Simulated translator-client contact as an exercise in technical translation

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ABSTRACT

Translator Education is becoming increasingly practice-oriented and learner-driven. Students are becoming agents in their own education, while the teacher, traditionally understood as the ultimate authority, changes into a guide who helps in, but not necessarily orchestrates the whole process of learning. This type of education makes use of real-life tasks, authentic assignments, and team projects, with the aim to equip future translators with practical knowledge.

The present study shows that a task which simulated real-life translator-client contact was beneficial for translation trainees and early, inexperienced translation graduates. The study participants engaged in a technical translation assignment during which they corresponded with clients, i.e. the authors of the source texts. The outcome of the study indicates that training students to contact their clients and cooperate with them plays an important role in the translation process. The results of the study also indicate that the translator-client cooperation is in general well perceived by both the translator and the client.

Keywords: Translator Education, translator-client communication, simulated tasks, project-based learning, technical translation

1. Introduction

Educating translators-to-be increasingly includes work- or project-based learning, real-life scenarios, practice sessions, and simulated or real projects (Aguilar, 2016). Aguilar (2016: 19) states that Translator Education has recently focused on "authentic learning" which she defines as learning by conducting real-life projects for actual clients, while the translator is given real-life tasks in which problem-solving and certain issues or obstacles the translator needs to face are somehow orchestrated by the teacher. The goal and expected outcome of such a task is that the translation trainee gets practice-oriented experience and draws conclusions from their own successes or mistakes, instead of having ready-made scenarios implemented by the teacher.

Although authentic learning frequently involves simulations, it seems indispensable to draw a distinction between purely "authentic" training and simulated learning. The former engages students in real-life tasks which have an actual outcome and significance (yet, authentic learning does not equal to internships as stated by Galán-Mañas, 2011). Simulated learning, in turn, may

include real-life situations and scenarios, but, as the name suggests, it only simulates real-life tasks, frequently making use of online or offline visualisation or simulation technologies (Lombardi 2007). That notwithstanding, both types of learning make the student learn by doing, through acting as a fully educated professional.

According to Kiraly (2014: 1), such an approach to education is "revolutionary, because it shifts the traditional focus of authority, responsibility and control in the educational process away from the teacher and towards the learner". Additionally, Aguilar (2016: 22) proposes that authenticity in Translator Education means that the learner understands and takes the responsibility of acting as a professional and learning by it. In other words, of "carrying out embodied action framed by recognizing the responsibility of coming into the world as a unique and singular being" (Aguilar, 2016: 22). Thanks to this "shift" of responsibility from the teacher to the trainee, the trainee starts to feel capable of shaping the process of learning and becomes more engaged in his or her own education (Aguilar, 2016).

To what extent is "authentic" or "simulated" learning needed from the practical point of view? Massey (2005: 626f.) points out that authentic learning might help to develop a number of sub-skills tranlators should posess. Both Massey (2005) and PACTE (2000) state that translation competence is a unique set of sub-skills, or a network of abilities, knowledge and experience that is needed to conduct the very specific language task of translation, because "translation competence is qualitatively different from bilingual competence" (PACTE, 2003: 59). These sub-skills include, but are possibly not limited to, language competence, general knowledge, research and problem-solving skills, as well as creativity and flexibility (Presas 2000: 28; Massey 2005: 626). PACTE (2000: 43) states that translation competence is "the underlying system of knowledge, abilities and attitudes required to be able to translate" and defines four basic categories of skills translators should posess. Figure 1 illustrates these skills:
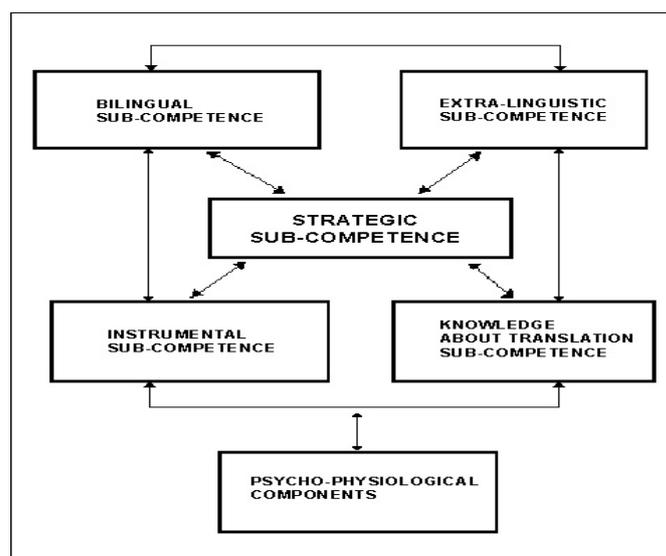

Figure 1. PACTE model of translation competence (PACTE 2005: 610)

According to PACTE (2005: 610ff.), "bilingual sub-competence" refers to the knowledge of languages sufficient for conducting the translation task, including the translator's ability to switch between langauges. "Extra-linguistic sub-competence" concerns knowledge, both general and specialised (including cultural knowledge), necessary to understand and transform meaning in a given domain. Next, "knowledge about translation" regards translator's awareness of how translation proceeds and what is its expected outcome. "Instrumental sub-competence" is predominantly about being skilled in searching and managing (re)sources, tools and technologies that are available. The use of all these skills is to some extent dependent on and controlled by "strategic sub-competence" which allows the translator to manage his or her own abilities and predict which sub-competences are most needed at a particular moment. Finally, the "psycho-physiological components" consider cognitive and motor skills that enable successful translation.

