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Attitudes of professional translators and translation students towards order management and translator platforms

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ABSTRACT

Technology plays an important role in the language industry. Investigating computer-assisted translation tools and machine translation systems is a continuing concern within translation studies. Among translation technologies, translator platforms, which are used both by translators and clients, have received scant attention in the research literature despite the fact that they can facilitate important tasks for translators such as order management. This paper provides an initial attempt to define translator platforms and their purpose. Moreover, it analyses the attitude towards these platforms among translators at different professional stages and with different years of experience. This study consists of a qualitative and a quantitative part. Semi-structured expert interviews and a survey among students in the field of specialised translation have revealed the differences regarding (expectations of) translation management and attitudes towards translator platforms. Especially professional translators who have already gained a foothold in the translation sector and are satisfied with their order management are sceptical about translator platforms providing order management features. Students, regardless of their practical translation experience, have a more positive attitude towards translator platforms. They appreciate the automatically generated quotations and invoices as well as client acquisition.

KEYWORDS

Translation management, translator platform, translation platform, specialised translator, translation workflow, translation process, order management, professional translator, translation students.

1. Introduction

Technology and collaboration play a crucial role in the language industry and thus also in a specialised translator's professional life. Technology such as computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, machine translation (MT) engines, terminology management systems, alignment tools and different forms of language technology have been gaining ground in the translation profession (Yuste Rodrigo (ed.) 2008; Sin-wai 2015). According to a study conducted by Elia *et al.* (2016), CAT tools, translation management systems and translation workflow systems are used by the majority of European language service providers (LSPs). This study also shows that machine translation is advancing fast in the language industry.

A large and growing body of literature has investigated CAT tools for (specialised) translators as well as (neural) machine translation (Garcia 2011; Proia 2012; Popović *et al.* 2014; Mesa-Lao *et al.* (eds) 2015; Moorkens *et al.* 2015), showing that translators rely on the use of technology. Different classifications have been developed for these systems (Alcina 2008). The dominance of technology in translation led to the statement that translation is "a form of human-computer interaction"

(O'Brien 2012: 103). This also means that the use of tools has an impact on the translation workflow (Christensen and Schjoldager 2010). There are different types of "translation environment tools (TEnTs)" (Zetzsche 2008: 47) which increase the productivity of translators. These translation tools can be defined in a broad and narrow sense. In a broad sense, they are any technology that aims at enhancing effectiveness, efficiency, speed and quality and reducing costs in the translation process. In a narrow sense, translation environment tools are systems used for transferring messages from one language into another, such as CAT tools and MT systems. These technological components surrounding translation (management) processes should make the job of professional translators easier. These include software and aids in the environment of translators, ranging from project management applications, query management applications, tools for review, content and knowledge management systems to common email programs (Alcina 2008: 90–96). The technology used may also encompass file sharing or online workflow systems such as collaborative translation platforms (Stoeller 2011: 291–292). Furthermore, tools can be used in every stage of translation or localisation projects ranging from the client's initial request for quotation, pre-job planning, analysis of the source material and capacity planning to quality checks and project post-mortem, i.e. the process of analysing a finished project and determining the lessons learned (Esselink 1998: 260-272; Drugan 2013: 100-105).

Before proceeding to examine the method of the present study, we would like to clarify key terms used in this paper: translation process, order management, translation platform, translator platform, resource platform and translation technology.

1.1. Translation process and order management

Translation, as a translatorial action (Holz-Mänttäri 1984), is a process. The term 'translation process' can mean the cognitive processes involved in translation itself, on the one hand, and the processing of a client's translation request ranging from the first enquiry to project follow-up, on the other (Englund Dimitrova 2013: 406–410). The first meaning of translation process refers to studying the cognitive processes involved in translation as part of cognitive translation studies or "translator studies" (Chesterman 2009). It means to "explore the translating mind" (Pavlović 2009: 81) and the working environment of translators. Translators and their working environment form a "translational ecosystem" (Krüger 2016: 312). This environment includes artefacts such as information technology (Risku 2004: 20).

The second meaning of the term is the one used by the language industry. Translation processes refer to translation management, the steps that translators take in order management and translation projects as well as the textual work of the translator (SDL 2018a). In this respect ISO 17100 (2015: 7-11) distinguishes three phases, i.e. the pre-production processes

and activities, the production process and the post-production process. The client's enquiry, the feasibility study, the quotation, the client-translation service provider agreement and project preparation belong to the pre-production phase. Translation service project management and the translation process, which consists of translation, check, revision, review, proofreading and final verification and release are part of the production process. The post-production phase consists of the client's feedback and closing administration. According to Rütten (2007: 93), professional translators need management in order to generate profit: only when managing their translation activity, they are able to optimise their working time and the invested capital to maximise their profit. The importance of management and management competence for translators is also recognised in the literature. Pym (2003: 494–495) and Sandrini (2008: 188), for example, insist on the importance of developing project management competences. Dunne and Dunne (2011) and Risku (2016) describe translation management within LSPs, while Braun *et al.* (2017) address different steps of a translation project both for LSPs and freelance translators.

In this context two types of management seem to be very useful: project management and order management. Every translation assignment can in fact be considered as a project, as it is "a sequence of unique, complex and connected activities having one goal or purpose that must be completed by a specific date, within budget and according to specification" (Wysocki 2007: 4). The coordination of a project or different projects requires the implementation and integration of five project processes: project initiation, project planning, project execution, project monitoring and project closure (Saladis and Kerzner 2011: 12), or three phases in ISO 17100 terms, i.e. pre-production, production and post-production. Since translation projects start with an order by a client and translators have to deal with different orders at the same time, translators need to implement an order management which enables them to coordinate all projects from ordering to invoicing.

