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Setting up a New Masters in CAT and Project Management: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract

This article describes the new Masters, the ‘Master en traduction spécialisée multilingue: technologies et gestion de projets’ that was set up at the University of Lille III in 2004 (UFR des LEA).¹ Some information is given about the context in which this so-called ‘Master professionnel’ was created and about its contents, the main focus being on the ‘profession-oriented’ aspect of the programme, and the plusses and possible minuses that such an approach represents.

1. Context

The development of this programme should be seen against the background of the so-called LMD (‘Licence-Master-Doctorat’), which is the French term to refer to the changes in the university degree structure that result from the Bologna Treaty. In the former system (cf. table 1), the initial degree was a two-year programme, the *DEUG* (‘diplôme d’études universitaires générales’), which was followed by three one-year degrees: *licence*, *maîtrise*, and *DEA* or *DESS*. For the so-called *bac+5*, the fifth year, the student had the choice between either a research-oriented degree, the ‘diplôme d’études approfondies’ and a ‘diplôme d’études supérieures spécialisés’, which prepares the student more directly for a particular profession. In view of the homogenisation of the European degree structures, the 4-degree system covering 5 years was abandoned in favour of a 2-degree system covering 5 years. The new system is composed of a three-year Licence (L1, L2, L3) and a 2-year Masters degree (M1, M2). The distinction between more ‘profession-oriented’ and more strictly academic training has been retained, the choice now being made from year 4 onwards. The scope of the ‘Master professionnel’ corresponds to that of a *DESS*, while the aims of the ‘Master Recherche’ match those of the former *DEA*, the difference being that the Master covers two years of study.²

¹ UFR stands for ‘Unité de Formation et de Recherche’; ‘LEA’ stands for ‘Langues Etrangères Appliquées’.

² It is usual practice to accept only a restricted number of candidates on a Bac+5 course. Each *DESS* or *DEA* has its own selection procedure, and most of them have been retained, even at universities who have already adopted the Licence/Master structure. It is being debated whether the selection should not be made at the level of M1, since students are indeed registering for a two-year programme.

	Former system	Present System (Bologna Treaty) LMD	
Year 1	Deug 1	Licence 1	
Year 2			
Year 3	Licence		
Year 4	Maîtrise	Master	Master
Year 5	DEA DESS		

Table 1: the French university degree structure

The LEA department at Lille III used to offer a *bac+4* in translation, a *maîtrise en traduction spécialisée*, but there was no *bac+5* or *DESS* to complement the *maîtrise*. The LMD was therefore an instigation to put in place a 2-year programme in ‘traduction spécialisée’. A number of translators were consulted to help determine accurately the training needs. We fairly rapidly reached a consensus that our offer was going to be focussed on CAT and project management, including some but not mainly localisation. Given that LEA students need to integrate two foreign languages from L1 onwards, we decided to maintain the multilingual aspect in the Masters. The ‘professionalised’ aspect was translated into a course content that is as practical as possible, with an important input by experienced translators and project managers in M2 and with a long-term internship in M2. These principles resulted in a M2 programme summarized in Table 2.

2. Contents

The focus in this text will especially be on the M2 programme, as this is the major change that LMD has brought about. The M1 course contents basically correspond to the former ‘Maîtrise en traduction spécialisée’ programme, the two major differences being that (a) the introductory CAT course has become an obligatory course rather than an optional one and that (b) an IT course has been added to the Maîtrise programme. M2 consists of six modules (‘unité d’enseignement’), the relative importance of each of them being reflected both in the number of ECTS credits they represent and the weight they have in calculating the end results of the students (‘coefficient’).

There are different course types: courses taught weekly by industry professionals and slightly more theoretical courses taught weekly by members of the academic staff of the LEA department. A third type of seminar is also taught by professionals but these are more stand-alone, one-off presentations of two or three hours. Such seminars are integrated into all of the core modules. This year, for instance, *LinguaNet* gave a presentation on the notion of translation agency and how the translation business model has changed over the years (‘agence de traduction’ ou ‘gestion de communication multilingue’? *Un nouveau modèle d’entreprise*). *Ycomm Europe* did a seminar on project management and their QA tools. *CrossLanguage* dealt with GMS and *SDL* presented their tools.