From the practical point of view, among many abilities, translators need to be equipped with a set of soft skills, including interpersonal and negotiation skills, the ability to solve unpredictable problems, and many other. Possessing them is crucial for communicating with clients effectively in order to, for example, discuss business, obtain information about a given topic, receive all materials needed for translation (such as editable files, or supplementary documents or drawings that facilitate understanding the translated text). Soft skills of this kind might also prove beneficial in case of technical problems, unexpected breakdowns, the client's complaints, group work issues, and many other.

That notwithstanding, teaching future translators is still often oriented towards what Kiraly (2005: 1098) calls "the *performance magistrale*, both a demonstration of the teacher's superior wisdom and an attempt to duplicate knowledge in students' minds, [which] appears to be a holdover from the earliest days of Translator Education, when Translation Studies began to emerge as an appendage to the field of philology". Put more succinctly, "traditional" teaching, being strikingly different from work- or project-based learning (Piotrowska, 2007), is still the frequent choice of translation educators. Nord (2005: 218) adds that such an approach does not meet the requirements of modern translation market and states that

> in modern translation practice, team work and management skills are qualifications required of any professional translator, whether s/he works for a translation agency or free-lance (mostly in a group of colleagues) or for a company. In the traditional translation classroom, these qualifications cannot be acquired. Therefore, translation practice during training should, at least in part, be organised in projects where each student has the chance to play various roles: that of client, of revisor, of terminologist, of documentation assistant, of free-lancer, of in-house translator working for a translation company, etc. (Nord, 2005: 218)

At the same time, the demand for authentic translation tasks is high, because

> it seems plausible that having students handle real translation assignments embedded in authentic situations with the same sorts of complexity and problem-solving constraints that they can expect to face after graduation will be more motivating than having them complete mere exercises" (Kiraly, 2005: 1102).

Relevance to the future work is frequently underlined not only by scholars, but also, as Windham (2007) writes, by students. That notwithstading, authentic learning can be, according to Windham, a challenging experience for students. The main difficulty of authentic learning lies in the lack of crearly defined rules, scenarios and tasks which may be frustrating for professionals-to-be. Tamo (2009: 76) lists several other disadvantages of authentic learning, such as: cultural specificity (which makes the learned skills or strategies possibly not appicable in another culture), a too high level of difficulty (e.g. language difficulty in language learning) and the time-consuming process of preparation to the task. Galán-Mañas (2011: 112) also states that supervising and managing authentic tasks might be very time-sonsuming for teachers.

The study described in section 2 attempts to adress the usefullness and potentially beneficial aspects of projects that include simulated tasks, carried out in the course of translator training.

2. The study

This section presents a study which consisted in simulating real-life translator-client contact in specialised translation. The translated texts were technical. The study itself focuses on the perceived satisfaction and subjective opinions about the cooperation between the translators and the clients, shared by both the former and the latter.

2.1 Aim

The aim of the study was to propose and evaluate the outcome of a self-designed translation exercise that consisted in simulating a real-life experience of having a translation assignment and contacting the client.

2.1 Research questions

There were three research questions, which were as follows:
1. Is the simulated translator-client contact perceived as beneficial by translation trainees?
2. Do clients perceive the simulated translator-client contact as a good practice?
3. Does the frequency of contacting and the number of questions asked to the client correlate with the translator's satisfaction with his or her target translation?

2.3 Participants

The study sample included 25 participants (19 F, 6 M), composed of 11 M.A. students before their graduation and 14 translation master's programme graduates, just after graduation. The mean work experience of the participants equalled to 3 months and one week (SD = 0.5 moths), and mean age was 24 years and 4 months (SD = 5.43 months) All the participants had Polish as their native language, i.e.

language A and English as their language B. In addition to that, 3 participants translated from and into German, one from and into Russian, and one from French into Polish. All students and graduates had participated in a 30-hour-long CAT tools course prior to taking part in the study. The course was compulsory in the translator training curriculum and included managing OCR (Optical Character Recognition) tools. During their technical translation classes, the students were also given basic information about how to address, contact and negotiate with a client. In this paper, I will refer to the group of translation trainees and early graduates as TTs.

