

Chodkiewicz, M. (2012). The EMT framework of reference for competences applied to translation: perceptions by professional and student translators. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 17, 37-54. <https://doi.org/10.26034/cm.jostrans.2012.458>

This article is publish under a *Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International* (CC BY):  
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>



© Marta Chodkiewicz, 2012

**The EMT framework of reference for competences applied to translation: perceptions by professional and student translators**  
**Marta Chodkiewicz, Marie Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland**

**ABSTRACT**

In the past forty years, several attempts have been made at naming and defining the concept of translation competence, as well as at identifying its sub-types and organising them into comprehensive models. A recent contribution which draws on and expands earlier scholarly models is the European Master's in Translation (EMT) reference framework. This framework is worth noting since it was compiled at the request the EU, a major employer and stakeholder in the European translation industry, and serves as a prerequisite for universities which apply to be part of a prestigious network of EU-approved translation programmes. This paper reports a study investigating how the competences which are part of the framework are perceived by two groups of subjects: translation students, whose views have been shaped only by the academic environment, and professional translators, who additionally have some work experience. For this purpose a questionnaire was devised based on the EMT framework; it was completed by a group of current postgraduate translation students of the University of Surrey, one of whose translation programmes follows the framework, and a group of professional translators, most of whom are graduates of this university. The first goal of the study was to establish how relevant the respondents found particular competences for their (future) work as translators. The other goal was to examine to what extent the views of the two groups differed and to attempt to explain these differences. In addition, some differences were found between the perceptions of freelance and in-house translators and were accounted for.

**KEYWORDS**

EMT reference framework, translation competence, professional translators, student translators

**1. The EU perspective: the EMT reference framework**

The European Union has long been committed to the policy of multilingualism, which is seen as instrumental for achieving European integration, with "respect for the equality and autonomy of the member nations" (de Swaan 2001: 173). Translators and interpreters play a key role in this process, which is why the EU has recently recognised the need to optimise translator training and provide a uniform set of standards which would govern it.

The EU has become a major employer on the European and global translation market: it employs approximately six thousand full-time translators and interpreters and cooperates with many more freelancers. Uniform standards make it easier to recruit qualified translators and interpreters to EU institutions, which has become an urgent need with the recent enlargement of the EU (the number of EU languages increased

from 11 to 23 between 2004 and 2007). They also help regulate a profession that is rapidly changing in terms of professional practices and quality standards. Another reason why the EU felt a need to define a “minimum quality profile” was the high number of translation programmes, which are diverse and potentially incompatible with the requirements of the profession (EMT expert group 2009a: 1).

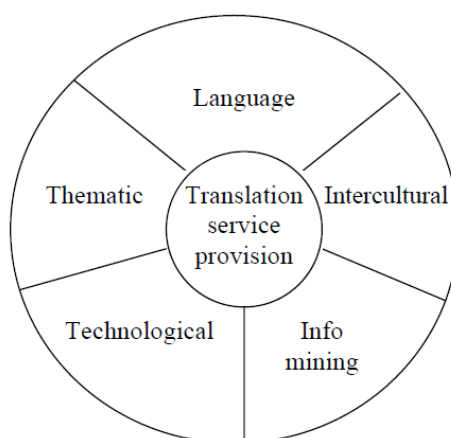
To address the last concern in particular, in April 2007 the Directorate-General for Translation (the European Commission’s in-house translation service) formed groups to work on the European Master’s in Translation (EMT), a reference framework for training programmes in translation. The aim of the EMT project was to produce the following:

- a generic description of the tasks and competences of translators to match the needs of the translation industry and public bodies, such as the EU institutions;
- a draft of a European model curriculum that addresses these requirements and could thereby enhance the status and quality of the translation profession (EMT 2009b: 1).

One of those groups was the EMT expert group, which included recognised specialists from universities in member states, whose goal was to further develop the curriculum. Conferences were organised to discuss the issue of professionalising translation, involving not only academics, but also employers’ associations and international organisations. As a result, a network of university programmes willing to implement EMT standards was established. The EMT expert group then drew up two important documents: “a list of competences that should be acquired by the end of an EMT-eligible training programme” and “an outline of the selection criteria for admission of university programmes to the EMT network” (EMT 2009b: 1-2). The universities which then applied to join the EMT network had to provide substantial proof that they met these criteria. The successful 54 universities now qualify as members of the EMT network and are allowed to use the EMT logo. They also benefit from closer cooperation with other universities belonging to the network and with EU institutions, but at the same time have to meet several requirements (EMT 2009b: 3-5).

