the results of the OPTIMALE network. It is “an Erasmus+ strategic Partnership . . . [whose] aim is to enhance the integration of professionally-oriented practices in translator training curriculum” (online). The project involves the participation of both students (from 7 European universities)—who take part in “Tradutech sessions” devoted to technical translation, conducted with the aim of exposing the participating subjects to near-authentic situations very close to those happening within the translation industry—and translation trainers, who meet in order to exchange ideas pertaining to collaboration in translation teaching.

A similar initiative to the one discussed above is INSTB, standing for the International Network of Simulated Translation Bureaus (<http://www.instb.eu/>). The network comprises a partnership of universities that deploy the idea of a *simulated translation bureau* (STB), or “skills lab”, within the scheme of translation training. As can be read on the website of the project, “[a] simulation translation bureau is staffed and run by students as a real translation bureau and is fully integrated, practice-oriented part of the

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curriculum that that earns credit points” (INSTB, online). The main purpose of INSTB is to “increase graduate employability by offering students practical, market-oriented experience during their studies” (online).

However, despite the fact that in translation studies literature one can find a plethora of remarks and suggestions on the benefits of collaboration in teaching translation (e.g. Englund Dimitrova, 2005; Gouadec, 2007; Kiraly, 2000; Kelly, 2005) or simulated professional practice (e.g. Konttinen et al., 2020), and translation scholars are generally in agreement as to the potential usefulness of so-called situated learning, including near-authentic situations in translation practice (see Gonzáles-Davies, 2004; Gonzáles-Davies & EnríquezRaído, 2018), very few studies (e.g. Huertas Barros, 2011; Pavlović, Hadžiahmetović Jurida, 2019) have so far focused on how translation students, or students in general (see e.g. Hammar Chiriac, 2014; Schultz et. al, 2010) perceive such activities and whether they find them useful for both their learning progress and their prospective professional career in the translation industry. This indicates a need to understand whether what translation trainers see as an advantage is also perceived as such by translation trainees, and whether any components of such training should be improved or modified in order for the trainees to achieve success. Therefore, this paper attempts to focus on translation trainees’ opinions as to the implementation of projects during which students are tasked with simulating

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professional translational activities specific to the translation industry.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper is a qualitative attempt of a phenomenological nature to contribute into the area of simulation-based learning as deployed within the field of translation pedagogy. By the phrase phenomenological nature it is meant in this paper that attempts are made to gain insights into the lived experience of the subjects having a particular experience with a new teaching method. In other words, this paper remains within the methodological approach of interpretative phenomenological analysis, which has at its core the value of an individual or a group of individuals making sense of a given situation. The objective of the study was to analyze translation trainees' perspective as to the implementation of assignments with simulation of professional translational tasks at their core, and to answer the fundamental two-fold research question posed in the study: 1) how the subjects interpret their experience with the project and 2) what the experience was like for them.

2.1 Participants

The study used a convenience sample of 11 MA students majoring in English Philology with Elements of

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Translation Studies, all being Polish native speakers, whom the author of the paper was teaching translation of non-literary texts over the period of four months prior to realizing the research project and conducting the interview. Over half the sample (7) was female. All of the participants of the study were aged 22-25. They studied translation as an inherent part of their MA programme in English Studies, participating in various courses dedicated to, *inter alia*, consecutive interpreting, audiovisual translation, journalistic translation or MA seminar in Translation Studies.

2.2 Specificity of the translation assignment

In order to launch the assignment⁴, I selected managers of the translation project. Then I assigned the remaining members of their translation teams on a random basis so as to avoid bias. The chosen managers were obliged to decide who was going to perform a given role in their teams. Their decisions were to be based on their relative acquaintance with the other members' translational abilities and skills. In this way three teams were created:

⁴ It has to be underlined that the translation project in question is not a real translation job ordered by a client but rather a task designed by the teacher, who, in this case, has simulated the role of the commissioner, and the translation trainees who participated in this procedure were aware of this fact. Because the trainees participated in such a project for the first time, and the main objective of the assignment was, first and foremost, to familiarize them with the specificity of different roles in the translation process and with the set of responsibilities that a particular member of the translation team holds, no further near-realistic aspects of the translation industry, such as billing, were introduced.