1.2. Translation platforms and translator platforms

The terms 'translation platform' and 'translator platform' embody a multitude of concepts. The terms 'translation management system', 'translation management service' and 'translation platform' are sometimes used interchangeably. They can be subsumed as language technologies supporting people in the translation workflow. Currently, there is no agreed definition on what constitutes a translation platform or translator platform. Basically, a platform is "a group of technologies that are used as a base upon which other applications, processes or technologies are developed. […] [S]ome browsers are now spoken of as platforms since they are used as a base on which to run other applications' software programs." (Techopedia 2018).

In the following section, various meanings and features of translation and translator platforms are elaborated. These meanings were influenced by the student survey discussed in section 3.2.1.

Throughout this article, the term 'translation platform' will be used in its broadest sense to refer to a web-based technological system that facilitates, customises and/or automates the translation workflow and/or translation management within a company. Translator platform, on the other hand, can be loosely described as a web-based technological system that facilitates the work of translators by providing a marketplace as well as translation-related tools and/or resources. The first system aims at facilitating translation workflows (of companies), whereas the latter aims at facilitating the work of (freelance) translators. While translation platforms focus on the translation process and its technological component, including automation of workflows, translator platforms primarily focus on the person of (freelance) translators and their needs.

1.2.1. Translation platforms

The term translation platform seems to be used to refer to web-based technological solutions that aim at streamlining translation processes within a company. Translation platforms focus on the translation process, especially project and order management. The translation workflows as part of these platforms are usually defined by the client. These platforms should support all people involved in a (company's) translation project. Normally, they are targeted at translator teams rather than individual (freelance) translators.

Translation platforms may be divided into two groups, including web-based translation management systems and translation workflow systems. Both web-based translation management systems and translation workflow systems streamline the translation workflow and provide an interface for translation editing. Thus, they facilitate and automate translation project management, i.e. the different steps in the translation process ranging from the client's initial request to finishing the translation assignment.

The first type of translation platforms are web-based translation management systems. These web-based systems are browser-based CAT tools which focus on the administration of (individual) translation projects. This web-based technology facilitates collaboration among translators who complete a single translation assignment together, similar to other CAT tools. In contrast to other CAT tools (see section 1.3.2.), a browser-based CAT tool can only be accessed via the Internet and products such as websites or software may be directly localised in the system. Therefore, they are also sometimes called localisation platforms. An example is Smartling (2018), which describes itself as a translation management system to localise different types of products. Transifex (2018) is another online localisation platform allowing for cloud-based, continuous and agile

localisation according to its product description. They provide customised solutions for a company with translation requirements. Here, the company may have already selected a language service provider having access to the platform.

Based on a predefined workflow, the second type of translation platforms, i.e. translation workflow systems automatically perform and monitor a defined sequence of processes and tasks to complete a translation. Based on the parameters entered, the request and translation move from one step to the next one. Translation workflows transcend departments and projects. For example, a translation workflow system may automatically assign translation jobs or provide cost and time estimations.

These platforms automate tasks and optimise management processes. They use the data entered to find resources or match content with tools and processes (Massardo *et al.* 2016: 80). This can be illustrated by SDL WorldServer (SDL 2018b), memoQ server (memoQ 2018) or Plunet (2018), which are used for centralising and automating translation processes. The latter is particularly targeted at translation agencies and in-house translation services. These systems may include, among others, contact and query management, quality assurance as well as automatic quoting and invoicing. In contrast to translation management systems, they are not geared towards individual translation projects but entire translation processes (within an organisation). They are performing a set of project management tasks. For example, according to predefined parameters, such as language(s), domain or urgency of the assignment, the system automatically informs eligible translators about the translation job. The system may send emails to the users and thus minimises the direct contact between the person requesting a translation and the translators during some project phases.

1.2.2. Translator platforms

As mentioned above, translator platforms focus on translators and their needs. Since freelance translators seem to be the main target group of translator platforms, these platforms may offer targeted information, services and features. These can range from discussion forums and the provision of resources which enable exchange and collaboration among translators onto automatic order management and client acquisition. One distinctive characteristic of these platforms is that they address individual translators who are often not working on the same translation project.

The first type of translator platforms is a website aimed at exchange among translators. This website may include an online forum for translators to provide advice, exchange tips and post problems they have encountered during translation. These problems can be of linguistic, technical or social nature. Other people may be able to offer a solution to these problems. Therefore, these translator platforms are often websites including a

discussion forum or a question-and-answer forum such as TranslatorsCafé or ProZ.com (Pym *et al.* 2016).

First, ProZ.com describes itself as an "Online Community and Workplace for Language Professionals" (ProZ.com 2018). Its aim is to provide various tools and opportunities for people working in the language industry. Translators and translation companies should benefit by networking, expanding their businesses and enhancing their work (ProZ.com 2018). Second, TranslatorsCafé.com "where linguists and their clients meet" (TranslatorsCafé 2018) allows clients, similar to ProZ.com, to post job offerings and search for translators or translation agencies. Linguists can search for translation jobs, terminology, glossaries or create their own website. One major feature is a forum to discuss translation, localisation or other translation-related issues, technical topics, language-specific issues or software for translators, including CAT tools (ProZ.com 2018, TranslatorsCafé 2018).

The common features of this type of translator platforms are:
- Translation marketplace:
  - Clients can search for (and hire) (professional) translators or translation companies.
  - Clients can post a translation job.
  - Translators can browse and land translation jobs.
- Communication and discussion among translators (who are not working on the same translation project):
  - Translators can discuss professional topics in forums.
  - Translators can get additional information, e.g. about events, professional development or the reliability of clients.
- Exchange of resources: Translators can exchange resources, e.g. glossaries.

A feature of translator platforms may be an online system to find translation vendors. This translation marketplace can take the form of a website that pools individual translators or language service providers (e.g. in a certain geographical region or belonging to a certain association). This website helps clients to find a translation vendor in the required language direction (and domain). This type includes websites of translators' associations that list all their members according to their working languages or specialisations. In Austria, for example, the national Interpreters' and Translators' Association, Universitas, has a searchable directory of its members. Clients can select translators and contact them via email or telephone.