The EMT framework comprises six “minimum” competences which pertain to professions involving multilingual and multimedia communication, translation, and different modes of interpreting. Competence is defined as a “combination of aptitudes, knowledge, behaviour and know-how necessary to carry out a given [translation] task under given conditions” (EMT expert group 2009a: 3). This definition encompasses both declarative and procedural knowledge, similarly to earlier scholarly works (see Bell 1991, Neubert and Shreve 1992, Cao 1996 and PACTE 2000), and emphasises the context of the translation, which was particularly highlighted in Cao’s (1996) work. What is more, this framework of competences is expected to be approved and authorised by an authority,

such as an institution or a group of experts, an aspect which has not been mentioned in other works (EMT expert group 2009a: 3). A graphic representation of the EMT reference framework is shown below. Its six competences are considered equally important, yet they are not entirely distinct categories as they are treated as interdependent or even overlapping.



**Figure 1. EMT reference framework for competences applied to translation professions: graphic representation (EMT expert group 2009a: 4)**

All the competences are defined by means of lists of components; in some cases the competences are additionally broken down into dimensions before being divided into components. The competences and their components will now be discussed in more detail so as to show how they are conceptualised in the framework and how they relate to earlier attempts at identifying different subtypes of translation competence.

*Translation service provision competence* combines several competences introduced in earlier models. It has been divided into two dimensions: the interpersonal and production dimensions. The *interpersonal dimension* has to do primarily with the translator's social role (cf. Cao 1996, Kiraly 2003, Neubert & Shreve 1992) and with the translator-client relationship, seen both from a macro perspective (market demand and marketing to potential clients, cf. PACTE 2003, Gile 2009) as well as from a micro perspective (negotiating with clients, estimating the cost of the services provided). It also includes elements of planning, management and self-evaluation, which were conceived of as part of strategic competence in other models (Cao 1996, PACTE 2003). Other aspects subsumed under this category include teamwork (cf. Arango-Keeth and Koby 2003) and complying with professional standards (cf. PACTE 2003).

The *production dimension* concerns the translation of the text according to the client's request and the translation situation (cf. Cao 1996, Nord 1991, 1997). Translators may also need to justify some decisions to the client (cf. Vienne 1998) and use appropriate metalanguage to discuss them (cf. Gile 2009, PACTE 2003).

The second competence identified by the EMT expert group is *language competence*, which is conceptualised similarly as in earlier models (see inter alia Cao 1996a, Neubert 2000, PACTE 2003, Angelelli 2009).

As far as *intercultural competence* is concerned, in the EMT framework is a two-dimensional construct. The *sociolinguistic dimension* encompasses what is labelled as “intercultural competence” in other models (see inter alia Cao 1996, PACTE 2003). The *textual dimension* comprises, among others, identifying and comparing cultural elements, as well as being able to analyse the macrostructure and coherence of a text and reproduce it according to the conventions of a particular genre and rhetorical standards (cf. Cao 1996, Neubert 2000, PACTE 2003, Gile 2009). Translators also need to be able to determine their problems with text comprehension and solve them (cf. PACTE 2003).

The fourth competence in the EMT expert group’s model is *information mining competence*. It includes a number of well-established components in the literature, such as “developing strategies for documentary and terminological research” including working with experts and using technological tools effectively to that end (see inter alia Roberts, cited in Delisle 1992, Nord 1991, Vienne 1998, Neubert 2000, PACTE 2003, Gile 2009).

*Thematic competence* is related to the previous competence as translators need to find information which helps them understand the themes of a document better. They also need develop their knowledge about specialist fields, their concepts, terminology, etc. (see inter alia Roberts, cited in Delisle 1992, Nord 1991, Cao 1996, Neubert 2000, PACTE 2003, Gile 2009).

Last but not least, a translator should have *technological competence*, whose basic components is the effective and rapid use of a range of software tools which assist in translation, documentary research, etc. (cf. Roberts, cited in Delisle 1992, PACTE 2003).