Semestre 1	ECTS	Coéfficient
UE 1 TAO - Mémoire de traduction - Traduction automatique - Terminologie - Nouveaux outils - Analyse de textes spécialisés	6	2
UE 2 Gestion de documents et de traduction - Gestion de projets - Localisation	6	2
UE 3 Projet de traduction Langue A	6	2
UE 4 Projet de traduction Langue B	6	2
UE 5 Structures fondamentales de la langue - Grammaire comparative : Langue A - Grammaire comparative : Langue B	3	1
UE 6 Option - Projet de traduction langue C <i>ou</i> cours de langue C	3	1
Semestre 2		
Stage (5 mois), rapport de stage et soutenance	30	10

Table 2: the M2 course programme

The CAT module (UE1) consists of five components. The course devoted to TM covers some of the major TMs on the market and goes into alignment tools and tools for terminology management. The students learn to work with *Systran* in the machine translation seminar; they are taught how to assess MT results and learn about possible ways of improving MT output. The 'nouveaux outils' component is meant to familiarise the students with some of the most recent developments in the translation technology. In the academic year 2004-2005, the students were invited to attend two seminars on globalised management systems and two seminars on tools for Quality Assurance. The contents of the other modules will be described in more detail in section 3.2.

The students have to do a two-month internship in M1 and a five-month internship in M2. With respect to the length of the traineeship, opinions diverge: whereas students have let us know that their applications were sometimes rejected because five months was considered too long a period, some companies have pointed out that they appreciate the length of the traineeship since it gives them the opportunity to check how a student integrates into a team and how quickly he or she learns on the floor and how he or she copes with the daily work routine. A five-month internship means that companies do not only need to invest time in the student but get some ROI too, since the student stays on after say, the six-week period it takes to explain the procedures and tasks. But the main reason for introducing a five-month internship is that such a period is thought to be sufficiently long to count as genuine work experience, which will hopefully be a bonus when students apply for a job after their Masters. The 17 students we accepted on the course are doing their

internships in Spain (2), in Puerto Rico (1), Germany (1), in Poland (1), in China (1), in Belgium (5), and in France (6). Half of them are working as translators; the other internships are in the field of project management, development of tools, localisation or a combination of these. Some students have informed us that the professionals with whom they work are impressed by their skills and had been unaware of the existence of such training schemes like the one described here. In order to increase businesses' interest in taking an intern, it will therefore no doubt be useful to explain in more detail the course contents and objectives of the 'Master professionnel' so that companies can appreciate that our students will arrive equipped with a fair amount of theoretical knowledge and practical know-how about the integrated translation process.

3. 'Master professionnel'

3.1. Official texts

As pointed out in section 1, the Masters offered by LEA is a *Master professionnel*, which corresponds to what was formerly called a *DESS*. (cf. section 1) Below, I have listed the characteristics of this type of Masters as they have been described in official texts:³

- Le diplôme de master (...) [comprend] une voie à finalité professionnelle débouchant sur un master professionnel (arrêté du 25 avril 2002 relatif au diplôme national de master)

³ It is not easy to determine to what extent the French 'Master professionnel' corresponds to the British 'professional Masters'. It appears that (cf. e.g. Sastry, 2004) in the UK a 'professional Masters' also has a professional orientation but the label all the same seems to cover a range of different programmes. In the *Academic Standards and Quality Handbook* of Nottingham Trent University, the difference between a Masters and a professional Masters is described as follows: 'Professional Masters: Holders of a Professional Masters will have knowledge that is at the forefront of a professional discipline. Students will have shown originality in the application of knowledge, and they will understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. They will be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, and they will show originality in tackling and solving problems. Holders will be able to exercise sound judgement, personal responsibility and initiative, in complex and unpredictable professional environments.', 'Masters Degree: Holders of a Masters Degree will have systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice. They will understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. Holders will be able to bring their own perspective to bear upon an unfamiliar and complex problem and have an ability to apply, refine and develop concepts and to interrelate theory and practice.' (<http://www.ntu.ac.uk/casq/docs.cfm?f=asqh0.xml>)

- Art 2. Le diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées sanctionne une formation spécialisée préparant directement à la vie professionnelle (...). Cette formation a pour objet l'acquisition de connaissances approfondies dans des domaines particuliers complémentaires de la formation dispensée en deuxième cycle ainsi que l'acquisition de techniques destinées à favoriser l'exercice d'un type d'activité déterminé. (arrêté du 25 avril 2002 relatif au diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées)
- Art 5. [La formation] inclut nécessairement des enseignements théoriques, des enseignements pratiques et un stage. Elle comprend aussi la préparation d'un mémoire ou d'un projet, individuels ou collectifs. (arrêté du 25 avril 2002 relatif au diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées)
- S'agissant des master professionnels, la participation aux équipes de formation d'intervenants professionnels qualifiés est indispensable. La qualité de ces intervenants conditionne, pour une part, la qualité de la formation. Elle sera attestée par le niveau réel des responsabilités que ces intervenants exercent dans les domaines professionnels concernés. En outre, un master professionnel doit être justifié au regard de l'environnement économique, social et culturel et du bénéfice à en attendre pour l'insertion des étudiants. L'insertion en matière d'insertion professionnelle obtenus par l'université dans le cadre des DESS constitue de ce point de vue un indicateur à prendre clairement en compte.' (lettre du 14 novembre 2002 du Ministre de la jeunesse, de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche aux présidents d'université)

The basic characteristics can thus be summarized as follows: (a) training directly preparing for a particular profession, (b) important input by highly qualified people from the relevant professional discipline, (c) integration of theoretical courses, practical courses and an internship, (d) development of a project or a dissertation.

