

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This chapter reviews the aims and issues addressed in this study, the analytical framework adopted, the findings arrived at and the interpretations made. This is followed by a discussion of the present study's contribution to translation research, as well as the implications for future research.

#### 5.1 The aims of this study

Owing to the stipulations of the South African constitution and the DOD Language Policy (see Chapter 1, par. 1.1.1.1), an increase in the demand for African language translations, as well as budgetary constraints preventing the large-scale outsourcing of translations and the employment of additional language practitioners, D Lang has held ALTFCs since 1997 to train military practitioners and Public Service Act Personnel (i.e. civilians) in the DOD to carry out routine translation tasks at their units. The ALTFC is rather unique in that it is a four-week in-house translation facilitation course designed to accommodate the specific realities and needs of the DOD as perceived by the language practitioners cum translation trainers designing the course at the time. Moreover, translator courses are normally presented at university and technikon level as degree and diploma courses and can last anything from one to three years, with shorter translation courses primarily directed at practicing language practitioners and not at people without a professional interest in languages and translation (see Chapter 1, par. 1.1.1.2).

Bearing the above in mind, the first aim of this study was to establish whether the current ALTFC is relevant within the DOD environment, especially in view of the fact that the candidates attending the course lack a uniform linguistic background and the course duration is only four weeks. This first main aim gave rise to two secondary aims. On the one hand, it had to be established whether the ALTFC is in line with current trends in translator training and to what extent these current trends can help to improve a translation facilitation course at the level of the ALTFC. On the other hand, the needs of the DOD, as well as of the candidates attending the ALTFC, had to be determined. While the former was addressed by means of a comprehensive literature survey, the latter required an empirical approach. Based on the outcome with regard to the first aim and the two secondary aims, the second aim of this study was to generate a new and improved ALTFC model, incorporating as far as possible the findings obtained.

The overview of the chapters in the following section will show how these aims were accomplished and provide a synthesis of the approach followed.

## 5.2 Overview of chapters

In **Chapter 1**, the background of the research problem was discussed in terms of the political dimension in South Africa as described in the relevant language policy documents, as well as past and present translator and interpreter training at South African universities and technikons. After stating the problems and aims of this study, the research methodology adopted to accomplish these aims was outlined. The research methodology was divided into a theoretical component in the form of the literature survey (see Chapter 2) and an empirical component in the form of survey research (Chapter 3).

**Chapter 2** first concentrates on the common denominator among translation teachers. Firstly, they agree that there is a difference between translation in foreign language teaching and translation for professional purposes. Whereas the former is a means to an end, e.g. testing certain capabilities in the foreign language, the latter is an end in itself. It is a skill acquired on the basis of L1/L2 proficiency. Contrary to popular belief, translation in foreign language training cannot be considered as preparation for translation for professional purposes since the texts used by language teachers mostly lack authenticity and a real communicative value.

Secondly, most translation trainers seem to favour the functional approach to translator training. This approach views translation in terms of intercultural communication and cultural transfer. Furthermore, it is based on the premise that texts are never translated in a vacuum but that there is always somebody initiating a text to be translated for a specific purpose and a specific target readership. The intended function of the TT is contained in the translation brief which is given to professional translators by the initiator of the translation before the actual translation process starts. In line with this professional practice, student translators should always be given a translation brief, enabling them to put their translation into context and giving them an understanding of what is needed in the TT.

Based on this consensus among many translation trainers, the literature survey revealed three basic trends in translator training. Nord's model of translation-oriented text analysis attempts to lead the student translator step by step through the translation process, with the finished translation being assessed in terms of binary and non-binary errors. In contrast, the process-oriented approach does not concentrate on the finished product but on how the student translator arrives at certain solutions. Instead of think-aloud protocols, translator trainers following this approach ask students to submit together with their translation a problem report, which can be an effective tool in error diagnosis. The third approach in turn, concentrates on the skills and competencies needed by translators, often concentrating on the contrastive analysis of text types. Translator trainers of this persuasion believe that once certain skills are mastered translation will fall automatically into place.