It is also worth emphasising that some components of particular competences in the EMT reference framework have not been specifically mentioned in other models. Typically they are practical and rather detailed skills which mostly belong to translation service provision competence (e.g. working under pressure, complying with deadlines and instructions or proofreading and revising documents) and to information mining competence (e.g. critical evaluation of the reliability of one’s sources). Other competences the framework seems to have expanded are technological competence (e.g. recognising the possibilities and limitations of machine translation) and the textual dimension of intercultural competence (drafting, rephrasing, restructuring, condensing, post-editing

and summarising the content of a document) (EMT expert group 2009: 4-7).

As demonstrated above, this model draws heavily on earlier scholarly works, benefiting from previously formulated concepts of competences required in translation, and reorganises their components; it also adds to them some new components. Its components include mainly practical and market-oriented skills, which are sometimes rather detailed. Abstract concepts which were present in early models, such as “transfer” (see Wills 1976, Toury 1986, Nord 1991, Neubert 2000, PACTE 2000) are not included in the framework. It is important to notice that in its very centre is not language competence, mentioned most frequently in the literature, or strategic competence as in the models by Cao (1996) or the PACTE group (2003), but the competence of providing translation services, which plays a key role in the translator’s task from the client’s point of view (Neubert 2000: 10).

Since the EMT reference framework was to represent the competences indispensable for professional translators in their work, which need to be developed by translation students enrolled in translation programmes, it would be interesting to see how the two groups perceive these competences. The following section presents the results of a survey based on the EMT framework which sought to probe the views of professional and translation students on this issue.

## **2. The study**

### **2.1. Purpose of the study**

The aim of the study was two-fold. The first goal was to determine what level of importance professional and translation students attached or thought they would attach to particular competences and their components in their work as translators. The second goal was to establish if there were any differences between the views of the two groups and attempt to account for them.

### **2.2. Methodology**

The main research tool used for the study was a questionnaire which consisted of three sections. The first section was an introduction which explained that it dealt with “the knowledge and skills needed in professional translation.” This expression was used as a simple definition of translation competence. The term itself, however, was not used in the questionnaire in order to avoid bias against a potentially abstract-sounding concept.

The second section, entitled “Your profile”, consisted of five factual questions, both multiple choice and open ones. They sought to collect

information about the respondents which would help divide them into groups and look for potential patterns in the data. This information concerned the following:

- their current status with respect to the translation profession,
- their working languages starting from the mother tongue,
- the degrees they hold,
- their experience in professional translation measured in years,
- the way they provide services to their clients (freelance vs. in-house translation).

The third section was entitled “Your views on the knowledge and skills needed in professional translation.” It consisted of one question in the form of a rating scale whose aim was to investigate how important the respondents found particular components. For this purpose they were asked to rate, on a scale from 5 to 1 (5 standing for “extremely important” and 1 for “not important at all”) how important they felt it was for them in their (future) work as translators to have the skills which were listed, or, more precisely, to do what was listed. The components in the list were adaptations of those provided in the EMT reference framework. As suggested by the participants of the pilot survey, the number of components was reduced (some were merged and a few omitted) in order to make the survey more user-friendly. Although the number of components in each category was smaller, it was proportional to the one in the framework. The components were grouped into sections. However, based on the feedback received in the pilot stage, they were put in sections different from the ones in the EMT framework. The table below shows how particular sections of the questionnaire refer to the types of competences and their dimensions in the framework.

<b>Questionnaire</b>	<b>EMT reference framework</b>
Providing translation services	Translation service provision competence: interpersonal dimension (8 components)
Your working languages and their conventions	Language competence (2 components) Intercultural competence: sociolinguistic dimension (2 components)
Working with the text	Intercultural competence: textual dimension (5 components) Translation service provision competence: production dimension (4 components)
Finding relevant information	Information mining competence (5 components) Thematic competence (2 components)
Using technology to assist you	Technological competence (4 components)

**Table 1. Competences in the EMT framework and their dimensions grouped under particular sections of the questionnaire**

The rating part was followed by a comment field where the respondents were asked to specify any other skills which they found important but which were not included in the list.

### 2.3. Procedure

Before being distributed, the questionnaire was piloted and adjusted accordingly, as has already been mentioned. The respondents then answered the questionnaire online. The link was sent to recent graduates of translation programmes run by the university, as well as to a few translation tutors, who work as professional translators, and to current postgraduate students enrolled in MA programmes in Translation, Business Translation with Interpreting, Translation Studies, Translation Studies with Intercultural Communication, Audiovisual Translation, as well as Monolingual Subtitling and Audio Description.