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two teams with four members each and one team with three members. During a specifically organized meeting the chosen managers were instructed by the researcher as to further actions they were obliged to perform in order to achieve the intended goal, which was to submit a translation of the first three pages (approximately 700 words in length) of an Introduction from Heidi M. Szpek's scholarly monograph entitled *Bagnowka. A Modern Jewish Cemetery on the Russian Pale* (2016). There were neither particular instructions nor glossaries provided except for the information that the translation was to be published by a publishing house specializing in scholarly monographs, and that the style to be deployed should be academic as the majority of the intended audience would comprise researchers interested in the problem of Jewish cemeteries dispersed across Europe. CAT tools were not used by the students as they were not familiar with this program at that time. The use of machine translation was not allowed.

The managers were provided with detailed information as to the specificity of particular roles that were to be performed by other subjects, with particular focus on revision and editing. The choice of the source text was first and foremost motivated by the fact that the cemetery discussed by the author is situated in Białystok, a city where all participants of the translation project study and where most of them have lived since their childhood. Furthermore, the book has not been translated into the trainees' mother tongue before, and thus the subjects did

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not have a chance to consult any potential existing renderings and be inspired by the solutions applied by other translators.

The entire project was realized remotely, outside the confines of the translation classroom, and it lasted a little bit over one month (17th December 2019 – 24th January 2020). (The assignment could be referred to as additional to the main syllabus, which means it was realized by students outside of their regular translation classes.) All participants were asked to communicate via e-mail only, using formal register, which was to help them simulate the conditions of real jobs performed within the translation industry. The whole project was also meant to evaluate the students' 'soft skills', or 'interpersonal skills'⁵. The managers' task was to assign particular roles (translator, reviser, editor) to other members of their teams, inform them about the philosophy underlying the entire project, provide them with the source text, as well as set deadlines for particular parts of the work that needed to be done. The researcher specifically asked all the managers to be CC'd on all communications that they were to have with other members of their teams. In this way the researcher obtained all e-mails sent from the managers to other members, or vice versa, on a regular basis, which made it

⁵ *Soft skills* are here to be understood in accordance with the European Commission's competence framework for the European Master's in Translation (EMT) Network, where the term is defined as the skills "that enhance graduate adaptability and employability" (online, p. 10). They include, but are not limited to, planning and managing time and deadlines, dealing with stressful situations, working in and managing a team, self-evaluating one's own skills and competencies, etc. (ibid.).

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possible to semi-control the entire procedure and react if needed. The researcher did not interfere in the whole procedure because one of the main ideas behind the project was to give the subjects the space and autonomy they needed to immerse themselves in the activities to be carried out. The deadline for submission of the translations by the managers was established for 24 January, 2020.

The researcher obtained all the translations within the allotted time. No problems were reported either by managers of the project or by other members of the three teams during the realization of the translation assignment. Only once did a manager ask the author of this paper for advice as to whether he should contact the author of the source text in order to clarify an issue connected with the translation of a lexical item. Apart from that, no other issues were raised.

2.3 The technique of collecting data

The data for this study were collected by means of a semi-structured focus group interview, a method which could be defined as a format “based on the collective experience of group brainstorming, that is, participants thinking together, inspiring and challenging each other and reacting to the emerging issues and points” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 144). The technique was chosen because of the fact that this type of interview allows the researcher to gather detailed information about the group’s opinions, as well as

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achieving a better understanding of their feelings about a particular mode of teaching or a type of assignment. Furthermore, due to the fact that the study implicitly attempts to gain insights into the group dynamics in a simulated real-life job situation, it was also interesting for the author of this paper to verify whether any disturbing behavioural patterns could be observed while interviewing the participants of the translation project as a group and not as individuals, and whether such potential patterns could have resulted from the assignment itself. This also related to the issue of the soft/interpersonal skills of the participants of the study.