It was shown in this chapter that the three approaches are not mutually exclusive and that translator

trainers mix and match the three approaches to suit their specific beliefs, circumstances and needs. The same applies to the ALTFC, as was shown in Chapter 3 (par. 3.2). The current ALTFC includes, for example, a discussion and the application of Nord's model of translation-oriented text analysis at a very basic level, the process-oriented approach during the workshops when candidates orally report on how they arrived at certain solutions, as well as the skills-led approach, with transfer and research skills being conveyed during the *Translation skills* and *Translation aids* modules, respectively. Apart from the detail and time spent on the various aspects of translator training, the literature survey showed that the ALTFC is in line with mainstream translator training in many respects, thus partially fulfilling the first secondary aim.

However, the literature survey also revealed that apart from a few exceptions most of the research concentrates on translator training at university and technician level. The few articles on shorter courses do not contain any concrete results but give suggestions on how translator training at such a level could possibly be approached. Moreover, the target group in most of these articles are practicing translators in the African languages without a formal translation background. This is where the empirical study came in to establish the type of candidate attending the ALTFC and whether ALTFC candidates actually benefitted from the course.

**Chapter 3** commences with a very detailed description of the current ALTFC as the unit of analysis, to set the scene for the empirical research. In a second step and in order to address the first main aim and second secondary aim of this study, survey research was chosen as the research methodology since it is particularly suitable for descriptive, explanatory and exploratory research where individuals feature as the unit of analysis (part I of the questionnaire; Babbie: 2001: 237-273). Since a series of issues had to be addressed and quantifiable data was required to make generalisations from respondents to ALTFC candidates as a whole, the second part of Chapter 3 mainly concentrated on the compilation of standardised questionnaires.

In discussing the operationalisation of standardised questionnaires, the focus was on selecting the sample, questionnaire administration (e.g. self-administered versus administered by an interviewer), detail of information (indicators and dimensions), question design (e.g. open-ended, (partially) close-ended), response categories, questionnaire format and data analysis (qualitative, quantitative, uni-, bi- and multivariate). Having detailed the characteristics of a good questionnaire and provided guidelines on how to analyse data, the focus shifted to the questionnaire for the *Survey for the revision of the African language translation facilitation course at D Lang*.

Divided into three parts and completed by the candidates of the three ALTFC courses in 2000, the questionnaire for the *Survey for the revision of the African language translation facilitation course at D Lang* enquired about the profile of ALTFC candidates (language- and education-related; part I),

as well as the candidates' opinion on the five course modules at the end of the course (part II) and with the benefit of hindsight about eight to ten months after completing the ALTFC (part III). Since the questionnaire largely followed the principles of good questionnaire design, no major problems were expected with regard to its outcome.

The outcome of the survey research was presented in **Chapter 4**. Firstly, the findings showed that the questionnaire was not as unproblematic as initially perceived, especially when respondents were asked to rate answers. Despite detailed explanations before filling in the questionnaire and the presence of an interviewer during the process, almost half the respondents failed to prioritise their choices in the case of multiple answers. The results were therefore not always as detailed as planned.

Despite this shortcoming, the results showed that respondents felt overwhelmingly positive about the ALTFC even with regard to those aspects that, although in line with general translator training practice, were considered to be perhaps too theoretical and difficult at the level of the ALTFC, e.g. the quotes section, translation-oriented text analysis or the practical application of the theory during the workshops. The post-course evaluation also showed that respondents found most aspects of the ALTFC useful and wanted more of the same (except English training!) when asked how the ALTFC could be improved. Moreover, respondents indicated that the course had improved their overall linguistic and cultural awareness and proficiency. It was also encouraging that over half the candidates had performed translation tasks on a more or less regular basis once they had returned to their units.