### 2.4. Participants: background information obtained in the survey

The questionnaire was completed by 55 respondents. The table below shows how they answered some of the questions on factual information in order to help sketch a profile of the group.

Option/response	Number of respondents
Current status with respect to the translation profession (n=55)	
Full-time translators	23
Part-time translators	11
Do translations occasionally	11
Current translation students	17
Degrees held (n=55)	
Are currently doing a Master's degree in translation.	19
Hold a Bachelor's degree in translation.	7
Hold a Bachelor's degree in modern languages.	10
Hold a Master's degree in translation.	35
Hold a Master's degree in modern languages.	6
Hold a PhD and/or a higher degree in translation.	2
Hold a PhD and/or a higher degree in modern languages.	0
Hold a degree other than the ones listed above.	8
Experience in professional translation in years (n=55)	
0-1	22
2-4	19
5-9	10



10 or more	4
Work mode/how services are provided to the clients (n=54)	
Do not work as professional translators.	12
Freelance translators who work directly for clients.	9
Freelance translators who work for clients through translation agencies.	8
Freelance translators who work for clients both directly and through translation agencies.	13
In-house translators at translation companies.	10
In-house translators at companies or other organisations (e.g. public bodies) whose business activity does not involve translation.	2

**Table 2. Profile of the respondents who participated in the survey**

The respondents (n=51) listed several languages apart from English as their working languages. They were the following (from the most to the least frequently mentioned ones): French (25), Greek (15), German (13), Spanish (11), Italian (9), Norwegian (7), Polish (6), Macedonian (3), Russian (3), Portuguese (2), Swedish (2), Turkish (2), Danish (2) and Dutch (2).

## **2.5. Participants: breakdown into groups**

The aim of the study was to compare the perceptions of translation students whose views have been shaped only by the academic environment and carefully constructed translation programmes with the views of professional translators who additionally have some experience in working in the translation industry. That is why the group of *professional translators* will include both experienced translators with more than 5 years of experience and less experienced ones who have 2-4 years of experience and hold a Bachelor's and/or higher degree in translation or are currently doing a Master's in translation. It is worth mentioning that nearly all participants who had 2-4 years of experience worked as full-time translators. Translation students were those with 0-1 years of experience who hold a Bachelor's degree and/or higher degree in translation or are currently enrolled in a Master's programme in translation. According to these criteria, 22 respondents were classified as student translators and 33 were classified as professional translators.

## **2.6. The perceived importance of competences in the EMT framework: general overview of findings**

Mean ratings ("mean") were used in order to determine the importance attached to the competences and their components by the whole group and by the two groups considered separately ("p." – professional translators, "s." – translation students. Standard deviations ("SD") were

also calculated and used as measure of internal agreement. Weight ranging from 4 to 0 was attached to points 5 to 1 on the scale used in the questionnaire.

The average rating for all competences in the whole group shows that, in general, the respondents considered the competences highly important (mean= 3.39). The standard deviation for the overall rating was 0.81, which would indicate that the respondents did not agree strongly. The data revealed that translation students tended to place more importance than professional translators on all competences apart from the technological one (the average difference between mean ratings was 0.15) and disagreed much less (the average difference between standard deviations being 0.20). Overall, the average rating and standard deviation were fairly similar for both groups.

The competences which were rated the highest were the following: intercultural competence ( $3.58 \pm \text{SD } 0.71$ ), language competence ( $3.58 \pm \text{SD } 0.76$ ) and information mining competence ( $3.53 \pm \text{SD } 0.78$ ). It is worth noting that respondents also agreed the most strongly about the importance of these competences, particularly the first two.

The competence which was found the least important was technological competence ( $3.10 \pm \text{SD } 0.99$ ), the respondents being in substantial disagreement.

In general, the respondents attached considerable importance to the competences listed, which implies that the EMT model does encompass several skills important for both professional and translation students who took part in the survey. The fact that professional translators tended to give lower ratings may indicate that they felt some skills were missing from the list (see "Additional competences suggested by the respondents" in Section 2.7). The systematically higher level of disagreement in this group, on the other hand, may result from the fact that professional translators had different modes of work (freelance vs. in-house,) and experience, as shown in Tab. 2, and probably specialised in various fields, which was beyond the scope of this questionnaire. In their particular situation some competences are thus more relevant than others. Student translators are still to specialise, on the other hand, and that might be the reason why they tend to perceive competences as equally useful. Moreover, most of the students who participated in the survey were currently doing programmes in translation (mostly at the University of Surrey) which comply with EMT criteria, thus it is hardly surprising that they would find them particularly relevant.