However, despite the many obvious advantages of the method⁶, there are certain drawbacks associated with the use of the focus group interview. The main disadvantage, as Dörnyei (2007, p. 146) rightly underlines, is that the moderator is in charge of many tasks to complete: preparing the site of the interview and the scenario, predicting potential problems or conflicts, conducting the discussion, recording it, taking care of the participants' well-being, etc. Following Smithson (2000), Dörnyei also stresses further drawbacks, namely, “the tendency for

⁶As Cargan neatly summarizes, a focus group interview offers “an efficient, economical way to collect data from several people at the same time . . . The flexibility of group dynamics encourages participation, and one person’s comments may stimulate ideas in others. In addition, these same dynamics often lead to concentration on the important topics . . . Focus interviews also allow the researcher to observe and explore the participants while they are interacting and sharing their attitudes and experiences. Finally, the focus interview allows the researcher to observe the roles played by the respondents during the discussion – to note their agreements and disagreements” (2007, p. 110).

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certain types of socially acceptable opinion to emerge and for certain types of participant to dominate the research process” (ibid.).

2.4 The procedure of conducting the interview

The participants of the study were interviewed at the end of January 2020, just after the completion of the winter term of the academic year 2019/2020. At this time all students had already been given final grades, and thus it might be assumed they were under no pressure as to the quality and spectrum of their accounts, along with the depth of information they provided. Initially, it was planned to conduct three separate interviews, each with a mixed group composed of students working in different teams in the project so as to avoid discouraging the participants from stating their genuine opinions about other members of their own teams. The plan was not realized, though, because the students claimed that they felt good in their own company and that they did not need to be separated. In other words, they had “nothing to hide in front of themselves”, as they put it.

The interview was conducted in Polish and lasted approximately 60 minutes. Prior to conducting the interview, the researcher introduced the subjects to the entire procedure and to the purpose of the interview, assured them about the confidentiality and anonymity of the data that were to be obtained, and explained the further

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treatment of the data. Some ground rules as to the interview were offered to the subjects. Students were also encouraged to ask questions concerning the specificity of the interview and to express their potential concerns about the whole procedure. The researcher also informed the participants that there were neither right nor wrong answers, and that all opinions should be respected. The interviews were recorded by means of a dictaphone. No video recording was used, first of all because the researcher had known all the students well for at least half a year and was able to recognize their voice as based on the audio recording itself, and second, a video-recording could have intimidated the subjects as they had never participated in a focus group interview before.

The interview proceeded in accordance with the following stages: 1) greeting subjects, explaining to them the entire methodological procedure and setting the tone for a further discussion; 2) conducting the interview⁷; 3) running a debriefing and concluding stage during which the researcher summed up what had been achieved and thanked the subjects for their participation in the project. Some positive feedback was also offered so that everybody could feel they provided valuable input to the

⁷ Examples of questions included: 1) What were your first reactions to the task?; 2) What kind of advantages and/or disadvantages can you see in implementing such an approach?; 3) What criteria did you apply while assigning roles to the remaining members of your translation team? Which part of the project was the most challenging for you? At the same time it has to be emphasized that the interview was semi-structured, and thus the example questions placed above were modified or adapted to the course of the discussion.

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discussion. Participants were seated in a circle. Also, in an attempt to make each interviewee feel as comfortable as possible, the interviewer repeatedly voiced encouragement for the subjects to present even those views that might seem to them rather less preferred or socially risky. They were asked the following types of open-ended questions: preliminary questions about their general feelings connected with the procedure, content questions, probes, and final, or closing, questions. As the moderator used a semi-structured version of the focus group interview, pre-prepared questions were modified or changed depending on the course and nature of the discussion. All the data were transcribed, coded and categorized by means of thematic analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the obtained results will be presented as divided into the delimited themes, or categories: 1) simulation-based translation project and emotionality; 2) simulation-based translation project as a way of integrating theory and practice; 3) simulation-based translation project as a way of verifying students' own knowledge and skills; 4) simulation-based translation project as a means to develop autonomy and achieve a better understanding of what studying is all about; 5) simulation-based translation project as a means to verify the nature of a given role within the assignment. It must be underlined that the categories above are marked by their

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inherent circularity in that they overlap and emerge from one another. For instance, integrating theory and practice has an impact on students' self-control over their translation skills and abilities, which, in turn, leads to the development of autonomy and self-reflection.