3.2. 'professionalisation' in LEA

In this section, I will list the different ways in which we have tried to answer the legal requirements, which basically imply that a 'Master professionnel' should enable students to acquire the practical skills they will need on the work market.

As pointed before (section 2), 60% of the courses in M2 are taught by industry professionals (i.e. translators, localisers and project managers) who have at least fifteen years of experience in the field. However, even though the presence of translators and project managers on the teaching team as such is necessary, it may not be sufficient. Adequate 'professional' training can be enhanced by an appropriate course structure and the course contents itself. For instance, for the translation modules, students get a 10,000-word project which they have to translate using a TM. A professional translator selects the texts and guides the students throughout the translation process, giving them pointers when necessary, the ultimate aim being that the students acquire the adequate methodology (in terms of search strategies (terminology) and work organisation) and learn the ins

and outs of a TM. Both in terms of topics covered and length, the students are faced with a 'real-life' translation project. And even though they struggle in the process of managing the translation, in the course assessment forms, it is actually the fact of having to do a 'real' translation that appears to have been very motivating.

For the project management module, one of the formats used has been a simulation whereby a team of four students (one project manager, three people for DTP) were given a translation project with 'genuine' deadlines, the teacher assuming the role both of localisation manager and customer. Part of the exchanges were to be followed on the LEA forum reserved for the TSM students, the point being that in this way a maximum of students could benefit from the exercise. The teacher was obviously in a position to generate an input directly inspired by her professional experience.

This takes us to another admittedly self-evident condition sine qua non to adequate training: it is necessary to find people who are interested and willing to share their professional experience and expertise with students who will find themselves on the job market soon. In general, the teachers need to develop teaching methods that provoke inventiveness when it comes to researching a translation project, finding solutions to terminological issues, etc. in short, that will incite students to develop a professional attitude and become real 'professionals'. In fact, for all of the courses that are taught on the programme, also the more theoretical ones, we have tried to turn capacity of analysis and summary into the main teaching objectives.

As the above survey shows, both in terms of hiring staff experienced in the fields of translation, localisation and project management as well as in terms of the course contents, our programme answers the official requirements of a *Master professionnel*. The ultimate test will of course be to find out how quickly our students find a job on finishing their internships.

4. Setbacks and challenges

Recruiting the translators and project managers has proved to be difficult. The academic world is fairly well familiar with remarks by translators about the gap between theory and practice or training and practice. To cite a few examples: 'How can we translators lay claim to professional status, and assert ourselves as professionals rather than as charlatans, if our research scientists fight shy of real-world problems and the advice that would help us to solve them? (Chesterman & Wagner 2002); 'With the current approach, translation studies of the kind of interest to people outside the community formed by the translation scholars themselves. ... We need more orientation toward the needs and interests of practising translators and their clients.' (Lars Berglund, technical translator, cited in Chesterman & Wagner, 2002). However, it has been my experience that the world of translation is not always that eager to step in when invited to do so. Several factors are at play. It will be obvious that not all translators necessarily want to become teachers, and it is basically only independent translators who can

easily combine teaching a course over several weeks with their work commitments. Even though some translators felt tempted to join this project, they turned down the offer because they felt unconfident about their teaching skills. Sometimes, the reluctance was due to the 'ivory tower syndrome' and a refusal to enter the academic world allegedly only interested in research and scornful of the 'wordface' (Chesterman & Wagner, 2002). While the traditional respective images may be equally one-sided, the academics need to communicate clearly the message that they are aware of the changes in the translation business and that they do wish to cater for current training needs by calling on the expertise of translators, localisers and project managers. My general impression has been that translation companies appreciate efforts to train students 'in the right way' enormously and wholeheartedly support the concept of a 'professional Masters', but the pool of candidates from which to recruit the teachers is small. Part of the solution also lies in informing and training the academic staff in an effort to reduce the gap between training and practice. One of the challenges we are facing now is indeed to implement the so-called 'professionnalisation' more fully right from M1. An introductory course to CAT and a more important emphasis on strictly technical translation and IT skills are important stepping stones and have been integrated into the M1 programme. But it will be clear that this process can be accelerated: academic staff need to get well informed about the translation market and need to acquire a certain level of familiarity with translation technology, localisation and project management in order to be adapt the course contents even more considerably to the objectives of the 'Master professionnalisé'.

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