Challenges and Constraints in Designing a Localization Module for a Multilingual Cohort

Rocío Baños
Pier Antonio Toto
London Metropolitan University

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore some of the challenges that may arise when designing a module in localization at postgraduate level for a multilingual cohort. This will be achieved by drawing on our own experience at a higher education institution in the UK (London Metropolitan University), and by reflecting on the strategies implemented to overcome these challenges. Special attention will be paid to key issues such as the resources needed (both human and technical), students' needs and expectations, and how to ensure an effective alignment between the curriculum and professional practices. Specific challenges and constraints will also be explored, such as the increasing heterogeneity of cohorts, particularly in terms of students' backgrounds and language combinations. Although this heterogeneity can be difficult to manage and will have an impact on the resources needed, it can also be seen as an opportunity to increase students' awareness of cultural differences, which is key to working in localization.

Keywords: localization, curriculum design, translator training, multilingual cohort

1. Introduction

The evolution of the localization industry and market demands in general have resulted in modules in localization appearing in the curriculum of translation programmes (Altanero, 2006: 31), both at undergraduate and postgraduate level. In the UK, localization at postgraduate level has often been integrated into the curriculum either in the form of optional modules or as part of more general modules in translation technology. In addition, some institutions offer stand-alone courses on various aspects and areas of localization which attract not only graduates, but also translation professionals who wish to acquire new skills or specific competences in this potentially lucrative field. This is an industry which continues to experience rapid growth and which is expected to increase to USD 25 billion by 2013 (Common Sense Advisory, 2010). A clear illustration of this trend is the introduction of an optional 20-credit module in localization in the MA in Applied Translation Studies (MA

ATS) at London Metropolitan University in 2007/2008. The design of this module has proven extremely demanding and challenging, due to a wide range of factors and constraints, and as a result of the "increasing heterogeneity of student groups in today's multinational and multicultural universities" (Kelly, 2010: 91).

The purpose of this paper is to explore the challenges that may arise when creating a localization module for a multilingual cohort, and the strategies that may need to be implemented to overcome them. This will be achieved by drawing on our experience of designing and teaching the localization module for the MA ATS. Special attention will be paid to key issues such as the resources required (both human and technical), students' needs and expectations, and how to ensure an effective alignment between curricula and professional practices. Specific challenges and constraints will also be explored, such as the heterogeneity of cohorts, particularly in terms of students' backgrounds and language combinations, and the need to take institution-specific requirements into account.

2. Overview of teaching and learning context: Localization in the MA ATS at London Metropolitan University

Several scholars have highlighted the essential role played by the educational context, in which teaching and learning take place, in curriculum design (Alcina, 2002; Austermühl, 2006: 71; Kelly, 2010: 88). As Kelly (2005: 62) points out, in a vocational context greater attention is normally paid to the acquisition of specific professional competences than to more general ones. This is the case with the MA ATS, which, overall, could be considered a vocational course, designed for students wishing to commence or advance their careers in specialized translation. As such, a strong focus is placed on professionalization through a balanced blend of theoretical knowledge, translation skills and an understanding of the professional environment. This is achieved via the delivery of core modules in translation theory, translation technology and specialized translation, as well as through practical translation projects and a final dissertation.

The vocational nature of the course is reinforced by the compulsory placement module, which provides students with the opportunity to work in the translation industry. In addition, students are introduced to specific fields or translation modes through optional modules. In order to meet current industry demands, the MA programme has increased its portfolio of optional modes since 2007 by incorporating both Localization and Subtitling. This change

was designed not only to increase choice and therefore make the course more appealing to students, but also to train them for diverse professional roles taking into consideration the fact that many trainees spend most of their professional life engaged in modes of mediation other than translation (Pym 2003: 23). Having experienced this situation as former translation trainees ourselves, professionalization and employability are the main cornerstones we have taken into consideration when designing the curriculum of the localization module, the aim of which is, among other things, to equip students with new skills and knowledge that could enhance their profiles.