The project triggered in the subjects a spectrum of diverse emotional states, which included fear, anxiety, dismay, surprise, excitement, and finally a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction with completion of the task. This specific emotional roller-coaster can be seen in the following statements:

M3⁸: *I was **excited** because I'm planning to develop my skills as a manager. . .*

T2: *I took an activity-based approach to the project. Here we go again. There is simply something to do, and I want to do my best. I was **not specifically excited**.*

M1: *I **worried** a little bit whether, for example, somebody would not want to cooperate with me . . . there could also be a **problem** within a group and I feared that . . .*

⁸ All accounts have been translated into English by the author of this paper. Also, when quoting subjects' accounts, the following abbreviations are used: **M** standing for the manager, **T** standing for the translator, **R** standing for the reviser, and **P** standing for the proofreader. Some words or expressions in the accounts have been marked in bold to highlight some of the key issues discussed in a given fragment.

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T1: *It was **hard** a little bit; I did not want to ply [the manager] with questions . . .*

R2: *I was **happy** that I had not been assigned the role of translator.*

T3: *Personally, I was **fine** with that. It is **the most interesting** role in the whole project.*

P1: *I saw it as **interesting** . . . When I found out which roles were available in the project, I strongly hoped that I would get proofreader . . . It was **a great relief** . . .*

M2: *I was **happy** to be able to check out myself in this particular role, and I **feared** a potential conflict within the group the most . . .*

At the beginning, as the subjects reported, the assignment led to the emergence of very serious concerns regarding not only the deadline of the project, but also the scope and character of their own skills and abilities and ensuing from them the question of whether the translation products would reflect students' ability to translate or to revise and proofread to the required standard. In particular, managers of the project were concerned whether the deadline set for the task would not lead to other members of their team having a grudge against the managers. It should be added that the realization of the project overlapped a winter break associated with travelling for Christmas and New Year's

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Eve, thus making it even more difficult for the students to plan their activities reasonably. It is worth noticing how frequently the subjects used words such as *fear*, *afraid* or *worry*:

M2: . . . *I was thinking whether the time we had would be enough . . . there was Christmas along the way. I did **not know what to expect**, and it was my **biggest worry**.*

M1: *I was **afraid** whether somebody would not hold a **grudge** against me . . . it is Christmas time, and I give the translator some additional work . . .*

P3: *I was surprised myself that we have such a project. There was **fear** a little bit about what would have happened if I had not performed my role properly.*

M3: *I imagined that a company had commissioned us with the task . . . I imagined what must be in the target text so that it would not be **inadequate** in relation to the original text.*

“This new situation” (M1), as one of the managers referred to the project, caused a plethora of questions on the side of other members of the teams. The manager revealed that her concern was that she would not be able to answer them properly:

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M1: . . . *I was **not able** to answer some of the questions . . . I was **hard** for me that I got some questions and I did **not know** either how this should have looked, how this should have been done . . .*

Other instances of anxiety and worries related specifically to the lack of faith in their own abilities and in the quality of translation products that were to be created. Other members of the three teams expressed that initially they doubted their own translation skills. Some of them were even pretty surprised to have been selected by the managers to perform a given role:

T1: . . . *I was **terrified** . . . for sure, there are better students than me . . . I was **afraid** that everything would rest on my shoulders, that I would **not be able** to deal with that . . .*

What is interesting, though, is that upon completion of the project all participants said that their initial concerns disappeared:

T2: . . . *in the end I **appreciated** the value [of the project] . . .*

Without too gross a generalization it might be said that the finalization of the project brought about a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction with the achievement. An interesting element of surprise was also raised by the

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subjects, namely that they did not expect that their colleagues would work so hard on their parts of the assignment, or would cooperate so effectively in order to achieve the intended goal. This finding corroborates the ideas of Pavlović and Hadžiahmetović Jurida, who also stressed the fact that such projects make it possible for the translation process to “turn into a highly positive working atmosphere yielding reliance on colleagues for support and the know-how on an as needed basis” (2019, p. 19).

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that in spite of the initial feelings of anxiety, or even of insecurity, by opening up to challenges in the form of experiencing new teaching methods the subjects could see for themselves that the project finally helped them to acknowledge themselves as capable of realizing a near-authentic professionalized translation process. The project also allowed the subjects to discern the potential of innovative learning tasks, which initially might seem to be too complicated to be realized. This accords with Pavlović’s and Hadžiahmetović Jurida’s conclusions. The authors underlined that “there is a strong preference for exploring new learning methods such as collaborative translation as it offers a number of benefits identified by the participants . . .” (ibid., p. 18).