The second type of translator platforms is a web-based system combining the marketplace feature with a partly automated order management system. These platforms make translation vendors visible on a website and additionally allow clients to contact translators directly via the platform. Examples are Nativy (2018), Lengoo (2019) and MOA (2019). Translators

and clients, on the one hand, and translators and revisers, on the other, can communicate directly via this platform. There is no need for email communication between these user groups. These systems do not only facilitate communication between clients and translators but also reduce the number of administrative tasks for translators, i.e. the entire order management. These platforms facilitate collaboration between translators and clients throughout the translation process directly via the platform. They should be beneficial to both clients and translators. Clients can order translations with a few clicks. Translators do not have to provide clients with quotations, invoices or information about deadlines because the system prepares cost and time estimations automatically based on a translator's price expectations and availability.

These online platforms have different complexity and focus on different stages within translation and order management. Whereas some systems allow for basic functionalities such as collaborative translation and simple terminology management, others are more sophisticated and include project management and key account management features. Thus, they are either systems for freelance translators only, such as MOA, or a tool used by companies to manage orders of freelance translators. In contrast to translation platforms such as Smartling or Transifex, workflows on this type of translator platforms can be hardly customised. Translator platforms often provide a one-fits-all solution for clients and translators. Nevertheless, clients may be able to specify the required target language(s), the desired date of delivery and their price expectations. Translators may also define their price expectations, their availability and their preferred domains. This type of translator platforms has many features with translation platforms in common, such as automation of order management, integration of translation-related resources and use of translation technology such as CAT tools or MT systems. However, we consider them to be translator platforms since they focus on the marketplace, i.e. clients can find translation vendors and translators can acquire clients. Similar to the first type of translator platforms, Nativy, Lengoo or MOA address individual translators.

The list above may not be exhaustive, and we may have overlooked further connotations of the two terms, but it is an initial attempt to categorise and define translation and translator platforms. Some systems might not clearly belong to one category or the other because the emphasis and features of the platforms may overlap.

To sum up, translation platforms are characterised by process orientation, whereas translator platforms are focusing on people. Both enable interaction among translators or between translators and clients. Translator platforms pay attention to the marketplace and/or mutual exchange of information, knowledge or resources. Translation resources and tools may be integrated into different subtypes of these platforms (see Figure 1). To classify platforms into translation platforms or translator platforms, they do not have to include all the features listed in Figure 1, but only the distinctive

ones. Simply put, and as the designations already imply, translation platforms focus on translation, whereas translator platforms are aimed at translators (and clients).
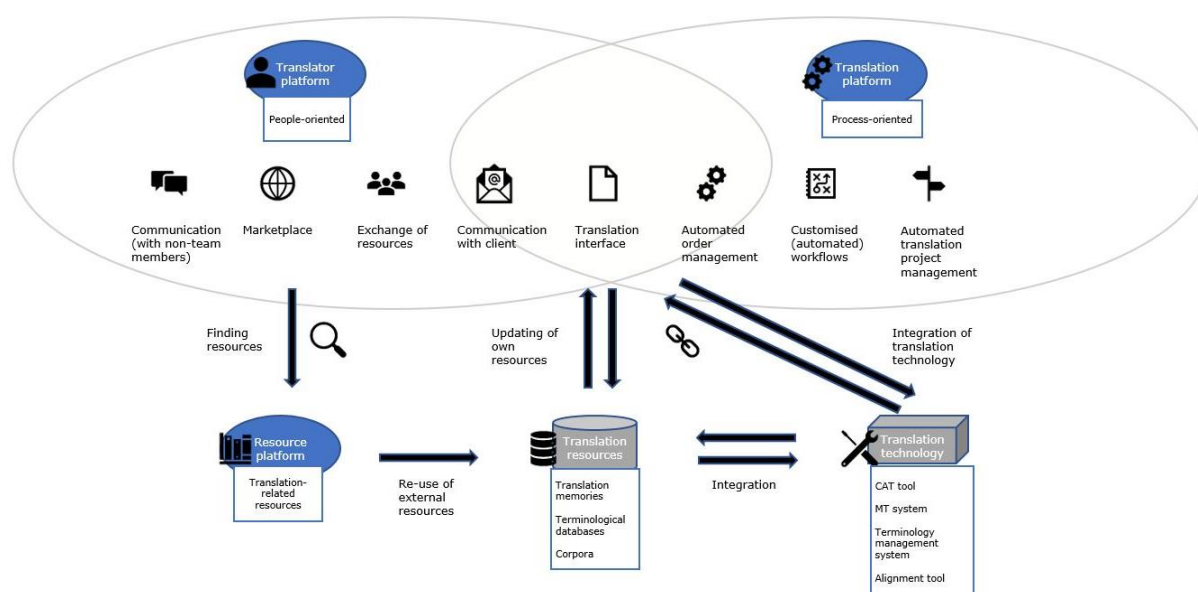

Figure 1. Features of translation platforms and translator platforms and their combination with resources and tools.

1.3. Translation resources and tools

We can differentiate between translation resources and translation tools as well. Translation resources are a compilation of linguistic data to be used by translators. One example is IATE (2019). (Language) tools are technology to manage these linguistic data (Alcina 2008: 98-99). Examples are CAT tools or terminology management systems, such as SDL MultiTerm. These tools and resources may be part of or may be integrated into translation platforms or translator platforms. In contrast to translator and translation platforms, tools and resources may be used offline and independently of these platforms. Resources may be exchanged by some means or other.

1.3.1. Resource platforms

Resource platforms are websites that provide translation-related aids, such as terminology, translation memories or corpora. In rare cases, these websites pooling language resources may be referred to as translation platforms as well. However, since they are usually not interactive, they are rather translation aids. These aids can be integrated, downloaded or used online in the translation process.