There were also 5 (2 F, 3 M) "fake clients" (FCs), who corresponded with TTs. Their mean age was 27 years and 2.27 months (SD = 1 year and 6.42 months). They were all professional architects whose native language was Polish. All of them reported knowing written English at the intermediate level.

2.3 Materials

Five texts in Polish, similar in terms of readability and content, were prepared for the study. There was no specific rationale behind selecting five texts, but the aim was to have different texts, while at the same time having several students translating each of the texts. The texts were produced by the FCs who were asked to write a circa 300-word-long descriptions of a detached house project. The texts were then reviewed and matched in terms of readability, with their authors. Table 1 presents the lengths, as well as the Gunning FOG indices, calculated for Polish texts (http://www.trzyw.pl/gunning-fog-index/) and informative of the readability of texts used in the study.

Table 1. Length in the number of words and Gunning FOG Index calculated for each study text;

text	1	2	3	4	5	mean	SD
FOG	**9.17**	**8.96**	**9.21**	**9.27**	**8.94**	**9.11**	**0.13**
number of words	297	295	306	303	301	300.4	3.98

The texts were subsequently used in the study.

Finally, there were two post-task, self-report questionnaires, one to be filled in by TTs and one by FCs. The TTs' questions concerned three topics: subjectively perceived satisfaction from the simulated translator-client contact, subjectively perceived benefit from the exercise and subjectively perceived satisfaction with one's own professional behaviour. The FCs' questions were, in turn, aimed at verifying the degree to which the clients perceived the translator's behaviour and work as sound and professional, and the extent to which the former ones were satisfied with the translator-client contact. All the questions required rating, on a 5-point Likert scale, the degree to which a participant agreed with a given statement.

Since assessing the subjectively perceived satisfaction from translator-client contact lacks a well-established framework within the field of Translation Studies, the questions used in the questionnaire in the present study were devised by the author of this paper, based on her own professional experience as a translator and conversations with other translators. The questionnaires are attached as Appendices 1 and 2.

2.3 Procedure

TTs were informed they are taking part in a study on technical translation and that they were going to be asked to fill in a post-task questionnaire after completing the translation task. They had a week to complete the task, and another week to fill in the questionnaire that was sent to them in the electronic form. They were given the following written instructions, delivered in Polish:

> Dear Participant,
> You are going to receive an email from a Client, who needs to have a text translated. The text file will be named "text_PL". From that moment on you can contact the Client in any matter you like. Your goal is to deliver a translated text to the Client. The Client is also going to write that he or she is waiting for your invoice. This is just for you to know that for the purpose of this exercise you "own" a company, and you are issuing invoices. DO NOT send any invoice though. Your task is just to send the translated text. Once the task is finished, you will receive an email in which the Client will write: "Thank you for your cooperation". This will be the end of your translation task and you'll be asked to fill in a post-task questionnaire. You may ask the experimenter any question if you are not sure about the procedure. (translated from Polish by Katarzyna Stachowiak)

Once TTs understood the procedure and signed the written consent for the study, they were sent an email (in Polish) stating:

> Dear Translator,
> my name is Mr/Ms X and I have found your email on your professional webpage. I have read the prices you are offering for technical translation, and they are fine for me. I have a short text I need to have translated into English in a week's time. The text is to appear in the English version of a brochure I am preparing for my foreign clients who wish to build a house. Please, let me know if you would translate the text. If you have any questions related to the text – do not hesitate to ask. I am looking forward to your answer and the invoice.
> Kind regards,
>
> Mr/Ms X
> (translated from Polish by Katarzyna Stachowiak)

The email included two attachments. The mentioned "text_PL" was a technical text sent in pdf format. There were no specific guidelines for contacting the clients, but the goal of the task was to deliver the attached text translated into English.

At the same time, fake clients were informed that for each of them there was a fake email account created for the purpose of the study. The FCs were given passwords to the accounts and could read the first email received by the students. They were subsequently given the following instructions:

> Dear Client,

you wrote a house description that has to be translated, to appear in the English version of a brochure you are preparing for your foreign clients who wish to build a house. You have just sent your text to a translator. The translator may ask you questions which you need to answer. If the translator asks you directly about the translation of a given word, write that you do not speak English. In any other case, i.e. if the translator describes a given problem and asks you what you meant by writing something, or if he or she has organisational questions, give him or her an answer within 24 hours. You also have the document that needs to be translated in .doc, in case the translator asks for it. You may ask the experimenter any question if you are not sure about the procedure. (translated from Polish by Katarzyna Stachowiak)

In addition to reading the above instructions, the FCs were briefed on working with a translator and were allowed to ask questions if they were not certain about the details of the procedure. Subsequently, they started cooperating with the translators. Once the FCs received the target texts, both they and TTs were asked to fill in post-task questionnaires.