However, the quantification of the questionnaire results lead to the identification of four main problem areas, comprising feedback on practical work, the time factor, the candidates' English proficiency, as well as teacher enthusiasm. These problem areas were addressed in turn in the second part of Chapter 4, with the solutions presented being of a short-term (e.g. introducing the results of the English assessment test as a selection criteria for ALTFC nomination, contextualised brainstorming), medium-term (more intensive English training, merging the *Translation aids* and *Translation strategies* modules) and long-term nature (involving the language practitioners at the GSBs in the translation evaluation process, compiling a corpus of parallel texts in the official languages).

In addressing the second main aim of this study, four new course models were generated incorporating the findings of the literature survey and the questionnaire survey as well as the short-term, medium-term and long-term perspectives. The fact that the ALTFC is largely in line with current translator training and with the needs of the candidates is reflected in the first three models. Most of the elements of the old ALTFC were maintained. However, more time in the teaching programme was allocated to the various modules due to the introduction of homework (model 1) and the introduction of homework plus the merging of the *Translation aids* module with other modules (model 2). Apart from being considerably longer (twice for three weeks), model 3 adds the creation of terms in languages of limited diffusion

(LLDs) to *Translation aids* and introduces *Translation strategies (II)*, comprising the discussion of textual and pragmatic equivalence. Model 4 radically deviates from the first three models in that the modules no longer deal with certain aspects of translation in isolation but rather with corpora of parallel texts. According to the literature review, this approach seems to produce excellent results (as shown in Chapter 2, par. 2.3.3) since by using corpora of parallel texts candidates acquire the correct terminology, expressions and format from a subject and text-type point of view. As this approach is thus expected to prove particularly useful to ALTFC candidates, who are not language experts, **this is the model that is strongly recommended for implementation at D Lang.**

Having addressed the second main aim and the first and second secondary aims of this study, the question still remains whether the ALTFC is relevant within the DOD environment considering that candidates attending the course lack a uniform educational background and the set period for the course is only four weeks (first main aim). The fact that so many DOD members and employees attend the ALTFC every year and are very appreciative of the course, as well as the fact that more than half the candidates engage in translation tasks once they return to their units shows that there is definitely a niche for a course like the ALTFC in the DOD. Although the number of former ALTFC candidates performing routine translation tasks should ideally increase D Lang has no direct influence on whether superiors actually task such translation facilitators with translation work. However, in order to publicise the role of translation facilitators, D Lang could, for example, use the various DOD in-house publications to inform a wider DOD audience about the fact that D Lang has been training translation facilitators for a number of years and about the type of translation jobs these translation facilitators have been trained to perform.

Since the ALTFC is conceived as an orientation course and many candidates are often not aware of what the course entails or whether they have an aptitude for translation, the course should be seen in a wider context. Since the ALTFC is not just about languages and translation but communication in general and communication across different cultures in the DOD a course such as the ALTFC does not only contribute towards linguistic tolerance but also cultural tolerance. This is of particular importance in a multicultural environment such as the DOD. Moreover, as the DOD subscribes to the principle of lifelong learning and learning for personal enrichment, the ALTFC definitely fulfils a function in the DOD, albeit not always with regard to translation.

### 5.3 Contribution of the present study

Firstly, the main contribution of this study is very practical in that it evaluated the current ALTFC from a theoretical as well as an empirical point of view and resulted in the generation of new course models, presenting not only immediate measures to improve the ALTFC but also taking a long-term view as to where ALTFCs should be headed once certain preconditions are met. Although the sample was rather

small and may cast doubts as to its representativeness the time frame for the empirical research had to be restricted to the three courses in the year 2000 for work as well as study purposes. As it were, the empirical research stretched over almost 18 months (because of part III of the questionnaire). Moreover, when the sample was chosen it was not possible to predict exactly how many DOD members and employees would attend the ALTFCs in 2000. Still, it is believed that the findings of the empirical study give an indication as to the needs of ALTFC candidates as well as the DOD in general and that the empirical findings together with the findings from the literature review will help to address the in-house translation needs of the DOD more efficiently.