The analysis of the data also revealed that the project was interpreted by the subjects as an effective way of connecting translation theory with practice. As they claimed, although they had participated in many

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translation courses for almost half a year prior to participating in the project, they never had any real chance to practically apply what they had already learnt about the specificity of the translation process. The views might be seen in the following accounts:

T2: *We learnt some theory, and now we had **a chance to see how it is in practice** . . . that . . . although it was in such an artificial environment, that it is some kind of confirmation of **how it really looks**.*

P1: *It was simply such an opportunity to demonstrate and see for ourselves our knowledge, skills, including theoretical ones . . . which we acquired during the last six months . . .*

R1: *. . . opportunity to see what it looks like from the **practical perspective** . . .*

M3: *Showing a student how it looks can help in a future professional career . . . **I am not a big fan of theory** but when I am able to apply it, I then see that there is some **progress** and then I feel that it is **worth doing** that . . .*

This finding is in agreement with Jiménez-Crespo (2017, p. 228; quoted after Pavlović, Hadžiahmetović Jurida, 2019, p. 8), who underlined the importance of allowing the student access to the specificity of the professionalized translational reality, which has a great bearing on the process of developing translation competence, in

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particular its component of service provision, and strategic and methodological skills as delimited in the competence framework for the European Master's in Translation (EMT) Network (EMT online). This view also lines up with Wang (2011, p. 204), who underlined that projects such as role-playing or simulations are the key to integrating the theoretical and the practical components of the translation teaching process, and with Krüger and Serrano Piqueras (2015), who accentuated the beneficial impact of *in vivo* translation on trainees' successful implementation of theoretical tenets that they are introduced to during lectures into the practice of translation.

With regard to the above, the project allowed the subjects to assess and evaluate their own translation skills. As they noted, the possibility of verifying other members' input (e.g. revisers checking the translation against the source text, or editors analyzing the target text in terms of its acceptability and adequacy) provided them with an opportunity to see that they had made some progress over the learning period, and that they slowly became used to applying the rules they had been taught:

M3: *I was surprised by the fact that after this half a year we were starting to, let's say, **get it**. It is clear how **we had changed**. I was **impressed** by how much we were able to **make use of** so that the text could be more readable . . . we had come quite a long way.*

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M2: *I observed this **development**; it was clearly seen even at the particular stages [of the project].*

R1: *. . . everything was done [by the translator] **as it should have been done** . . . I did not have anything to correct.*

M1: *I could see how others translated, and I was **pleasantly surprised**.*

The finding surprised the subjects, and it might be concluded that it was only after the project had been implemented that they started seeing themselves as prospective professionals (not only translators though), capable of realizing translation commissions, and not only as still hugely inexperienced trainees:

P1: *We **discovered something about ourselves** . . . whether we see ourselves in such a role. It gave us a nice **view on our skills**.*

R2: *During the half of year, I never had an opportunity to **check myself out** as a reviser, and it was great for me, even better than working as a translator.*

This increased sense of competence and know-how might be explained by the fact that by applying near-authentic translation projects, the trainer enables the student to feel

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“empowered” (Kiraly, 2000, p. 17), to boost a feeling of confidence in their own skills, thus making it easier for the student to make a more informed choice about the nature of their prospective job in their future workplace. This conclusion is similar to the findings indicated by Kontinen et al. (2020), which have proven how important simulation projects are for the well-being of translators-to-be. The authors also underlined the fact that “the improvement of the students’ confidence in their own competences is a valuable learning outcome as such” (p. 161).

In their narratives, the participants also stressed how the project differed from other translation courses that they had attended. It was referred to as “the most original of all the different tasks” (M3) that the subjects were faced with. Another student, assuming a role of proofreader in the project, said the following:

P1: *[the project] was something new, something different than regular home assignments . . . and it also involved elements of cooperation.*

M3: *It was a nice change . . .*

More importantly, however, participation in this endeavour resulted in students achieving a better understanding of what studying at a university should be all about. There are similarities between such attitudes and

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those described by Pavlović and Hadžiahmetović Jurida (2019, p. 14). Also, as one of the managers put it:

M3: *In reality, for the first time in a long time I felt that I was **not learning but studying** in the project. And so it should be like that . . .*

This accords with the rationale behind the use of near-authentic tasks in the translation classroom. For as Mitchell-Schuitevoerder (2013, p. 127) claims, allowing for a larger number of encounters with professionalism in the translation classroom boosts students' self-reflection and leads to, *inter alia*, responsibility, autonomy and learning awareness.