2.4 Data analysis

Both TTs' and FCs' answers were collected and analysed in a calculation sheet. Although the sample analysed in this study is a small one, some answers served as data for statistical analysis. The statistical analysis was conducted by means of the IBM SPSS Statistics software. Shapiro-Wilk test served to verify the normality of data distribution. Spearman's rho was calculated to test the correlations between selected Likert scale scores obtained by the participants. $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

2.5 Results

2.5.1 Results of the post-task questionnaires

As many as 19 out of 25 TTs (76%) asked their clients for the editable version of the document. The rest (24%) resorted to OCR and transformed the pdf document into an editable format. On the other hand, only 14 TTs (56%) translated the text by means of a CAT tool, while the rest (44%) used MS Word or an equivalent document editor to translate. 17 TTs (68%) reported that they contacted their clients 3-5 times, while 2 trainees (8%) contacted the client only once or twice (to send the translated file or to answer the first mail and send the file subsequently), and 6 TTs (24%) sent more than 5 emails. That notwithstanding, 9 TTs (36%) stated that they asked 1-3 questions to the client, while 12 TTs (48%) asked 4-7 questions, and 4 TTs (16%) asked more than 7 questions. Figure 2 presents the TTs' answers to the other post-task questions:
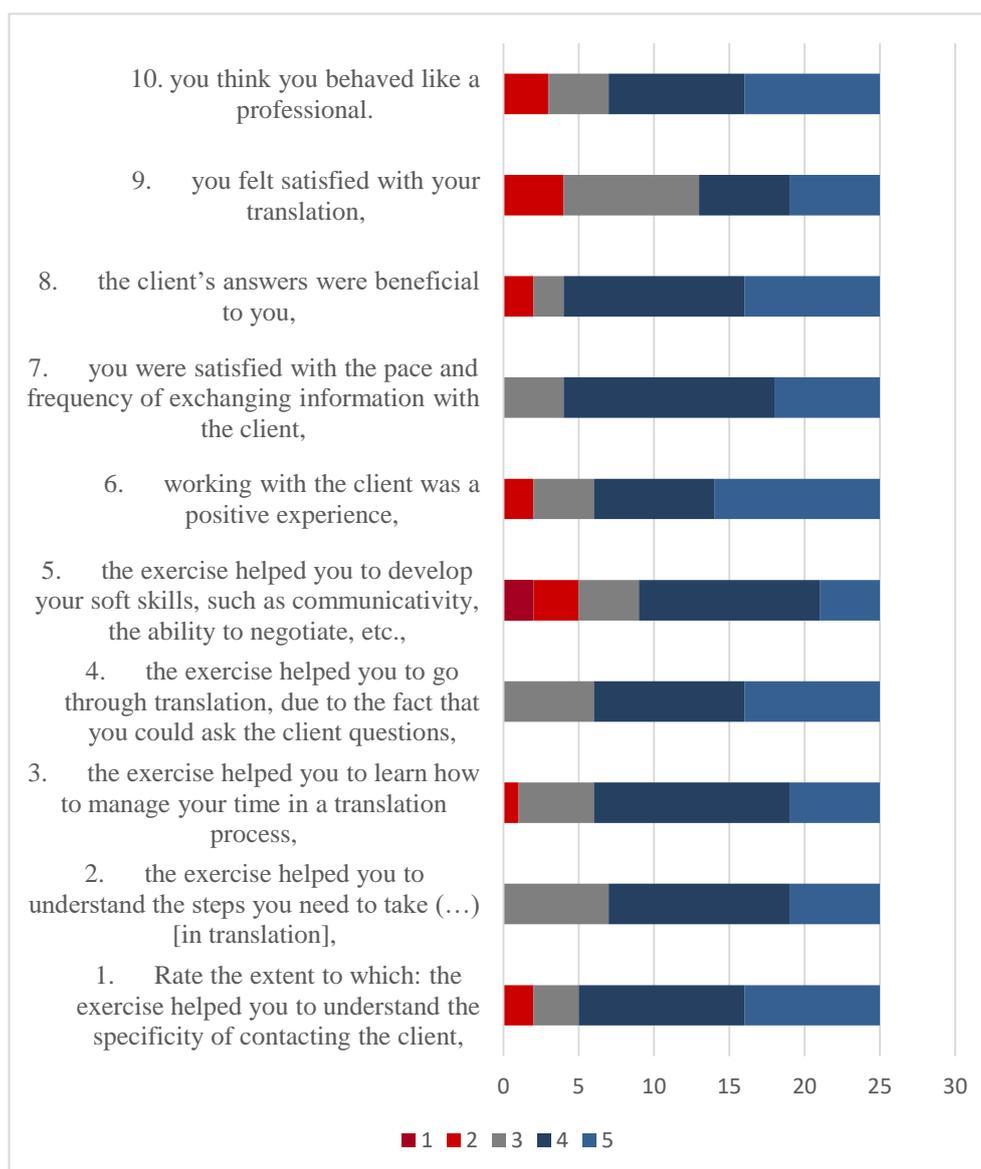
Figure 2. TTs' answers in the post-task questionnaire (Appendix 1)