On the one hand, a resource platform may be a website that pools language resources such as translation memories or terminological databases. An

example are TermCoord's (2019) glossary collections which provide a variety of online terminological resources. On the other hand, a resource platform may only provide a single resource. An example is linguee.com, which is often used as concordance search or IATE (2019), the European Union's terminological database. Compared to translation platforms and translator platforms, resource platforms are not used for workflow automation and they are less interactive. Resource platforms offer language resources, but exchange and communication between translators or with the resource providers are often not intended since they focus on the unidirectional provision of resources.

Resources may be exchanged on translator platforms, such as ProZ.com or TranslatorsCafé. These websites may provide dedicated sections for exchanging glossaries or terminological databases.

1.3.2. Translation technology

In the literature, different translation technology categories can be found (Hutchins and Somers 1992: 147; Melby 1998; Alcina 2008: 96; Krüger 2016). These classifications of computer applications related to translation often depend on the relation to translation, the point of use in the translation process, the type of data they handle, different phases of the work or the automation of translation. The majority of these classifications put an emphasis on the translation itself rather than the processes surrounding translation, such as alignment, project or process management, resource maintenance, client database management or query management.

Generally, translation technology in a narrow sense encompasses CAT tools and MT systems. In rare cases, CAT tools and MT systems are also perceived as translation platforms.

CAT tools may be classified on the basis of where the software runs, i.e. desktop-based, server-based, cloud-based and browser-based CAT tools. However, drawing a clear distinction is not easy since they can be combined. Especially server-based, cloud-based and browser-based CAT tools enable translators to work collaboratively on a translation. Examples are SDL Trados Studio, memoQ and Wordfast which are (also) available as a desktop version. Other technological solutions may be only available online. These are called browser-based CAT tools. Depending on their features, these browser-based CAT tools or localisation tools may classified as translation platforms (see section 1.2.1).

Machine translation systems can be divided into rule-based, statistical, neural or hybrid MT systems. They can also be classified into generic or domain-specific systems or depending on their availability, i.e. freely available systems or systems with restricted access. Freely available machine translation systems are available on the Internet, such as Google

Translate (2019) or DeepL (2019). Systems with restricted access are often customised systems developed for a company or organisation.

Translation technology in a wider sense includes any tools besides CAT tools used (by a translator) in the translation process (Krüger 2016: 322-323). These are any information and communication technology tools that support translators in their work (Risku 2011: 86). These may be email programs, knowledge management systems or quality assurance tools. Moreover, translation management systems, translation workflow systems globalisation management systems, localisation project management systems as well as controlled authoring tools are also gaining importance in the translation industry (Elia *et al.* 2016: 16; Massardo *et al.* 2016: 3). Thus, any technology increasing the translation productivity may be regarded as translation technology.

According to the broad definition of translation technology, translation platforms and translator platforms can be classified as translation technology. In this paper, we consider CAT tools, MT systems, alignment systems and terminology management systems as translation technology.

Since our paper pays attention to translator platforms, we will focus on two potential target groups of these platforms, i.e. freelance translators and novice translators. Before describing the study, it is necessary to describe the situation of freelance translators and translation education in Austria.

1.4. Freelance translators and translation education in Austria

We base our understanding of freelance translators on the definition by Kitching and Smallbone: "[f]reelancers might be defined as those genuinely in business on their own account, working alone or with co-owning partners or co-directors, responsible for generating their own work and income, but who do not employ others" (2012: 76). Freelance translators are therefore self-employed translators who work as independent contractors for different clients, which can be language service providers (LSPs) and/or direct clients, for example companies, public sector agencies and private clients. In contrast to employed translators, freelance translators are not part of the company's staff. They can be considered as independent contractors and are therefore ultimately responsible for paying their own taxes and insurance (Freie Berufe 2018).

As shown in the literature, freelance translators "seem to dominate the translation market globally" (Pym *et al.* 2012: 88). Pym *et al.* (2012) state that the number of freelance translators can only be estimated as their profession is not legally protected. The legal status of freelance translators differs from country to country. In general, they can be either members of the liberal professions or entrepreneurs. To build their professional network and gain practical know-how, freelance translators often join professional

translators' associations and/or online marketplaces and platforms (Risku and Dickinson 2009: 58).

In Austria, the freelance translator landscape is quite heterogeneous. Many freelance translators are members of Universitas Austria, the national Interpreters' and Translators' Association. When this study was conducted Universitas Austria had 1,265 members, 541 of whom were registered translators, 381 were registered interpreters and 343 members were registered as both translators and interpreters. As the Austrian Economic Chamber WKO (*Wirtschaftskammer Österreich*) represents both self-employed translators and LSPs and does not have any detailed numbers about these two groups, it is not possible to verify the number of individual entrepreneurs and LSPs in Austria.

In Austria, three universities offer higher education in (specialised) translation or LSP (language for specific purposes) translation. At the University of Vienna, the master curriculum is called Translation. Students may choose from different focusses including specialised translation and language industry. At the University of Graz, three degree programmes cover specialised translation. These three programmes focusing on specialised translation are called Translation; Translation and Dialogue Interpreting, and the Joint Degree in Translation. Finally, the University of Innsbruck offers a master programme in Translation Studies.
The curricula of all universities include modules related to computer-assisted translation or translation technology, multimedia translation or technology-assisted media translation, localisation and technical documentation (Universität Innsbruck 2009; Universität Wien 2015; Universität Graz 2017). This means that all translation programmes in Austria offer specialised translation modules. However, none of them explicitly mentions translation platforms or translation management tools in their curricula.