## **2.7. The perceived importance of competences in the EMT framework: professional vs. student translators**

- Translation service provision competence

This competence was found highly important by both groups (p. mean = 3.22, s. mean = 3.41), although it was not among the highest ranked ones. This seems quite unexpected since this highly “practical” competence is at the centre of the EMT model and its elements are also highlighted in other recent scholarly works, as has been shown in Section 1.

It is interesting to find that not only was this competence not among the highest rated ones, but also that both professional and translation students disagreed considerably about the importance this competence (SD = 0.87 vs. 0.72), in particular about the interpersonal dimension (SD = 0.90 vs. 0.76).

This competence also contained the highest and lowest rated components on the entire list. The component which both groups of respondents found the most important was “delivering a translation appropriate to the client’s request, i.e. the purpose and the translation situation”, listed under the production dimension (p. mean = 3.73, s. mean = 3.86). This information is part of the *translation brief* (Nord 1997) or *translation commission* (Vermeer 1989), which lies at the heart of several widely accepted functional approaches towards translation stemming from Vermeer’s (1978) *Skopostheorie*. If translators are not provided with such information, they risk producing a translation which does not fulfil its function and therefore is useless from the client’s perspective. Fraser’s (2000: 53-54) research shows that although professional translators are guided by the brief in the decisions they make, many of them complain that this information is often not easily available from agencies and direct clients, which is yet another reason why the respondents might have emphasised the importance of this component.

The other two components with high ratings, as well as high levels of agreement, were “planning and managing your time, stress, work, budget and ongoing training, and meeting deadlines” (p. mean = 3.61, s. mean = 3.73) and “evaluating the quality of your work and accepting responsibility” (p. mean = 3.64, s. mean = 3.5), both from the highly controversial interpersonal dimension. They would be subsumed under strategic competence in the models by Cao (1996) and the PACTE group (2003), which occupies a central position in the two models and allows for interrelationships between other competences.

Overall, however, the translation service provision competence was rated relatively low. One of the reasons for this, from a statistical point of view, is the fact that it comprised the component which had the lowest rating in

both groups, i.e. working in a team (mean = 2.12 vs. 2.36), however, at the same time, it is worth noting that in both groups there was strong disagreement about this particular component (SD = 0.93 vs. 1.09). Surprisingly, this component was rated equally low by both professional freelance and in-house translators (mean= 2.1 vs. 2.2).

The component of “justifying your translation choices using appropriate metalanguage” was also rated fairly low in both groups (p. mean= 2.79, s. mean= 3.05). This could mean that either metalanguage is not particularly useful for translators or clients hardly ever require them to justify their decisions. What is more, this component was rated lower by professional in-house translators than professional freelance translators (mean= 2.5 vs. 2.95), the former seldom having contact with clients. According to Fraser’s (2000: 57-58) findings, few professional translators receive feedback from their clients, therefore the stage when they would be able or required to justify their decisions is missing from the process of providing translation services.

It is also worth noting that in this competence the greatest differences between the ratings of the two groups were found and this concerned two components. The first one was “specifying and calculating the services you offer and their added value (additional proofreading etc.)” (p. mean = 2.97, s. mean = 3.43). This might be explained by the fact that professional translators see this task as easy and it might seem a minute detail compared to other components, whereas translation students may regard it as difficult. Interestingly, in-house translators found this component significantly more important than freelancers (mean = 3.6 vs. 2.95). One possible explanation could be that translation companies tend to use more intricate systems of calculating the value of their services than freelance translators: if CAT tools are used, which is very often the case, their rates may vary depending on repetitions in the text or different degrees of matching between the source sentence to be translated and previously translated sentences. The other component was “being aware of demand in the market and advertising your services” (p. mean = 3.06, s. mean = 3.5). This finding seems quite surprising since 65.7% of professional translators worked freelance and 63.6% were full-time translators therefore they need to have a steady inflow of translation jobs in order to make a living. This could possibly indicate that they feel they are fairly well-established in the market, and that they specialise in fields which there is either demand for or which they would like to continue to specialise, irrespective of fluctuations in demand.