As mentioned in section 2.3, FCs were asked to fill in a post-task questionnaire as well (see Appendix 2). Figure 3 presents the FCs' answers in this post-task questionnaire:
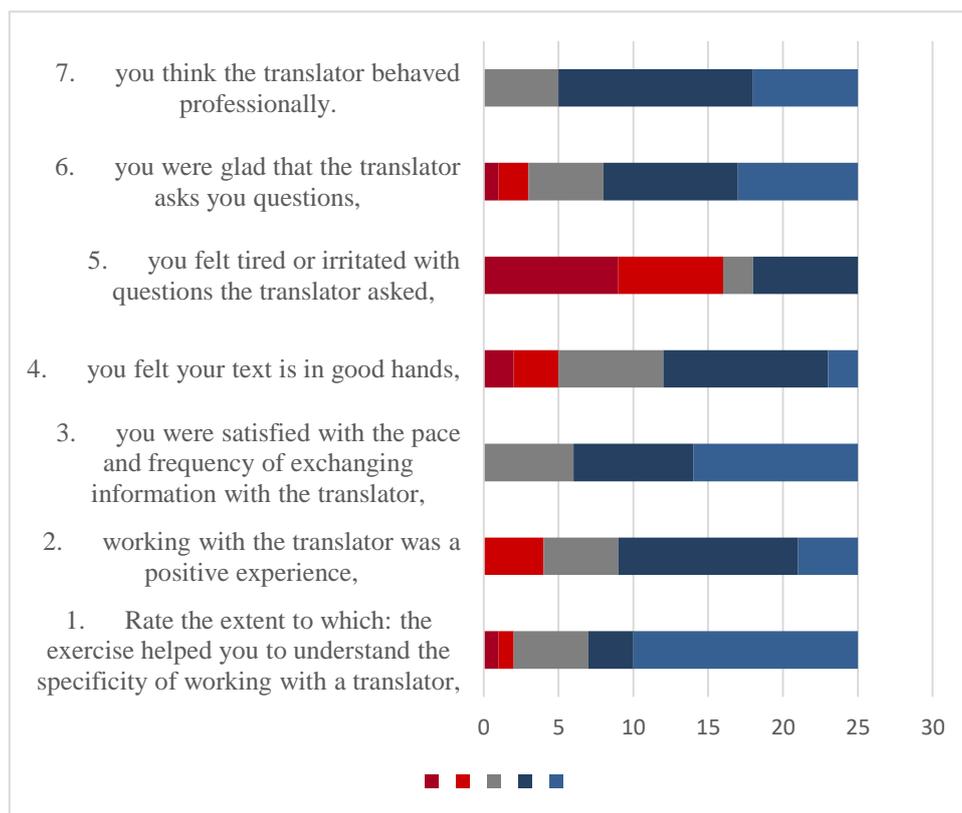
Figure 3. FCs' answers to the post-task questionnaire (Appendix 2)

Next, the frequency of contacting the client and the number of questions the translator asked were correlated with the scores TTs and FCs obtained in selected questions. Table 2 presents the results of Spearman's correlations calculated for these questions.

Table 2. Spearman's correlations calculated for scores obtained by TTs and FCs in selected questions. * stands for $p < 0.05$ and ** means $p < 0.001$

		frequency of contacting the client (Question 3, Appendix 1)	number of questions asked to the client (Question 4, Appendix 1)
questions to TTs	"working with the client was a positive experience" (Question 6, Appendix 1)	$rs = .134, p = .24$	$rs = .009, p = .21$
	"the client's answers were beneficial to you" (Question 8, Appendix 1)	$rs = .111, p = .62$	$rs = .122, p = .01*$
	"you felt satisfied with your translation" (Question 9, Appendix 1)	$rs = .367, p < .001**$	$rs = .510, p < .001**$

questions to FCs	"working with the translator was a positive experience" (Question 2, Appendix 2)	$rs = .214, p = .09$	$rs = .326, p = .04*$
	"you felt your text is in good hands" (Question 4, Appendix 2)	$rs = .341, p = .002*$	$rs = .412, p = .001*$
	"you felt tired or irritated with questions the translator asked" (Question 5, Appendix 2)	$rs = .189, p = .003*$	$rs = -.276, p = .004*$
	"you were glad that the translator asks you questions" (Question 6, Appendix 2)	$rs = .112, p = .31$	$rs = .225, p = .004*$

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Finally, selected scores obtained by the TTs in question 6 were correlated with the scores obtained by FCs in question 2. Both questions referred to whether working with either the translator or the client was a positive experience. The results revealed a positive correlation ($rs = .350, p = .011$) between the translators' and the clients' scores. There was also a statistically significant, positive correlation between the TTs' scores in question 10 and FCs' scores in question 6 ($rs = .120, p = .027$) related to the subjectively perceived professional behaviour of the translator. No effect of text, experience, age, nor gender was observed.