2. Background and method

2.1. Background

This study was conducted as part of a research project titled My Own Agency (MOA), which aimed to develop a web-based platform for translation services. On the one hand, My Own Agency pursued the objective of facilitating the work of freelance translators through the optimisation of project and order management. On the other, it was intended to make it easier for clients to find translators for their projects. MOA provides translators with a website free of charge which they can use to describe their qualifications. This website should help freelance translators find new clients and interact with both (potential) clients and colleagues. In addition, business processes such as giving a quotation, invoicing and client acquisition are automated, i.e. the platform delivers automatically generated quotations and invoices to clients. Furthermore, it assigns

translation jobs to individual translators based on their language combinations, availability and preferred price (ZTW 2018).

MOA was developed by the Austrian company Nativy. Nativy describes itself as a "modern translation agency" (Nativy Translations 2018). However, there are no translation project managers involved since the platform automatically assigns potential translators to a translation job. It also automatically generates quotations and invoices. Moreover, translators can clarify questions directly with the clients via the platform. MOA, on the other hand, makes individual translators more visible since translators can create a website to present themselves as part of the MOA domain. Clients can select translators on their own. If translators do not cover a language combination requested by a client, they can easily collaborate with other translators via MOA. In addition, since it is another product developed by Nativy, MOA still generates quotations and invoices automatically and frees translators from (often unpleasant) administrative tasks (ZTW 2018).

2.2. Aim and method

The main aim of this study was to investigate the differences regarding (expectations of) translation management and order management in general as well as attitudes towards translator platforms among professional freelance translators and aspiring or novice translators in the field of specialised translation. The qualitative and quantitative part of the investigation should show the following:

- How do professional freelance translators manage their processes and orders?
- Do their management systems differ from those of novice translators?
- What are the expectations towards translator platforms among professional translators and translation students?

We conducted qualitative expert interviews with professional translators (working both as freelancers and as individual entrepreneurs) and a quantitative survey among university trainees in the field of specialised translation.

As far as translator platforms are concerned, we did not explain the meaning of the terms beforehand, neither during the interviews nor during the survey, to elicit spontaneous responses. Here, we could test the respondents' understanding of the term 'translator platform.' However, at a later stage in the questionnaire, we provided examples of and links to two platforms, namely Nativy and My Own Agency to get more relevant feedback.

In the qualitative part, we wanted to understand how experienced professional translators manage their client orders and therefore their translation processes.

For the expert interviews, we selected eight professional translators living in Austria. The prerequisites were at least five years of experience as translators in different fields, German as a working language and membership in Universitas, the Austrian Interpreters' and Translators' Association. This means that they had completed university-level translator education or obtained a degree in a similar field. The interviewed translators were recruited through our network of colleagues. Therefore, their combination of working languages is similar, especially Italian and German. Although this rather homogenous sample allows for a better comparison between the participants, it might also bias the results. Some findings could be related to the characteristics of the Italian translation market, while the market conditions for other language combinations could be different. Moreover, this sample is not representative of the translator population in Austria.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted between October and November 2016. Four interviews were held in person and the other four via Skype. All of them were audio recorded. The average interview duration was seventeen minutes. A set of short open and closed questions covered demographic details (gender, age, business status), translation technologies and language resources used, the translator's fields of specialisation, text types translated and types of clients. Moreover, the translators were asked about their order management and whether they are satisfied with it. In addition, the interviewees were asked to define steps in their order management which could be automated. The interview then moved on to platforms (both translation and translator platforms without explaining the meaning of these terms). The experts were asked to list the platforms they knew or used, and the platforms' advantages or disadvantages. Finally, they were asked about their opinion on MOA or similar platforms.

The interviews were summarised and qualitatively analysed. For the analysis, we used Mayring's (2010: 58-74) method for qualitative content analysis based on interview questions.

For the survey, 86 students enrolled in the Viennese master programme in Translation were recruited. Only students who majored in specialised translation (irrespective of their language combination) were considered. Over a period of two years starting in 2016, the survey was sent out to 136 students registered in a localisation course. The German-language survey consisted of 37 items in total (24 of them were open questions). The questionnaire was based on this study's expert interview questions and addressed (expectations of) the translation profession, translator platforms and demographic details. Students who stated that they already work as

translators had to answer additional questions about their order and project management.

Both samples are neither representative of the translator population in Austria nor of both target groups, i.e. professional translators and translation students. These groups have been analysed with different methods. Therefore, the number of participants differs between the groups. These differences between the two samples make a comparison of the results difficult. However, since there are no other data available for both professional translators and translation students, we compared the results of the qualitative and quantitative study. This allowed us to get a first insight into this topic.

3. Analysis

3.1. Results from the expert interviews

All the interviewees were female, offered translation services from or into Italian and German and had more than seven years of experience in translation (see Table 1). Six out of eight translators were self-employed, while the other two were both freelancers and in-house translators or university lecturers. Three translators were not VAT-registered in Austria, which means that their annual income derived from translations for Austrian clients did not exceed € 30,000. Two out of these three non-VAT-registered translators were no individual entrepreneurs but just freelancers. The third translator who was not VAT-registered and the remaining five translators applied for a business licence and were individual entrepreneurs. One translator did not only offer translations in her working languages but also into languages that she could not cover herself. To offer this service, she worked together with other freelance colleagues who translated into other languages. This means that, in comparison with the other interviewees, she managed a higher number of projects at the same time.

The majority of the interviewed experts (six out of eight) mainly worked for direct clients (business clients) and not for LSPs. The two translators mainly working for LSPs were those who are not liable for VAT in Austria. The income and type of client seem to be correlated since translators working for LSPs have a lower income than those being commissioned directly by clients. However, this assumption should be verified in a broader study.

The interviewed translators worked in different fields: law, economics and marketing, technology, tourism, culture and the arts, science, cosmetics and politics. Only two interviewed experts – mainly working for direct clients – did not use CAT tools due to the non-repetitive texts they translated. However, they were interested in using them or learning how to use them in the future. The other translators regularly used memoQ and SDL Trados Studio.