These aims are also reflected in the module learning outcomes. These take into account what professional localizers are required to do with regard to the kinds of texts which are normally translated according to industry demands, and to the instrumental competences (Kelly, 2005: 33; PACTE, 2005: 610) required to work in a professional context. Interpersonal and strategic competences (Kelly, 2005: 33) are also integrated, focusing on the students' capacity for applying knowledge in practice and for developing sound practical and evaluative knowledge. It is worth mentioning that the specificity of the localization process and its relationship with translation are also considered, establishing a link with modules taken in the first semester of the course and thus promoting an integrated approach. Although the module learning outcomes were appropriate and consistent with the approach we had envisaged, some of our original ideas, reflecting a forward-looking approach, needed to be reconsidered after facing the various challenges and constraints which will be explored below.

3. Challenges & constraints in designing a localization module

3.1. Institutional policies

In addition to social and professional needs, institutional policies must also be considered, since they have an impact on curriculum design and will determine whether implementing changes after curriculum evaluation is at all possible. Trainers should therefore be familiar with the specific procedures followed at their institution in order to introduce new modules and implement changes in the existing curriculum. In higher education institutions in the UK, the approval of new modules often requires the creation of module specifications, which need to be approved by the relevant quality officer, in line with the institution's quality assurance strategy. Inheriting a module which has already been approved can be advantageous, since

the existing module specifications can serve as an appropriate starting point, given that the module's aims, intended learning outcomes and assessment strategy are probably described in the documentation. However, these specifications can also limit and constrain the approach to the on-going development of the module with regard to content, the nature and sequencing of teaching and learning activities, and the design of assessment tasks. Implementing changes to the existing curriculum might not be a smooth or easy process, as it often involves the submission of module modification documents. Getting these approved is time-consuming and subject to strict deadlines. Considering the rapidly-evolving nature of the localization industry, this is a key factor to take into consideration, since it limits the possibility of speedily introducing changes into the curriculum that reflect market demands.

3.2. The heterogeneous profile of students

According to Kelly (2005: 42-43), trainees or learners are the single most important element in any training process and it is therefore essential to carefully consider factors such as their prior knowledge, learning styles, expectations and motivation, and degree of homogeneity. The latter plays an important role in many postgraduate degrees, where the heterogeneity of the student population is on the increase. In our specific case, the MA ATS cohort is very heterogeneous in terms of students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Unlike other institutions, home students (i.e. UK students) are a minority in the MA ATS (25%[1]), whereas the majority is formed by EU and international students (75%), who do not have English as their mother tongue. Although not all students choose to take the localization module, this heterogeneity is still reflected in those enrolling. This is shown in the following diagram, which illustrates the different language combinations that have been offered during the four years from 2007/2008 to 2010/2011.

[1] According to data gathered from 2006/2007 to 2010/2011.