2.5.2 Translator-client correspondence: questions and answers

After discussing the participants' subjective opinions related to the translator-client contact, it seems suitable to delineate the questions which translators addressed to fake clients. In this paper, they are divided into: 1) terminology questions, 2) questions about the intended meaning and 3) questions related to the client's preference of style.

To begin with, circa 64% of questions trainees asked were related to terminology. To give an example, two translation trainees asked their clients whether the Polish word "słup" which stands for either a pillar or a stud in English, can be translated as "stud" due to the fact that "pillar" refers to larger building, instead of detached houses. To be more specific, one of these trainees wrote:

> Dear Sir,
> (…) would you confirm that the Polish name "słup" refers in line 8 ("70 cm między słupami" [70 cm between the studs]) to a part of timber construction that supports the walls of the house you designed, as opposed to large pillars which are used in cathedrals or in halls? (translated from Polish by Katarzyna Stachowiak)

This particular question was followed by the client's answer:

> Dear Ms (…),
> (…) I don't know the English terminology, but "słup" definitely refers to a part of a timber-frame, exterior, load-bearing wall. It is not a single, free-standing piece of construction, but something that supports the wall and is subsequently plastered. (translated from Polish by Katarzyna Stachowiak)

Approximately 38% of the terminology questions referred to culture- or language-specific terminology. Put more succinctly, these questions revolved around naming items or processes which look different in Poland and Anglo-Saxon countries. For instance, 4 translation trainees asked about the specificity of the Polish word "inwentaryzacja". One of them wrote:

> Dear Mr X,
> (…) To the best of my knowledge, Polish "inwentaryzacja" refers to the process of taking detailed measurements of an existing building. It can be translated as "building survey" into English, while "survey" is a slightly broader term and stands for the general inspection of a building. Would you confirm that my understanding of "inwentaryzacja" is correct? (translated from Polish by Katarzyna Stachowiak)

This question was answered with a simple: "yes, 'inwentaryzacja' refers to measuring a building, your thinking is correct" given by the client.

Though related to terminology, some questions seemed to stem from the translator's lack of expertise in the given domain or the lack of "intuition" typical of experts in a given field. These questions regarded the correct understanding of the source text and referred to the author's intended meaning. For instance, as many as 4 out of 5 architects used the Polish word "obiekt" [object] to refer to their buildings. While "obiekt" is literarily translated as "object", it can refer to "building", "form", "spot", "centre", "house" and many other in the field of construction and architecture. One translation trainee stated that:

> "obiekt" should (…) be understood simply as "house", since it refers to the house that was designed. (translated from Polish by Katarzyna Stachowiak)

The client who received the above comment answered as following:

> Dear Ms (…),
> (…) thank you for your question. I do refer to the house when I use the name "obiekt". I would appreciate it, though, if you wrote something more sophisticated in style, or use a nicer word than just "house". It is important to me to have a good, catchy description. (translated from Polish by Katarzyna Stachowiak)

Irrespective of clients paying attention to style, translators asked for guidance when it came to deciding on style as well. Only 6 translators out of 25 (24%) issued a style-related question. That notwithstanding, they asked fairly detailed questions about the intended impact the architects wanted to exert on their potential clients (i.e. readers of the project descriptions). For instance, one of TTs issued the following question:

> Dear Mr/Ms X,
> (…) You wrote that you were preparing a brochure for your clients. Is the brochure to be used once and is it dedicated to concrete clients, or will it serve as an advertisement material for a larger audience? I am asking this as the purpose of a text frequently dictates the style a translator selects for the target text. (translated from Polish by Katarzyna Stachowiak)

This translator's client answered as follows:

> Dear Translator,
> (…) I haven't thought about the style, it's nice you have. The brochure will be probably something I will add to my advertisement materials. I may also put the text on my webpage. (translated from Polish by Katarzyna Stachowiak)

Due to the limited length of this article, it is impossible to detail the translator-client contact and analyse all the questions asked by the translators and answered by the clients (importantly, the study clients were meticulous, as none of the questions was left unanswered). That notwithstanding, it seems important to point to the fact that the possibility to ask questions made translators benefit from the FCs' expert knowledge in terms of the source text terminology, meaning in context, and style.

2.6 Discussion

Most importantly, the vast majority of translation trainees and early translation graduates (TTs) stated that they benefited from contacting the clients (FCs). In very simple terms, TTs claimed the exercise facilitated the translation process and made them more satisfied with their own translation. The simulated translator-client contact also allowed them to better understand the process of translating, manage their time, as well as learn about the steps, or phases, of translation. Many TTs claimed they developed their soft skills when carrying out the exercise, as well as learn about the specificity of contacting the client. Both translators and clients believed the exchange of emails was a positive experience, and the vast majority of the representatives of both groups found the pace and frequency of contacting each other satisfying. Many clients also believed their texts were "in good hands", while both TTs and FCs usually thought the translators behaved professionally. Importantly, a great number of FCs (though not all of them) did not express any (or expressed little) irritation with the questions translators asked.