None of them used any project management (PM) software. However, all used terminology management systems and databases, online dictionaries and their own glossaries that they edited in Microsoft Word or Excel. Microsoft Excel was also used for accounting.

Translator	T01	T02	T03	T04	T05	T06	T07	T08
Full-time/ part-time	full-time	full-time	full-time	full-time	part-time (50%)	full-time	full-time	full-time
VAT yes/no	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no
Male/ female	female	female	female	female	female	female	female	female
Age group	35-40	30-35	25-30	30-35	30-35	30-35	30-35	30-35
Translator since	2003	2007	2010	2007 part-time, 2012 full-time	2010	2010	2006	2010 (part-time); 2012 (full-time)
CAT tools	memoQ SDL Trados Studio	memoQ	no	memoQ	no	memoQ	SDL Trados Studio memoQ	SDL Trados Studio
PM software	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
Direct clients (DC)/ LSP	95% DC, 5% LSP	60% DC, 40% LSP	90% DC, 10% LSP	75% DC, 25% LSP	DC,1 LSP	DC	60% LSP, 40% DC	65% LSP, 35% DC

Table 1. Data of the interviewed experts

3.1.1. Working practice and order management

Order management was similar among all interviewed translators. The translators received translation orders by email and rarely by telephone. After analysing the source text, they sent their quotations by email to the client. One translator requested the source text exclusively in Microsoft Word to count the number of lines and words. Some translators may require further information before giving a quotation, including information about the target audience, mandatory terminology to use and the urgency of the translation. Interestingly, only some translators wanted to know the desired deadline before sending their quotation. We assume that the deadline was not relevant to them because they indicated the number of working days needed for the translation in their quotation. Among the interviewed professional translators, the price rates were mostly flexible and diverse, depending on the clients' country of origin. Clients in Italy were charged a lower price compared to clients in Austria or other countries. Moreover, the costs for a translation depended on a text's complexity, the client type (LSPs, translator colleague or business company), the type of service (some of them exclusively delivered already proofread translations) and the

project volume, whereas some translators offered discounts for repetitions in comprehensive technical texts. This shows that the interviewees had a differentiated marketing strategy. Sometimes they concluded framework agreements with their clients to avoid price negotiations for every translation assignment. To calculate the final price for Austrian clients, most of them referred to lines of text according to the standard in Austria. Upon request, they also offered rates per word or flat rates.

After sending the quotation, all translators waited for a confirmation email before starting to translate. One translator even required an official confirmation signed by the client. For quotations and invoices, the majority of the interviewed translators used templates including re-usable text blocks to save time. The translators had different times of invoicing. Half of them sent their invoices at the end of the month, while the other half did so immediately after finishing the translation.

We found four types of order management:

- a comprehensive list (e.g. in Microsoft Excel) with information about the assignment, client, deadline, price, etc.;
- a combination of folders in the email program and digital client folders on the computer desktop, or physical client folders;
- a Microsoft Excel list, which is normally used for accounting, having additional columns with information about every assignment;
- sticky notes and calendars.

The first and second type of order management were adopted by three translators each, while the third and fourth type were used by one translator, respectively. A comparison of these types of order management shows that the first type offers a better overview of all assignments and does not depend on the accounting system used. The second type offers only a partial view of a single order and/or client. Furthermore, translators cannot display temporal relations to other translation assignments or plan capacities. The other two types provide neither an overview of all assignments nor of a single translation job. However, they help the translators monitor different aspects such as an imminent deadline or the price to enter on the invoice. The first two types of order management were predominantly used by translators working for business clients and offering a vast range of languages and services, while the last two were more common with translators working for LSPs.

3.1.2. Attitude towards translator platforms

All interviewed translators knew of or even had experience with different types of translator platforms. They were currently, or at least at the beginning of their career, members of marketplace platforms, such as TranslatorsCafé and ProZ.com. Actually, they did not use them for client acquisition but rather for terminology research and networking with

colleagues. Only two out of eight translators were interested in platforms for order management such as MOA.

For them, the advantages of these platforms were automatically generated quotations or invoices. This means they would need less time for administrative tasks and accounting. Nevertheless, they argued that the system for generating quotations should be customisable and flexible. It should be possible to adapt the system to their personal needs. The price calculation features should allow them to count lines, words or other units. At the same time, some of the interviewed translators argued that a professional quotation requires translators to analyse the text more thoroughly. In general, automation was not regarded as an advantage since it is not a synonym for quality: through automatic quotations, important characteristics of the texts to translate could be overlooked by the translators. Furthermore, this would make translators less visible for their clients with the consequence that it is difficult for them to communicate their unique value.

As far as the automatic generation of invoices is concerned, the experts also emphasised the need for more flexibility, e.g. the possibility to send the invoice at the end of the month and not directly after the translation. They expressed concerns regarding the platform providers' measures to earn their fee for their service. However, the translators understood that the platform providers charge a service fee. Furthermore, the majority of the interviewees did not want to receive their payment via an intermediary, i.e. the platform provider. Here, they identified the risk that the translators' clients might stop contacting the translators themselves but directly approach the platform provider if it is an LSP.

Disadvantages mentioned by the experts include losing personal contact with clients because this personal interaction is a unique selling proposition of some translators. Additionally, they were concerned about data security, especially texts with sensitive and confidential content. Moreover, the risk of breaching confidentiality and the possibility of losing the Internet connection were further disadvantages of these platforms.