Lastly, the interview revealed that prior to participating in the whole procedure, many subjects had viewed the particular roles to be of a different nature, which mostly holds true of the managers. Initially, as they reported, they saw the role as the least complex one, due to the fact that in their opinion, it did not encompass any concrete part of the work to be realized. Participation in the project, it seems, raised their awareness of the responsibility that most of the roles in the translation industry necessarily assume:

M1: *At the beginning of the project, I got the impression that we [managers] got the easiest roles, that we simply had to assign other roles to other people, but then when e-mails started to be sent with the corrected elements and it*

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*was necessary for me to **make some decisions** . . . I had to accept the corrections, and in many cases I myself was not sure whether it should be like that, and I had to trust either myself or the person who was correcting the text . . . So it is **an important and responsible role**.*

R1: *It was **not an easy task** . . . Sometimes I did not know whether what I was doing was like nitpicking, looking for an error by force, or maybe I should leave it as is. Something which seems to sound good to me does not have to sound better to somebody else.*

Those performing the role of translator also interpreted their task as one carrying with it great responsibility. As one of the translators said: “. . . everything begins with the translation . . .” (T1), a statement which proves the subject’s awareness of the power that the translator holds and the impact of the translation on the successive stages of the entire process of realizing the client’s order.

A possible explanation for this might be that focusing too much on translating texts during classes without recourse to the professional dimension of the translation process results in the trainees not having a clue about what the profession entails. Not realizing the intricacies of the translation profession may have well been caused by the low level of the translator’s competence, that is the ability to cooperate with other agents carrying out activities specific to the translation industry (see Kiraly, 2000, p.

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13), as translator competence—emerging over a period of time from novices to experts and constituting a complex set of various elements, including, but not limited to, life experience or personality traits (Király, 2013, p. 210-213)—is related to the professional world of translators. This observation is consistent with research carried out by Biel (2011), who claims that translator competence “is developed by professionalization of training, in particular simulations of professional practice . . .” (ibid., p. 164). It is encouraging, then, to see simulation-based practice as a way of developing not only translation competence but also translator competence, a set of skills and abilities which need to evolve for the trainee to be prepared for “employability” (Hu, 2018, p. 203). The increased responsibility for the work being realized also manifested itself in the process of assigning roles to particular students:

M3: *I found out that **she had already had experience** with translation, so I certainly took it into consideration.*

M2: *I knew who would be the translator for sure . . . **because I know that he was good at it** . . . I saw how he had been working during other classes.*

M1: *In my case it was more like observation during translation classes. I saw that **she had been catching it quickly** and so I thought that for her the translation would be the easiest part.*

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4. CONCLUSION

The present study was designed to check translation trainees' views on the use of a simulation-based project in the translation classroom. As the results of this study presented above show, engaging translation trainees in simulation-based projects has obvious implications for the students' perspective on both their learning experience as prospective professional translators and their perception of themselves as autonomous individuals making their own decisions in the educational process. The findings suggest that, in general, such projects should be deployed on a regular basis, with various configurations of typical roles of the translation industry assigned to students, so that each of them benefits from an opportunity to decide on the best option for them for their future career. The results also demonstrate that there is a great need for implementing near-authentic projects in the translation classroom, as the trainees did not know much about what the translation profession really entails.