   That notwithstanding, there was a statistically significant, positive correlation observed between the number of times a translator contacted his or her client and the client's subjective feeling of being tired or irritated with the translator's questions. On the other hand, the number of questions asked to the client correlated negatively with the same, client's, feeling of being tired or irritated. This might at first sight seem contradictory, but is in fact easily justifiable. It seems that a translator asking many questions can be perceived as professional, as if genuinely concerned with the quality translation, or simply being meticulous. The questions is then, why is the same translator, who writes frequently, perceived as tiring, instead of being perceived as diligent or professional? Though this conclusion cannot be drawn directly from the results of this study, a possible explanation of such an outcome is that frequent writers are subjectively perceived as disorganised, as opposed to those who ask many questions in a single email, and less capable of managing their projects in comparison with the latter group. To corroborate this conclusion, frequent writing (in contrast with the number of questions asked) did not correlate with the client's positive attitude towards the translator-client contact, nor with the client being happy about receiving questions. That notwithstanding, clients of those translators who both wrote frequently and asked many questions believed their texts were "in good hands", which possibly indicates that frequent

and numerous questions make the client feel secure about the quality of the target text.

From the translators' point of view, asking frequent and numerous questions correlated positively with being satisfied with one's own translation. It should be noted that these correlations (see Table 2) are the only ones which can be labelled as moderate, in contrast to other, weak correlations observed in this study. There was also a statistically significant correlation observed between the number of questions asked and the feeling that the client's answers were beneficial to the translator. While the latter might seem obvious and self-explanatory, the correlation between the frequency or number of questions asked and the satisfaction with one's translation points to the important role of the client (or, possibly, an expert) in the process of translation, as well as to the importance of cooperation between the translator and the client.

These observations may be corroborated by the types of questions asked by translators. A number of TTs contacted their clients when not sure about the terminology. Importantly, not only particular lexical choices, but also the intended meaning or style were consulted. As presented in section 2.5.2, the translators' questions, including the ones related to intended style and target audience, were well-received and answered (including a client's comment that it was good the translator thought about the style). This itself indicates that translator-client contact is needed both because of the complexity of the translation task and due to the fact that the translator's and the client's skills and competences are frequently complementary, and can be all used to obtain a good translation product.

The beneficial role of simulated projects in Translator Education was also observed by Kiraly (2005: 1106ff.), who describes a subtitling project which his translation students conducted for an actual client. The students jointly completed a subtitling task preceded by a training in a freeware for semi-professional subtitlers. At some point, assistance was provided by a professional subtitler who reviewed the students' work. Conducting the project required a number of revisions due to technical and organisational issues that occurred along it. That notwithstanding, Kiraly (2005: 1108) reports great engagement in the project from the students' part. He at the same time emphasizes that subtitling competence gained over the project was a product of joint team work and cooperation which at the same time constituted added values to the knowledge and skills acquired (Kiraly, 2005). Similarly, Cranfield (2006) reports an authentic translation project which gained popularity and triggered engagement among translation students. The task assigned to trainees in the study presented in this paper was also well-received by the participants. Similarly to what was observed by Kiraly (2005) and Cranfield (2006), the task triggered engagement and interest in the participants, which can be observed not only in the number of emails exchanged, but also in the detailed questions asked and answers given.

Galán-Mañas (2011: 113ff.), in turn, assigned authentic translation tasks to third-year translation students. The texts were in the field of robotics and the task required mastering both translation and CAT-related skills. The students went through several phases of planning, team work (i.e. actual translation), revision, self-evaluation, as well as evaluation by peers and by the teacher. On one hand, Galán-Mañas (2011: 118) reports negative aspects of the work, such as the lack of experience in team collaboration, excessive workload and the lack of initiative to engage in the project (as opposed to taking final exam instead of completing the authentic assignment). On the other hand, she emphasizes the importance of professional training and reports that some participants did benefit from the project (Galán-Mañas, 2011: 119). According to the students participating the study of Galán-Mañas (2011), the authentic task they completed allowed them to work autonomously with the teacher and prepare for future professional work. At the

same time, they felt that they benefitted from being assessed in a continuous way, during the task (Galán-Mañas, 2011: 119). Similar benefits were also listed by the participants of the present study.

Finally, Szymczak (2013) engaged his students in translating Wikipedia articles, at the same time allowing trainees to carry out authentic, almost real-life translation. The translation task was supplemented with a questionnaire, in which the trainees were asked to compare the assignment with regular classroom exercises or assignments, as well as give their opinions about the Wikipedia translation task. The vast majority of Szymczak's (2013: 65) respondents shared positive opinions about the translation process and stated that they preferred the authentic translation task over regular assignments.