Aspects that would make translator platforms more attractive to these professional translators can be summarised as follows:

- the fee charged for the platform providers' service should be collected monthly or annually. It should not be included as a fee on every invoice for every single translation ordered via the platform;
- the possibility to link the platform directly to the translators' own websites. The translators' clients should understand that the translators are not working as freelance translators for the platform providers, but they are only using a service, namely the order management system offered by the platform;

- a more flexible system regarding price units, i.e. lines, words or characters when automatically generating quotations and invoices;
- a chat function to exchange ideas and suggestions with colleagues also using the platform;
- the possibility to reject the automatically generated quotations since a professional quotation cannot be done automatically;
- the possibility to receive monthly statistical analyses of the user's own translation business (clients, volumes, etc.);
- the possibility to translate offline and not having to rely on the Internet connection, and to integrate the CAT tools used by the translators.

3.2. Results from the student survey

Of the initial cohort of 136 master programme students in localisation courses, 86 students completed the questionnaire. The response rate was 63%. Of these 86 students, 81 were female and five male. All participants were aged between 22 and 39 (mean: 26, median: 25 years) when they filled in the questionnaire. Thirty students (35% of the respondents) already worked as translators.

3.2.1. Understanding of platforms

Without being provided with a definition of the term, about 28% of the respondents stated that they know translator platforms. However, only 12% of the students stated that they use these platforms. When asked which platforms they know, 14% of those surveyed listed ProZ.com and 6% mentioned TranslatorsCafé. The third most frequently mentioned platform were Facebook groups that address translation. Other students also mentioned Lionbridge, SmartCat, Lengoo, linguee.com, brand names of CAT tools, and professional associations such as the Austrian Interpreters' and Translators' Association or the Austrian Association of Certified Interpreters.

When asked about their experience with (these) translator platforms, they stated that they use these platforms to look for translation jobs or search for resources or information in the discussion forum.

3.2.2. Expectations about and attitude towards translator platforms

About 88% of the students responded that they are interested in a translator platform such as Nativy. When the participants were asked about the advantages of these systems, the majority commented that these platforms facilitate exchange and collaboration with colleagues and help them get translation jobs, and thus get in contact with clients. Easier translation management due to less time needed for project management and administrative tasks was also among the advantages of translator platforms. In relation to this, the students mentioned that these platforms

allow them to focus on translation itself, be more productive, and save time and costs. Moreover, they can discuss issues related to translation with other translators or forward enquiries to colleagues.

The respondents were also asked to indicate the disadvantages of these platforms. A common view amongst those surveyed was that price dumping (16 answers) is a disadvantage. However, another 16 students did not see any disadvantages when using translator platforms. Concerns were also expressed about less personal interaction and less contact with the client, which may be detrimental to client retention. Other reported disadvantages include competition among translators, dependency on the platform, less control over decisions, e.g. on time, work and accepting or refusing a translation assignment. A recurrent theme was also translations offered by non-professional translators on these platforms.

Not quite as many students (68%) responded that they are interested in a translator platform such as My Own Agency (MOA). The reasons listed are similar to those mentioned before. The main advantage they expected is to find clients. In addition, they can easily create their own website. The disadvantages mentioned were price dumping and competition and were similar to the responses above.

Students were fond of the advantages of the MOA platform, including getting a free website without any knowledge of web design required. Automatically generated quotations and invoices would allow them to focus more on translation itself rather than on the surrounding (and often annoying) processes, including price and time estimations for a client's enquiry. Especially beginners thought that using MOA might be a stepping stone to start and pursue a career as a freelance translator.

However, others said that exactly these aspects make translators, especially beginners, dependent on the agency running this platform. One respondent argued that students or beginners would never learn how to give a professional quotation or issue an invoice if they relied on translator platforms. This view was echoed by another informant who mentioned that translators registered on these platforms would never learn how to manage a translation job.

3.2.3. Working practice and order management

Of the cohort of master students, 30 already worked as translators. Half of them got translation assignments directly from a client and eleven translators from both a client and a translation agency. The remaining four students worked for translation agencies. The novice translators (57%) had a list for managing their translation jobs. Only three translators used project management or order management software. The students listed Trello, Slack, SmartCat or SDL WorldServer, whereas SDL WorldServer was used rather for translation workflows within the student's organisation.

In total, only four respondents were not satisfied with their order management. Six students explicitly emphasised that they were satisfied with their dealings with clients. The students' order management system may encompass a colour-coded order management system and a clear (folder) structure providing a good overview of incoming orders. Some of them stated that they have a small number of regular clients and a small number of translation jobs. Therefore, they did not need an elaborate order management system at the moment. The students also reported that they are satisfied with their contact with the client, including quick responses to client enquiries, their time management and their templates for quotations and invoices. They were proud of their autonomy and their ability to deliver translations on time. Other trainees were aiming at process optimisation, including the optimisation of quotations and management. Individual novice translators emphasised that they provided good-quality translations and were reliable service providers.

The students indicated that they see potential improvements in their order management. These improvements included order management in general. They intended to use order management software or time management software in the future. The trainees also mentioned that they wanted to improve their documentation to have a better overview of orders and deadlines at the same time. Some hoped to finish translation projects faster in the future, especially through automation in the area of planning and invoicing.

If a client asked the novice translators to translate from or into a language they did not cover, the majority (43%) forwarded the translation request to a colleague. Another 40% refused the assignment while the remainder said that they have not received this type of request before. The respondents primarily forwarded the requests to translators they already knew, especially to fellow students. Others relied on an already existing network, publicly available lists of translators or Facebook groups to find a translator for a certain language combination.

Automated steps in the translation workflow were found rarely among the cohort of novice translators. However, the steps in the translation management that are already automated or could be automated in the future are price calculation related to quotations and invoicing (often based on CAT tool analyses). Others explicitly stated that nothing is automated in their workflow, except for functionalities in CAT tools, e.g. counting words or terminology research. One student working in a company used a system that automatically saves a client's contact details, deadlines, project costs, topic of the translation and language direction. Other students mentioned that they are not planning to automate their workflow because they work (also) as literary translators or prefer the personal contact with clients. However, the answers revealed that some respondents seem to use the terms automation and use of CAT tools synonymously.