- Language competence

This was the highest rated competence in the survey (p. mean = 3.55, s. mean = 3.64), as was intercultural competence, with the second highest level of agreement among the respondents (p. SD = 0.85, s. SD = 0.61). This competence also comprises the second highest rated

component, i.e. “knowing grammatical and lexical structures, and graphic conventions in your working languages and being able to reproduce them in another language” (p. mean = 3.7, s. mean = 3.73). As far translation studies are concerned, there has been an interesting shift in the approach towards this competence. It was identified in the earliest works in the field, and is still included in the most recent models, such the ones by Cao (1996) and the PACTE group (2003), in addition to EMT framework. None of them, however, have put in a central position. In fact, when measuring translation competence and its acquisition, the PACTE group (Orozco, M. and Hurtado Albir. A 2002, PACTE 2003) deliberately exclude language competence from their studies as it is not unique for translators; for the same reason Vienne (1998) took the radical step of leaving linguistic competence out of his list of core competences for translation. Despite this shift in translation studies, however, the translators who participated in the survey regarded language competence as the nexus of translation competence.

- Intercultural competence

Similarly to language competence, this is another widely acknowledged competence in the literature. Both professional and translation students rated intercultural competence as the most important one (mean = 3.5 vs. 3.69), as they did language competence, laying particular emphasis on the “traditional” sociolinguistic dimension (mean = 3.56 vs. 3.75). What also proves that this competence is regarded as crucial and is well-established in the respondents’ minds is the fact that it had the highest level of agreement (p. SD = 0.81, s. SD = 0.50). Yet again, the participants validated the well-established components of a competence which does not occupy the central position in new models.

- Information mining competence

This competence, which has been mentioned by several authors as shown in Section 1, was rated third in the list in terms of importance (p. mean = 3.46, s. mean = 3.64). A possible reason for this difference could be that translation students find the tasks of processing information or evaluating the reliability of their sources more challenging than do professional translators. This competence was also third in terms of the level of agreement (p. SD = 0.90, s. SD = 0.54). The particularly high level of disagreement among professional translators (with a much lower level in group of students) may seem surprising, however, it may be due to the fact that some translators are well-established in some niches of the market or translate for regular clients and have less of a need to search for information as they tend to rely on their experience. No significant difference was found between professional in-house and freelance translators in this respect.

- Thematic competence

This competence, which has been very strongly emphasised in the literature and introduced even in early works, comes fourth in the respondents' ratings (p. mean = 3.27, s. mean = 3.46). It was also the second competence the respondents disagreed most strongly about (p. SD = 0.94, s. SD = 0.72). As in the case of information mining competence, there was particularly high disagreement about this competence in the professional group. This might indicate that some professional translators learn about their fields "as they go" and they do not explore the domains they specialise in outside their translation tasks.

- Technological competence

In contrast to the three previous competences, technological competence has been mentioned mainly in recent works on translation competence and both groups attached the least importance to it (p. mean = 3.10, s. mean = 3.09). It should also be stressed that both professional and translation students disagreed the most strongly about the relevance of this competence (SD = 0.99 vs. 0.97). This would reflect the gap between those translators who use or plan to make heavy use of technology in their work and those for whom it is not essential.

In fact, all the components of technological competence were rated low by both groups compared to the components of the remaining competences. It is worth noting that "knowing the possibilities and limits of machine translation" was rated considerably lower by professionals than by translation students. This difference might be due to the fact that while machine translation is a stimulating topic to discuss in academic courses, and CAT tools, which are constantly being improved, have indeed revolutionised the translation industry, translation remains a task which can be performed successfully only by human translators aided by machines and fully automatic machine translation (which the phrase "machine translation" might suggest) is only possible with specially written texts. Machine translation received far greater consideration from in-house translators than from freelancers (mean = 3.30 vs. 2.62), which would indicate that they are more likely to have access to and benefit from advancements in this field.

The rapid and effective use of a range of computer tools which assist the translator in translation, terminology and research, on the other hand, is valued much more by professionals, all of whom are already working as translators, than by students. What is more, this component stresses speed and effectiveness, which contribute to translators' efficiency, and, as a result, their income, which is an immediate and important consideration for professional translators. It is also worth mentioning that in-house translators found this component much more important than freelance translators (mean = 3.8 vs. 3.33), which is hardly surprising

since translation companies nowadays provide translators with a range of computer tools and their use is compulsory. This entails the necessity to learn to use new tools, which is not required of freelance translators to such an extent (mean = 3.2 vs. 2.95).