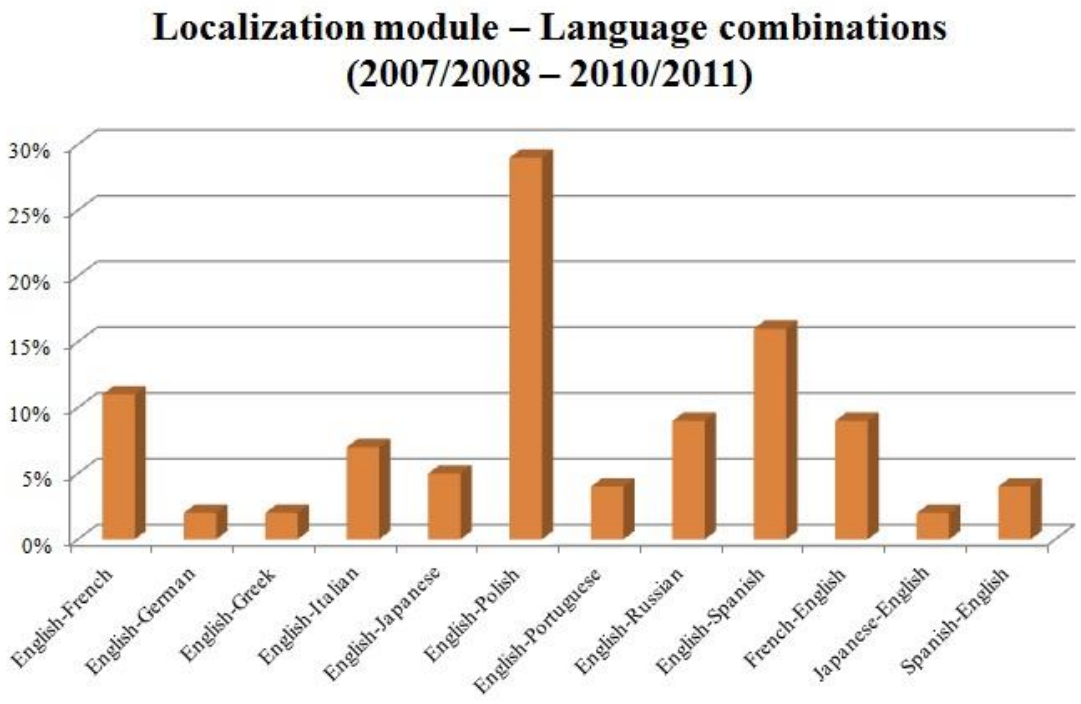

Figure 1. Localization Module – Language Combinations (2007/2008 – 2010/2011)

As can be seen, 12 different language combinations have been offered since the module started running in 2007/2008. These have varied each year, with an average of 5-6 language combinations per year. This has obvious consequences for the approach taken to teaching the module. As students do not share working languages, it is not possible to simply provide them with texts to translate at home and then to discuss translation challenges, resources and solutions in depth in class. Creative approaches are therefore needed to make the most of this heterogeneity, which can prove very enriching when used to increase students' awareness of cultural differences, this being a key aspect of working in localization. As will be illustrated below, teaching a group of students with different language combinations also has an impact on financial and technical resources, as it involves increasing staffing depending on the number of languages offered, and having access to several computer labs at the same time.

As Granell (2011: 186) points out when analysing student profiles in a similar field (i.e. videogame localization), it is often expected that postgraduate students taking a module in localization will have already developed some preliminary linguistic, extra-linguistic, translation and instrumental competences (especially in the use of Translation Memory tools). In our case, however, the first year that the module was taught, tutors reported that some students' preliminary competences were insufficient to successfully overcome typical

challenges arising in software and website localization, both from a linguistic and a technical point of view. As a result, it was necessary to revisit general translation and IT issues which had already been discussed in other modules. Drawing on this feedback, it was decided to establish specific requirements for taking the module, and students who had struggled in the practical translation module and in the preliminary translation technology module during the first semester were discouraged from enrolling on the localization module. This preventative measure did not result in the complete homogenization of the group, but it did help to prevent de-motivation (Kelly, 2005: 44), both in students who were already competent in these areas, and in those who might be lacking and found it difficult to progress. Despite the implementation of this measure, as Alcina suggests (2002), it was still essential to consider differences in students' IT skills and attitudes towards technology when formulating teaching strategies and designing resources. Taking student expectations of teaching/learning pace into account is equally crucial.

On this kind of course, one might also expect students to have a basic understanding of what localization involves. However, our experience shows that many students are not familiar with the concept of localization, and that some choose to take the module after finding out that professional prospects in this field are more promising than in other areas of specialization. Trainers should therefore bear in mind that the motivation of some students could be of an extrinsic nature (Newstead and Hoskins, 2003: 28). This highlights the importance of paying special attention to professional aspects when teaching, in order to prevent de-motivation, and to develop strategies to increase intrinsic motivation. Whereas some students will welcome a focus on professionalization, involving independent research and learning by doing, others might find it difficult to adapt to this approach, especially if they are used to more directed learning. The challenge thus lies in being flexible enough to cater to diverse needs and expectations without losing the initial focus.

3.3. Delivery approach: language-specific vs. generic sessions

In order to avoid many of the challenges of teaching a multilingual cohort, some institutions opt to offer non language-specific modules, that is, modules where the onus is not on linguistic and cultural competences, but rather on the subject area and instrumental competences. This approach seems to be common in Translation Technology modules across the UK, which focus heavily on professionalization and on the skills needed to work with the

tools demanded by the translation industry. In these cases, it is expected that students will be able to apply what has been learned during the module when carrying out translation assignments, either for other modules within the course or in a professional setting. However, from our viewpoint, this approach is not the most suitable for a localization module. Training in localization should not merely focus on instrumental skills, but rather on the development of translation competence through the use of specific technology, bearing in mind the specificities of the localization industry.