That notwithstanding, Szymczak (2013: 66) raises an important issue related to authentic translation tasks, namely that translation trainees are frequently puzzled or afraid of committing a mistake when faced with a real assignment (i.e. an assignment whose goal is to generate a text that will be subsequently received by a reader who is not the students' teacher). This problem was not observed by Szymczak (2013: 66) in his study, which the author attributes to the nature of the source text his students translated. As he states, the texts used in his study were Wikipedia articles, whose format and style is well-known to most students. The problem mentioned by Szymczak (2013) did not occur in this particular study either, despite the fact that TTs engaged in technical translation, i.e. translation within a specialised and potentially difficult field. It seems possible that the oportunity to ask multiple questions reduced the level of translation-related stress and the fear of making errors in the case of this study, or that simulated tasks are in general less stressful for students than an authentic one. However, more detailed studies are needed to verify these assumptions.

3. Conclusion

The study described in the present article shows that assigning tasks which reflect real-life scenarios might be beneficial for translation trainees and early, inexperienced translation graduates. It also points out to the necessity and importance of training students to effectively communicate with their clients, in order to get additional information, files needed, or to receive an expert's opinion or explanation of the source text content. The results of the study also indicate that the translator-client cooperation is in general well perceived by both the translator and the client.

On the other hand, there are several issues which were not described in this article, or which cannot be explained due to design flaws or other limitations of the study. First of all, the article does not touch upon the participants' opinions about the project except for the ones expressed in the questionnaires. Further studies including both questionnaires and structured or semi-structured interviews are needed. What is more, the questionnaires given to translators and clients need to be detailed and enhanced. By being related to translation in general, they are not informative of translation process vs. product. In addition, this article refers only to a specific type of written translation, namely the translation of technical texts, while future studies might show whether the described translator-client, or even translator-expert contact is beneficial for trainees in general. The sample analysed in this paper is relatively small, and further studies are needed to verify if the tendencies observed in this sample are repeated in a larger population. Finally, it

should be noted that both translators and clients knew they were taking part in a study. The impact of this knowledge on the participants' engagement in the project and their answers given in the post-task questionnaires cannot be excluded. For this reason, future research should possibly be focused on those projects in which all parties are convinced they are conducting real-life tasks. Such an approach might lead to a better understanding of the translation process and students' problems, resulting in high-quality and practice-oriented Translator Education.

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Appendix 1

Post-task questionnaire for Translators (originally in Polish)

Number:
Gender:
Age:
Experience in translation:
Langauges:

Please, answer the following questions, by circling the correct answer. Some questions might require you checking your email conversation with the client.

1. How did you obtain the editable version of the document: "text_PL"?
    a. I asked the Client if he/she had it and could send it to me.
    b. I used OCR.
    c. I did not use the editable version, just the pdf.
    d. Other:

2. What kind of tool did you use for translation?
    a. A CAT tool,
    b. MS Word or an equivalent tool,
    c. Machine translation,
    d. Other:

3. How often/many times did you contact the client?
    a. I just contacted the client twice, at the beginning and when sending the translated text.
    b. I wrote to the client 3-5 times, including my first email and the last one (in which I attached the translation).
    c. More than 5 times.
    d. Other:

4. How many questions about the source text did you ask?
    a. 1-3 questions,
    b. 4-7 questions,
    c. More than 7 questions,
    d. Other:

5. What did you ask about?

On a scale 1-5, rate the extent to which:

1	2	3	4	5
not at all		to some extent		very much

1. the exercise helped you to understand the specificity of contacting the client,

2. the exercise helped you to understand the steps you need to take from receiving the text until sending it back, translated,
3. the exercise helped you to learn how to manage your time in a translation process,
4. the exercise helped you to go through translation, due to the fact that you could ask the client questions (as opposed to a regular homework when you do not have that opportunity),
5. the exercise helped you to develop your soft skills, such as communicativity, the ability to negotiate, etc.,
6. working with the client was a positive experience,
7. you were satisfied with the pace and frequency of exchanging information with the client,
8. the client's answers were beneficial to you,
9. you felt satisfied with your translation,
10. you think you behaved like a professional.

Appendix 2

Post-task questionnaire for Clients (originally in Polish)

Number:
Gender:
Age:
Languages:

On a scale 1-5, rate the extent to which:

34

1	2	3	4	5
not at all		to some extent		very much

1. the exercise helped you to understand the specificity of working with a translator,
2. working with the translator was a positive experience,
3. you were satisfied with the pace and frequency of exchanging information with the translator,
4. you felt your text is in good hands,
5. you felt tired or irritated with questions the translator asked,
6. you were glad that the translator asks you questions,
7. you think the translator behaved professionally.