- Additional competences suggested by the respondents

The respondents were given an opportunity to mention any other skills that they thought were missing from the questionnaire. Eight (15%) of the respondents mentioned such skills, some more than one. Most of the comments were related to what the EMT model labels translation service provision competence. The comments reflected and broadened some of the components already touched upon in the EMT model, such as setting realistic deadlines and respecting them, adapting to the demands of different clients and being professional in all situations. Other detailed and practical skills which were not included in the model, but could be subsumed under translation service provision competence, concerned judging one's ability to deliver a successful translation and refusing if one is incapable of providing such a translation, keeping a record of work for tax purposes, highlighting potential problems and ambiguities before or upon the delivery of a translation, and distinguishing between actual and preferential errors when proofreading other translators' work.

As for thematic competence, it was suggested that a translator should "read widely and be up-to-date with current affairs". A remark concerning a related competence, i.e. information mining competence, as well as technological competence, was that computer-assisted translation tools could be used to search for parallel texts (this could be subsumed under "documentary research" mentioned in the model) which can be of use if the translator is unfamiliar with the subject.

Some other skills mentioned by the respondents which seem unrelated to the competences mentioned in the EMT model included touch typing and maintaining physical and mental health, which can be adversely affected by spending long hours in front of the computer.

### **3. Conclusions**

The European Master's in Translation reference framework, which serves as a basis for EU-approved translation programmes, has been shown to incorporate concepts put forward by several translation scholars and to be a valuable attempt at their categorisation. It was noted that this framework not only makes extensive use of earlier works in the field, but also operationalises the competences by providing practice-oriented components for each competence.

The EMT reference framework was used in order to devise a questionnaire whose aim was to investigate whether the competences are also perceived

as relevant by two groups they concern, i.e. professional translators and translation students, and whether the views of the two groups differ. The findings are presented below.

- Overall, the competences were found highly relevant by both groups, which suggests that the framework is indeed valid for the two groups of respondents whose views the survey sought to investigate.
- Professional translators gave slightly lower ratings for all competences but one, and disagreed more about their importance than translation students, which would indicate that the framework is better established in the minds of those who are currently doing translator training programmes than in those of professionals with working experience who already have a specific mode of work (freelance vs. in-house).
- Interestingly, in both groups the competences were classified in the same order in terms of importance and the level of agreement.
- One might have expected that the practical competences, which are new to translation research, would be rated the highest, particularly by professional translators, but in this survey the traditionally recognised language and intercultural competences were regarded as the most significant. Information mining competence was third in terms of importance, and thematic competence came fourth. The novel and practice-oriented translation service provision competence, which encompassed strategic competence central in other models, was not rated as high, while technological competence, included in recent works, was rated the lowest. Moreover, there was substantial disagreement about these two competences; as might have been expected, there was a significant gap between in-house and freelance translators in terms of their perceived importance of machine translation. The order of importance in which the competences were ranked by the respondents corresponds with that in early works in the literature, rather than to the EMT framework which has translation service provision competence as its core.

Although, due to limited time and access to potential respondents, the research involved only a small group of professional and student translators with a similar academic background, it points to some interesting conclusions, which would be worth testing in other environments. The main advantages of the recent EMT framework are that, on the one hand, it embraces views of the academic environment, and on the other, it has been developed with professional translators in mind. Both professional and student translators who participated in the small-scale survey found the competences and their components relevant. The fact that there was strong similarity between their views could indicate that thanks to using criteria such as the ones based on the EMT framework in translation programmes (as is the case at the University of



Surrey) translation students are now more adequately prepared for their professional careers in terms of knowledge and skills needed in their professional work, or at least that their attitude towards them is similar to that of professional translators whose views, even if initially influenced by the EMT framework incorporated in their training programmes, have been verified by their professional experience. The numerous advantages of the framework and the results of this survey may suggest that the EMT framework can serve a solid basis for translation programmes which are to prepare student translators for real-life translation tasks.

As already mentioned, it would be interesting to replicate this study with respondents in different countries and with varying academic backgrounds in order to see if they find the competences equally important and if such a high level of agreement is possible in less homogenous groups.