Drawing on our experience, an additional and important issue when implementing this "generic" approach, is that it often results in student frustration. This has been gathered from the feedback provided by students who attended the first year of the MA ATS localization module. When this module was introduced, it was decided to adopt a generic approach and not to offer language-specific sessions or feedback on the texts localized during weekly assignments. As a result, only general localization issues were discussed in class, irrespective of the language/culture in which they appeared. In order to compensate for the lack of language-specific feedback, translation/localization solutions were compared on screen in the lab for everyone to "get a feel" of both common and language-specific issues. However, it soon emerged that students would benefit enormously from receiving feedback on recurrent issues in their own language/culture. This prompted the introduction in subsequent years of language-specific sessions delivered by localization professionals. As will be discussed below, this approach results in a more satisfactory learning experience for students, but has an impact on the human and financial resources needed to teach the module.

Taking the aspects outlined above into consideration, the module was organised into generic sessions, attended by the whole cohort, and language-specific seminars in which students were split into groups depending on their language combination. When opting for this approach it is important to ensure that students do not feel excluded or isolated because of their particular language combination. In our case, while most of the cohort worked out of English, there were also some English native speakers, working into English, who were asked, as an exception, to practice by translating into the foreign language in class[2].

[2] These students were reassured that the texts for weekly assignments and the final assessment would be tailored to their language combination. Due to English being the predominant language of software programming, finding out-of-English software strings or materials was quite challenging. To overcome this, extensive research was carried out on the Internet to source software-related materials from languages such as French, Spanish and Japanese for the native English students. This was not the case with website localization: as a variety of websites are available online in many different source languages, it was easier to find materials for all our students.

3.4. Available resources

Whereas the heterogeneous background of students poses several challenges with regard to the number of trainers needed to teach a localization module (human resources), the predominant role that technology plays in localization results in further challenges as far as technical resources are concerned (software and facilities). It is also worth noting that both human and technical resources are constrained by financial limitations and institutional policies, as will be discussed below.

3.4.1. Human resources

Training a multilingual cohort has a major impact on human resources, especially if the aim is to provide language-specific feedback to students. In this case, it is essential to have a tutor who delivers generic lectures and/or seminars for the whole group, plus tutors for each of the language combinations offered to teach language-specific sessions and, if necessary, to supervise and mark assignments. In addition, it is advisable to have a coordinator who liaises with all the tutors involved, in order to ensure a successful teaching and learning experience and to make sure that common criteria are applied when teaching and assessing students' work. As can easily be inferred, this approach (i.e. dividing the module into generic and language-specific sessions, and having language-specific assignments) is quite demanding from a financial point of view and, in order for the module to remain viable, it might be necessary to establish a minimum number of students per language combination[3].

New language-specific tutors may need to be recruited every year depending on the working languages of students choosing to take the module. Not only do these tutors need to have the same language combination as the students taking the module in a specific year, but they must also be experts in localization and familiar with the software used in class. The recruitment of suitably qualified trainers poses several challenges, which impact on curriculum design. This seems to be common in many localization courses (see Popaud, 2006) and is addressed by recruiting hourly paid lecturers. However, despite bringing professional experience into the classroom, such staff might have a limited repertoire of teaching strategies (Toohey, 1999: 8). In order to overcome these difficulties, plenty of time and effort should be dedicated to the recruitment process and strict criteria should be applied when employing tutors. In addition, a number of meetings and conversations should be had

[3] For example, it would obviously be cheaper for an institution to run two language combinations with more than five students in each than to run five language combinations with only two students per group.

with all the tutors involved in the teaching of the module, with the aim of providing them with as much support as possible.

3.4.2. Technical resources: software and facilities needed

Regarding technical resources, we believe that students taking a localization module at postgraduate level should receive practical training in the use of Translation Memory tools and other programs used by localization professionals. This approach ties in with prevailing views on what should be taught in localization courses (see, for example, O'Hagan 2006), and it also addresses current market demands, as translators working in the localization industry are required to be able to use a wide range of translation tools. One of the main issues which needs to be addressed is deciding which translation and/or localization tools are going to be included in the syllabus. As Kelly (2005: 75) points out, training institutions and trainers are often pressed to use the most widely accepted and best known software, despite the huge expense this entails for institutions.