Incidentally, as a result of the ALTFC, which reflects the need for shorter non-academic translator training in South Africa, the DOD was invited to send a permanent representative to the Standards Generation Body (SGB) for Translation, Interpreting and Language Editing (TILE), established under the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to generate unit standards for the training of translators, interpreters and language editors at various levels. To date the TILE SGB has drafted unit standards for a National Certificate in Community Language Practice at level 4 (i.e. matric level) of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). A learner studying for this certificate will be able to specialise in community translation or interpreting.

Secondly, this study is, to the best of my knowledge, one of the few that deal with translator training outside the academic environment. Unlike the academic courses, it is aimed at a target group that is not mainly concerned with languages and translation in their working environment. It was shown that a course such as the ALTFC can produce useful results for informal in-house translation facilitation purposes. This is of particular importance to LLDs where translation requests often exceed the number of professional translators available.

Thirdly, in line with the specific realities and the time available the above models can be easily adopted by other government departments and institutions or organisations that have similar in-house translation needs as the DOD because of the stipulations of South African language policy documents and budgetary constraints that prevent the large-scale outsourcing of documents for translation. The texts used during the workshops will of course have to be changed to suit the needs of a particular organisation.

Fourthly, this study also showed that despite some teething problems a multilingual and multicultural classroom can work if a process-oriented approach is adopted. Again, this is important with regard to LLDs where the number of candidates for a certain language combination does not necessarily justify a separate translation course or where no professional translation trainers are readily available for certain language combinations.

Finally, this study makes a contribution to the ongoing debate as to whether translation theory is really necessary in translator training because translating is considered to be a practical skill. The questionnaire results (part II) indicated that even at the level of the ALTFC, candidates appreciated the more theoretical parts of the syllabus and found that theory also had its practical application. They further showed that rather complex concepts can be imparted in such a way that they make sense to non-linguists.

#### **5.4 Implications for future research**

Since very little research has to date been done on short translation facilitation courses for in-house translation purposes (see Chapter 2 above), the analytical framework for researching the ALTFC could also be used to research other short non-academic translation facilitation courses to establish whether they support the findings of this study. To facilitate such research, a register containing all the in-house translation facilitation courses or short translation courses for non-academic purposes offered in South Africa should be compiled.

Moreover, once introduced each new ALTFC model will have to be tested by means of survey research (questionnaires) along similar lines as the current ALTFC to verify whether the course improvements as perceived by this researcher are also considered to be improvements by the ALTFC candidates. This also implies that the student profile of ALTFC candidates will have to be kept up to date since profile changes will necessitate changes to the syllabus. This may be particularly true regarding the candidates' English proficiency which is expected to improve as a result of the selection criteria for course nominations as well as the intensive English training that has been initiated throughout the DOD.

In addition, the new ALTFC models should not only be evaluated in terms of the improvements as perceived by the candidates but also in terms of the actual improvement in the candidates' translation facilitation ability. For this purpose, candidates should sit at the beginning of the ALTFC for a translation test which will be marked according to the translation assessment system outlined in Chapter 4 (par. 4.3.1). Another translation test should be given at the end of the ALTFC or as part of part III of the questionnaire and assessed according to the same key. A comparison of the test results will show whether the translation facilitation ability of candidates has improved as a result of the ALTFC and indicate the areas of improvement (e.g. accuracy, vocabulary, cohesion, coherence, text organisation, etc.).

Finally, once the various qualifications and unit standards generated by the TILE SGB form part of the National Qualifications Framework, which may still be some time, it will have to be investigated how and where a course such as the ALTFC fits in. Although the ALTFC is probably too short for a certificate learners should get credits for certain of its aspects. This means that the ALTFC will have to

be redesigned by taking the skills required under certain unit standards as well as the needs of the ALTFC candidates and the DOD into consideration.

Since this study mainly explores *territory* that has hardly been *charted* by mainstream research into translator training it can only be seen as a point of departure for future course development at non-academic level. Hopefully this study will inspire future research in this respect from which translation facilitation courses, including the ALTFC, will benefit.