## References

- **Angelelli, Claudia V.** (2009). "Using a rubric to assess translation ability: defining the construct." Claudia V. Angelelli and Holly E. Jacobson (eds) *Testing and assessment in translation and interpreting studies*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 13-47.
- **Arango-Keeth, Fanny and Geoffrey S. Koby** (2003). "Translator training evaluation and the needs of industry quality training." Brian J. Baer and Geoffrey S. Koby (eds) *Beyond the ivory tower: rethinking translation pedagogy*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 117-134.
- **Bell, Roger T.** (1991). *Translation and translating: theory and practice*. London: Longman.
- **Cao, Deborah** (1996). "A model of translation proficiency." *Target* 8(2), 325-340.
- **Colina, Sonia** (2003). "Towards an empirically-based translation pedagogy." Brian J. Baer and Geoffrey S. Koby (eds) *Beyond the ivory tower: rethinking translation pedagogy*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 29-59.
- **Delisle, Jean** (1992). "Les manuels de traduction : essai de classification." *TTR : traduction, terminologie, redaction* 5 (1), 17-47.
- **EMT expert group** (2009a). *Competences for professional translators, experts in multilingual and multimedia communication*. [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/emt/key\\_documents/emt\\_competences\\_translators\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/emt/key_documents/emt_competences_translators_en.pdf) (consulted 10.07.2011)
- — (2009b). *Developing a European network of translation programmes*. [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/emt/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/emt/index_en.html) (consulted 10.01.2009)
- **Fraser, Janet** (2000). "The broader view: how freelance translators define translation competence." Christina Schäffner and Beverly Adab (eds) *Developing translation competence*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 51-61.

- **Gile, Daniel** (2009). *Basic concepts and models for interpreter and translator training*. Revised edition. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- **Kiraly, Donald C.** (2003). "From instruction to collaborative construction: a passing fad or the promise of a paradigm shift in translator education?" Brian J. Baer and Geoffrey S. Koby (eds) *Beyond the ivory tower: rethinking translation pedagogy*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 3-27.
- **Neubert, Albrecht** (2000). "Competence in language, in languages, and in translation". Christina Schäffner and Beverly Adab (eds) *Developing translation competence*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 3-18.
- **Neubert, Albrecht and Gregory Shreve** (1992). *Translation as Text*. Kent. OH: Kent State University Press.
- **Nord, Christiane** (1991). *Text analysis in translation: theory. Methodology and didactic application of a model for translation-oriented text analysis*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- — (1997). *Translating as a purposeful activity*. Manchester: St Jerome.
- **Orozco, Mariana and Amparo Hurtado Albir** (2002). "Measuring translation competence acquisition." *Meta* 47(3), 375-402.
- **PACTE** (2000). "Acquiring translation competence: hypotheses and methodological problems in a research project." Alison Beeby, Doris Ensinger and Marisa Presas (eds) *Investigating translation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 99-106.
- — (2003). "Building a translation competence model." Fabio Alves (Ed) *Triangulating translation: perspectives in process oriented research*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 43-66.
- **Swaan (de), Abram** (2001). *Words of the World: The Global Language System*. Cambridge: Polity.
- **Toury, Gideon** (1986). "Natural translation and the making of a native translator." *TextconText* 1, 11-29.
- **Vienne, Jean** (1998). "Vous avez dit compétence traductionnelle?" *Meta* 43(2), 1-4.
- **Vermeer, Hans J.** (1978). "Ein Rahmen für eine allgemeine Translationstheorie." *Lebende Sprachen* 23 (1), 99-102.
- — (1989/2000) "Skopos and commission in translational action." Lawrence Venuti (ed.) *The Translation Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 221-232.
- **Wilss, Wolfram** (1976). "Perspectives and limitations of a didactic framework for the teaching of translation." Richard W. Brislin (ed.) *Translation. Applications and Research*. New York: Gardner Press, 117-137.

## **Biography**

Marta Chodkiewicz works as a teacher and researcher at Marie Curie-Sklodowska University, Lublin, Poland. She holds an MA in Business Translation with Interpreting from the University of Surrey and completed an MA-BA programme in Applied Linguistics in English and French at Marie Curie-Sklodowska University. Her research interests include the development and measurement of translation competence, translation of specialised texts and translator training; she has also dealt with English-Polish poetry translation. She is currently working on a PhD dissertation which explores the behaviour of novice translators.

Contact: [marta.m.chodkiewicz@gmail.com](mailto:marta.m.chodkiewicz@gmail.com)