The use of specific software raises further considerations when designing and teaching a localization module: installation issues and student access. Installation issues are common, due to the complex licensing system of some Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tools. In addition, some departments suffer from a lack of support for and control over the IT facilities where the software is installed. From an institutional and logistical point of view, installing new software during term-time might be problematic, and some institutions have tight deadlines in place for submitting installation requests. These challenges are particularly relevant considering that translation technology needs to be updated or upgraded frequently. With regard to student access to the software, one of the disadvantages of choosing proprietary software is that students will only be able to access demo versions (if anything) from home and therefore need to stay at university to practice with the full version. Using freeware tools would solve this problem, but some trainers are reluctant to rely on the latter, as they often tend to be less user-friendly and less sophisticated than proprietary tools. Reaching an agreement with one of the main localization software vendors to provide students with free academic licenses would be one of the most convenient solutions, but this is not an option welcomed by all CAT tool providers.

In our case, we had to face a further challenge: as the localization module we taught was built on the skills gained in a previous module in translation technology, we had to consider using the tools previously implemented. After careful thought, and weighing both

professional and financial aspects (e.g. budget available), it was decided to use SDL Trados for both the introductory module in translation technology and the localization module. In addition, we were constrained by some of the decisions made prior to the start of the module: we used Alchemy Catalyst during the first year the module ran, as it was already installed on the computers in the labs. This, of course, did not leave much leeway in terms of software choice. It was soon discovered that the license for this application needed to be upgraded every year at a substantial cost, which meant this option needed to be reconsidered. In addition to using SDL Trados, given the budget available, SDL Passolo 2009 licenses were purchased in order to give students the opportunity to learn how to use a more sophisticated and complex tool. Our decision regarding the choice of tools centred on real-market expectations and employability. SDL Trados is one of the most widely used and accepted tools in the industry (see Lagoudaki, 2006), and this trend seems to be continuing. In addition, most employers require students to have been trained in this tool. Thus, its use in the classroom might well enhance students' employability. The fact that many professional translators use this software is also an advantage when looking for tutors to teach language-specific sessions, as it is more likely they are already familiar with the software used in class. Whichever software is used, it should nevertheless be noted that our purpose is to train students to develop basic skills which can be transferred to any freeware or commercial packages they will use in the future.

3.5. Curricular design: selection of content and time constraints

One of the main aspects to be considered when designing a localization module is which areas are going to be targeted, especially as the term localization is used broadly to refer to software, websites and video games. Another relevant aspect to be considered concerns the balance between theory and practice, as well as the role technology will play in the delivery and assessment of the module. As Kelly argues (2005: 72), the decisions taken on any of the above-mentioned aspects of curricular design will inevitably be influenced by the constraints and environment in which teaching and learning take place. In this sense, curricular design is determined, among other factors, by the duration of the module/course and especially by the distribution of contact time and self-managed study.

In our case, as we were teaching a 20-credit module, students had only 20 contact hours, complemented by 160 independent study hours and 20 hours for directed activities. Given the

number of contact hours and the duration of the module (12 weeks, from February to May), our objective was to provide students with an introduction to the topic rather than to cover a wide range of localization-related areas in depth. Within the given timescale, integrating theoretical and methodological considerations with practical and professional aspects, as well as training students to use a localization tool, was extremely challenging. Moreover, it was essential to make sure that students were given sufficient opportunities to meet the intended learning outcomes.

While the initial syllabus included software, website and games localization, it was soon realized that significant rethinking was needed, as there was not enough time to cover all these areas and integrate them into the assessment strategy. In the end it was decided to focus on software and website localization as it was deemed preferable to cover fewer areas but with a more in-depth approach. Student preferences were also taken into account when adopting this approach: as the module progressed, it became evident that students favoured software and website localization over games localization. This is possibly due to the fact that most of them were more familiar with the Internet or PCs/Macs and related software than with video games.

Taking these constraints into consideration, it was decided that the module would be broken down into three sections: the initial part would provide students with an overview of localization and the localization industry, the second part would be of a more practical nature, and in the third part students would embark on an individually supervised project, in order to produce the final and only piece of assessed work.