The career of the novice translators often started suddenly. Friends recommended them to clients, or they started with a small number of assignments. Those who described their career start as difficult mentioned that it was hard to stand out from the masses of translators, find clients, get enough assignments to make a living or to reconcile work and family obligations.

The majority of the students who have not yet gained a foothold in the translation market had one word for describing their future as translators: "difficult". They predicted a gloomy future characterised by competition. The respondents argued that there are many experienced translators on the market, and it is hard to earn a good reputation, especially in the beginning without any practical experience. They expressed concerns regarding client acquisition. One student even forecast a dire future despite offering a rare language combination in Austria.

To sum up, the majority of the surveyed students highlighted the advantages of translator platforms, such as Nativy or My Own Agency. For them, advantages were the automatic order management that leaves them more time for the translation job at hand and the opportunity to get translation jobs more easily. Interestingly, students who were already working as translators tend to be satisfied with their order management. However, some of them stated that automation of steps in the translation workflow may be necessary if the number of clients or translation assignments increases in the future. Using a translator platform would be an option to start automating the translation workflow.

4. Discussion

Although this study was conducted with a small number of participants and is not representative of Austria, other studies (Groß 2014) show similar results. Interestingly, a rather high number of surveyed translation students already work as translators. This allowed us to subdivide the participants into three groups: aspiring translators enrolled in a translation programme, novice translators (still studying in a translation programme, but already working in the translation profession) and experienced professional translators.

The results from the qualitative expert interviews and those from the (more) quantitative student survey seem hardly comparable due to the different approaches (in-depth interview compared to answers in an online questionnaire). Although the samples differ in size, are subject to different methods and are not representative of Austria, the findings reveal that the professional freelance translators' attitude towards translator platforms is more negative than that of the translation students.

Every interviewed freelance translator used an order management system, although not all of them are organised efficiently. When comparing the analysed systems with project management observed by Risku (2016: 182), there are some similarities, especially in the phase dedicated to the analysis of the translation order and the storing of the information about the order and the client. We were able to observe a correlation between the complexity of the order management and the prevalence of business companies as clients. Translators (also) working for LSPs did not need an elaborate order management, whereas translators directly approached by clients had a good order management. However, the results cannot be generalised due to the small number of interviewees. Freelance professional translators who are members of a professional association seem to act in a business-oriented way. This may be linked to the fact that professional associations provide their members with up-to-date information about trends and practice on the translation market. A significant contribution is the professionalisation of their members, e.g. through lifelong learning measures. Professionalisation also includes know-how about organisation, accounting, marketing, business development and negotiating (Jenner and Jenner 2010: 27). Thus, acting and thinking as an entrepreneur is important to remain viable (Groß 2014: 36).

As far as translator platforms are concerned, we observed scepticism among professional freelance translators who had already gained a foothold in the translation market. Especially if the platform provider is an LSP, confidentiality, data security and the type of intermediation should be clarified since there is competition between the translators and the LSP. In general, some features of translator platforms were interesting to freelance translators because they allow users to save time and reduce the number of (often challenging) administrative tasks. Nevertheless, these platforms should be flexible and customisable so that the translators can continue to apply different strategies in terms of prices or deadlines.

87% of companies outsource their translations (Giammarresi 2011: 19–20) and 80% of translations in a localisation project are outsourced to freelance translators (Jiménez-Crespo 2013: 26). Although these data are dated, the general tendency is expected to be the same. Therefore, a large group interested in translation-related technology are freelance translators. Translator platforms address this target group in many ways. On these platforms, freelance translators can network, find translation jobs and clients, exchange resources or discuss translation-related topics. Translation students in particular had a positive attitude towards translator platforms since they did not have a client base yet. Aspiring translators assumed that they can get a translation job more easily when registered as a freelance translator on a translator platform. In addition, they could avoid cumbersome administrative tasks related to order management such as writing quotations and invoices or keeping a list of clients and orders. From our experience, entrepreneurship and the development of professional competence are only marginally addressed in university-level translation

programmes in Austria. Therefore, topics such as accounting, marketing and starting a business are likely to daunt novice translators. Although some translation students could not see any disadvantages of translator platforms, others expected more competition and price dumping. Although competition was also mentioned as a disadvantage by the interviewed translators (but rather between the LSPs and the freelance translators), the main concerns of the experts were data security, confidentiality, the reliance on a stable Internet connection and the role of the platform provider, e.g. when charging fees.

Further studies which focus on a larger sample, including professional translators with additional language combinations, translators and students from other regions and other fields of specialisation will need to be undertaken.

5. Conclusion

Experienced translators who are also members of professional associations and do not see themselves 'just' as freelance translators, but rather as entrepreneurs, tend to work predominantly for business companies and less for translation agencies. They differentiate their prices, i.e. they do not adopt a one-size-fits-all pricing strategy. They are also less intimidated during negotiations with their clients. Furthermore, they are aware of the importance of an order management tool. This tool should not be very complex, but enable them to plan, control and monitor every assignment from the incoming order to the outgoing invoice. Regarding translator platforms such as Nativy or MOA, the professional translators described some features of these platforms as *good*, but the majority of the interviewees stated that they might be more attractive to novice translators who are entering the translation market for the first time. This means that translator platforms are less attractive to already established professional translators with previous experience and a stable client base.

Translation students, on the other hand, are more willing to register on and use translator platforms compared to professional (freelance) translators. A likely explanation is that they do not have a client base yet and they are not familiar with client acquisition or translation management. This can also be related to the fact that the majority do not have a (sophisticated and efficient) order management yet.

Translator platforms especially target (novice) freelance translators who expect to finish translation projects faster, find new clients, land more translation jobs and exchange resources or information with other translators when using these platforms. However, experienced translators and translation students appreciate different features of translator platforms.

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Biographies

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