One of the most significant findings to emerge from this investigation is that the participants were able to discuss their own weaknesses and concerns while realizing the project, and were surprised to have combated and overcome them while the project proceeded. Taken together, these results suggest that in spite of the subjects'

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initial concerns about their participation in the project and the nature of the whole procedure, in the end the trainees reached the conclusion that they benefited from the task more than they had initially expected. Participation in the project turned out to be a worthwhile experience which fundamentally changed the subjects' perspectives on the translation process and translation profession in many different ways. All the students viewed the project in a positive way. To them the whole experience was a good way of checking the level of their translation knowledge and skills, as well as being a means to integrate theory and practice in a more flexible and readily discernible manner. In some way, the project also strengthened relationships between students, as they saw for themselves that everybody did their best in order to reach the intended goal and that they could rely on each other. Lastly, it should be underlined that through participating in the project the subjects had a unique opportunity to develop their translator competence (more specifically, soft, or interpersonal skills, strategic and methodological competence, as well as skills relating to the implementation of translation services, that is, components stipulated in the competence framework for the European Master's in Translation Network), which, after Biel, is defined as one "developed by professionalization of training, in particular simulations of professional practice and traineeships" (2011, p. 164). It could be summarized in accordance with the European Commission's competence framework for the European Master's in Translation (EMT) Network that the

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participants of the study learnt how to explain and justify their decisions, as they had to comment on their solutions while communicating with the manager or the editor; “check, review and/or revise their own work and that of others according to standard or work-specific quality objectives” (online, p. 8) and “draft texts for specific purposes . . . taking into account specific situations . . .” (ibid.). As for the set of “soft skills”, participation in the project enabled the students to learn better how to behave in rather stressful, deadline-driven situations; “plan and manage time . . . and workload” (ibid., p. 10), as they were obliged to provide their final product within the set timeframe; “work in a team, including, where appropriate, in virtual . . . environments” (ibid.), as the participants needed to work together and communicate using e-mail and other Internet communication tools; and finally, as the reports revealed, collaborative learning made it possible for the trainees to “self-evaluate, update and develop competences and skills . . .” (ibid.), as the entire project entailed broadening their own knowledge and acquiring information pertaining to not only the subject matter, but also effective communication with others, managing other people’s work, as well as undergoing the translation process in line with the rules set for going through it in ISO 17100:2015: *Translation services – Requirements for translation services*, a document published in 2015, stipulating “the core processes, resources, and other aspects necessary for the delivery of a quality translation service that meets applicable specifications” (ISO, online). Finally, participation in the project improved the trainees’

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level of competence pertaining to service provision. They needed to learn how to “organise . . . and manage translation projects involving single or multiple translators and/or other service providers” (EMT online, p.11); “apply the quality management and quality assurance procedures . . .” (ibid.), as one of the requirements of the project was to provide a translation that meets publication standards.

The research has thrown up various questions in need of further investigation. In the future, it would be interesting to assess the impact of simulation-based learning and role playing on the quality of translations. More research is also needed to better understand to what extent the trainer should interfere in the entire process so as to assist trainees in their acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for their future career. A natural progression of this paper would also be to analyze the translation trainer’s experience with such simulation-based activities as assigned to their students. Above all, however, it would be particularly useful to investigate the extent to which trainees’ perspectives on the translation profession and the different roles that might be assumed in the translation industry change after having engaged the students in projects such as one described in this paper.

This research might serve as a basis for future studies on the effectiveness of collaborative, or near-authentic, learning in translation pedagogy, with a special focus placed on simulation-based activities and role-playing.

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The implications that the investigation has can be used to develop more targeted interventions aimed at developing specialized forms of translation competence, for instance within the field of law, economics or medicine. A key policy priority should therefore be to plan for the long-term application of simulation-based learning practice, or even for entire courses to be based on the specificity of such projects, divided into theoretical and practical components. Furthermore, more direct contact should be made available for prospective translators with those working in the translation industry, paying close attention to jobs that students do not usually associate with the profession, for example managers of translation projects, terminologists, revisers or editors.

Finally, important limitations of the study need to be considered. First, both the teaching and the interviewing were conducted by the same person, which might have introduced biases into the research. Second, the interview was only audio- and not video-recorded, thus minimizing the analytical potential of the gathered data for the author as to the observable behavioural indicators of the participants. Third, the project discussed was only a one-off endeavour, experienced by the subjects for the first time in all the translation courses they were attending at that time, which, as a complete novelty, could have exerted a significant impact on the subjects' interpretation of their involvement with a simulation-based translation assignment. Despite the limitations, though, the study has expanded our knowledge about the potential of the

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simulation-based approach to translation pedagogy as seen from the student's perspective, as well as going some way towards enhancing our understanding of the image and specificity of the translation jobs the trainees hold at the very beginning stage of their learning process.

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