3.6. Choosing an appropriate assessment strategy

Deciding how the attainment of intended learning outcomes is going to be measured and assessed plays an essential role in curriculum design. When choosing the most appropriate assessment tasks for a localization module, and following the principles of "constructive alignment" introduced by Biggs (1996), trainers must make sure that assessment tasks address the intended learning outcomes and are supported by the teaching and learning activities implemented during the module. Several authors (Austermühl, 2006; Vintar, 2008) have highlighted the advantages and suitability of using group projects to assess a wide range of skills in modules or courses in localization. As Austermühl suggests (2006: 74), the objective is to recreate a professional scenario in which each student takes on a specific role

(terminologist, translator, project manager, etc.) as part of a larger localization project. While this approach seems extremely appropriate for a large cohort of students sharing the same language combination - especially for a more heavily credited module - its implementation would be very challenging in the case of shorter modules, as well as when teaching a multilingual cohort.

In our specific case, as we had a maximum of 15 students enrolled on the module at any given time, with only 2-3 students sharing the same language combination, it was decided that an individual localization project would be more appropriate. This decision not only came out of self-reflection but was also based on the feedback provided by tutors and students. As for the nature of the assessed project, it consisted of a set of software strings and HTML pages, to be localized with a CAT tool (in our case, SDL Trados), and a commentary analysing specific localization issues encountered during the process. When choosing the files to be localised both for the final assessment and for in-class activities, every attempt was made to use real texts, similar to those likely to be encountered by students when working as professional localizers. This can be extremely challenging when dealing with website and software localization, as the sophistication of these products is on the increase. The material chosen for assignments should therefore be as authentic as possible, yet still within the capability of students, taking into consideration what has been covered in the module. In fact, this is one of the reasons why it was decided that trainers instead of students would choose the files to be localized. Giving students the opportunity to find their own material to be localized can be very rewarding and promote independent study and self-learning, which are crucial when learning translation technology (Alcina et al., 2007). However, while this might be an option worth exploring in other contexts, in our case, it was decided it could be counterproductive. In the case of website localization, for instance, the training provided covers only basic aspects of html language and website design due to time constraints. In most cases, the skills acquired will not be sufficient to understand, adapt and handle the technicalities of any website. Since these have become more complex over the years, careful selection is needed to ensure that the level of difficulty is appropriate for students to demonstrate that learning outcomes have been met satisfactorily.

In addition to submitting the localization project, in order to pass the module, our students were asked to submit the formative assignments carried out throughout the module. This submission was introduced as a pass/fail component in order to ensure engagement from all students, with the following objectives in mind: 1) to prepare students for the final

assignment; 2) to engage students with the activities suggested during the module; 3) to provide formative language-specific feedback on both translation and technical issues; 4) to introduce a small peer-assessment element, which is essential in translation training as it prepares students for the real world; 5) to encourage reflection and critical thinking.

Even though greater emphasis has traditionally been placed on the summative function of assessment (Kelly, 2005: 130), particular attention should also be paid to effective formative assessment. The latter is defined by Bloxham and Boyd (2007: 234) as "[a]ssessment which is intended to provide feedback to the student such that they can improve their work and to the teacher so that they may adjust their teaching". Formative feedback can also take the form of peer assessment, an instrument which is engaging for students as well as being economically viable for the institution and time-saving for trainers. While giving budding translators the opportunity to comment on work submitted by other trainees in the same language combination, it can also provide students with a foretaste of external "quality assurance" procedures. The introduction of a peer-assessment element in the curriculum prepares students for the localization industry, in which their work will be regularly reviewed by peers, and they will have to justify the decisions they have made and discuss the suitability of their choices.

4. Curriculum evaluation to overcome challenges

Many of the challenges discussed above could be gradually overcome by systematically evaluating the curriculum with the purpose of identifying areas of improvement, so as to suggest strategies and actions to promote such an improvement. Our evaluation strategy was based on a 3-way process which involved self-reflection, meetings with tutors and feedback provided by the students. The first stage – self-reflection – means looking back at the module and evaluating any aspects to be improved, as well as potential issues, in light of students' in-class reactions. As pointed out by Hounsell (2003: 164), the purpose of self-generated feedback is to "cultivate reflection and promote self-scrutiny", which is extremely important to maximise not only student engagement, but also to ensure that trainers act in a self-critical way and improve approaches and methods to better satisfy students' needs.

Experience has shown that organising meetings with all the tutors involved in the module is extremely effective, since these meetings provide excellent opportunities for identifying problems and suggesting solutions. In our view, it is desirable to have at least one mid-

module meeting and a "post-mortem" session for carrying out a more detailed and final evaluation. Working with trainers who have differing professional schedules and commitments makes the organisation of these meetings particularly difficult, since it is often impossible to find a slot that will suit all tutors. However, module coordinators should pursue this objective, as the advantages definitely outweigh the initial complications.

Gathering student feedback is not only a requirement in many institutions, it is also a crucial element in curriculum evaluation. In our case, student feedback was collected informally over the course of the module (most/least engaging activities, favourite topics) and also at the end, via anonymous questionnaires distributed during the last session. They included both general and specific questions whose purpose was to gather information on the suitability of the materials taught, the suitability of the classroom/IT equipment, and to obtain any comments/observations for improving the module. Among the comments received, the most recurrent were:

- appreciation of the professional nature of the module, of the interactive sessions and the opportunity to acquire new skills which would be useful in the marketplace;
- requests for more language-specific feedback;
- requests for more opportunities to practice with localization tools, evincing a deeper interest in practical rather than theoretical issues.

Although only partially indicative of the type of responses submitted as feedback, these comments are representative of the impact the module had on the students, in particular as regards its strong orientation towards market-based scenarios. This gave us the confidence to keep on implementing the changes we deemed necessary for the students' benefit. The module was designed with a constructivist approach in mind (Anson and Miller-Cochran, 2009: 41), whereby its primary aim was to engage students in active participation and in the creation of (localized) content while dealing with their expectations of the "real world" and the limitations of the academic world. However, the curriculum and the subsequent changes made to it were also evaluated on the basis of employers' expectations and requirements.

In consideration of all of the above, collecting data relating to students' career choices after the completion of their course is extremely useful and relevant. It can prove challenging, as keeping in touch with alumni who are likely to be located all over the world is often difficult.

In addition, it might be hard to obtain a clear-cut snapshot of the individual career paths chosen. This is due to the fact that students might be involved in activities unrelated to translation/localization once they leave university and/or it might take them some time before they are professionally and fully engaged in the industry. Whenever possible, however, this data should inform the curriculum evaluation process and lead to the suggestion of specific action plans.

5. Conclusions

Throughout this paper some of the challenges and constraints that may be faced when designing and delivering a module in localization have been discussed. Particular attention has been paid to the increasing heterogeneity of students in terms of their backgrounds and language combinations, its impact on the resources needed, curricular content and assessment methods. Some of the issues addressed are specific to localization training and they highlight the essential role played by translation technology and the technical constraints that may arise. They also reveal that embracing the fast-paced developments occurring in the localization industry, outside the academic world, is extremely challenging. As discussed, institutional policies and procedures might hinder the reconciliation between academia and industry. However, we believe that there are feasible ways to establish links with the localization industry, which would be beneficial for all parties. This could be achieved, for example, through long-term collaborative partnerships with translation agencies and companies that could provide a set of projects for students to work (and practice) on for the duration of the module. There would be no cost to the company/agency, and the jobs in question would be returned as finished products at the end of the term. This approach would involve the integration of long-term projects in the syllabus instead of weekly assignments and would make such projects the core element around which the whole module revolves.

When suggesting strategies to overcome challenges and to avoid further issues, the concept of alignment has been paramount. This includes not only the principle of "constructive alignment" suggested by Biggs (1996), but also the need to ensure an effective alignment between the curriculum and professional practices, as well as between a specific module and the rest of the course. Our experience also shows that creativity and collaborative effort are important to devise effective solutions. However, we have also experienced that the viability of their implementation depends both on institutional policies and the resources available.

Also related to the educational context is the vocational nature of the course in which the module is embedded. The focus on professionalization, together with our interpretation of students and market needs/expectations, has guided many of the design decisions taken. Self-reflection and consultation with stakeholders in the teaching and learning processes are key aspects which nourish ongoing development and give curriculum evaluation full meaning in ascertaining whether challenges have been successfully overcome. In our case, drawing mainly on employers' reports, tutors' feedback and performance (e.g. they all provided effective and thorough feedback, which was approved and appraised by external examiners), as well as on students' results and feedback, it could be concluded that the overall approach taken to solve these challenges has been successful and appropriate. A similar approach and spirit must be maintained in order to face the numerous challenges that lie ahead.

It is obviously not easy to predict what sort of scenarios await translation/localization lecturers and students. In the UK, for example, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has severely cut funding for UK universities' research and teaching budgets (Morgan, 2009), which will result in undergraduate tuition fees soaring to a maximum of £9,000 in some institutions from 2012. This has already had an impact on staffing in some universities in the form of redundancies and also puts a strain on existing resources, resulting in heavier workloads and tighter timetables. As for students, higher fees mean that, for those who can afford to attend a university course, their choice may end up being based on the profitability of their degree subject and how quickly it can generate the income necessary to pay back the higher price of education. This also means that, in order for a localization course to be successful and competitive, it needs to secure strong ties with the industry in order to stay relevant and prepare students for the actual requirements of the translation/localization market.

As pointed out earlier, time constraints effectively influence the amount of information, practical training and technological input that can be integrated into a course or module. On the one hand, this will pose further challenges as a whole array of new trends are appearing in localization, such as the incorporation of data-driven machine translation (Pym, 2010; Zetzsche, 2010) and more challenging file formats (Freij, 2010). Playing "catch-up" with new developments in the market will further emphasize how necessary it is for lecturers to learn and train in new fields (Aula.int, 2005), in order to acquire new skills and to adapt to the extremely dynamic nature of localization. On the other hand, it will remain paramount to

review teaching strategies and methodologies on a regular basis, in order to keep abreast of students' expectations and actual needs in the light of further developments in the market.

REFERENCES

Alcina, A. (2002) “Strategies and resources in the teaching of IT applied to translation”, in *Papers de Tradumàtica*. Available at http://www.fti.uab.es/tradumatica/papers/articles/30_eng.pdf [Accessed 24 May 2012].

Alcina, A., Soler, V., Granell, J. (2007) “Translation Technology Skills Acquisition”, *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, 15 (4), p. 230-244.

Altanero, T. (2006) “The Localization Job Market in Academe” in Pym, A., Perekrestenko, A., Starink, B. (org.). *Translation technology and its teaching*. Servei de Publicacions: Tarragona, p. 31-38.

Anson C. M. and Miller-Cochran S.K. (2009) “Contrails of Learning: Using New Technologies for Vertical Knowledge-building” in *Computers and Composition*, 26, p. 38-48.

Aula.int (2005) “Translator Training and Modern Market Demand” in *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, 13 (2), p. 132-142.

Austermühl, F. (2006) “Training translators to localize” in Pym, A., Perekrestenko, A., Starink, B. (org.). *Translation technology and its teaching*. Servei de Publicacions: Tarragona, p. 69-82.

Biggs, J. (1996) “Enhancing teaching through constructive alignment”, *Higher Education*, 32, p. 347-364.

Bloxham, S. and Boyd, P. (2007) *Developing Effective Assessment in Higher Education: A Practical Guide*, Berkshire, Open University Press.

Common Sense Advisory (2010) *Common Sense Advisory language industry facts and figures* [online] Available at http://208.38.164.28/Resources/FactsandFigures/tabid/1213/Default.aspx#languageservicesmarket [Accessed 28 September 2011].

Freij, N. (2010) “Top Five Localization Myths” in *Client Side News*, February/March 2010, 10 (2). Available at http://www.clientsidenews.com/downloads/CSNV10I2.pdf. [Accessed 24 May 2012].

Granell, X. (2011) “Teaching Video Game Localisation in Audiovisual Translation Courses at University” in *Jostrans*, 16, p. 185-202.

Hounsell, D. (2003) “The Evaluation of Teaching”, in Fry, H. et al. (eds.), *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Enhancing Academic Practice*. London: Kogan Page, p. 161-174.

Kelly, D. (2005) *A Handbook for Translator Trainers*. Manchester: St. Jerome.

Kelly, D. (2010) “Curriculum” in Gambier, Y. And Doorslaer L. (eds.) *Handbook of Translation Studies*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, p. 87-93.

Lagoudaki, E. (2006) *Translation Memory Systems: Enlightening users, Key findings of the TM Survey 2006 carried out during July and August 2006*, London: Imperial College London.

Morgan, J. (2009) “Hefce budget to be slashed by £915m over three years”, in *Times Higher Education*, 31 December 2009. Available at http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=409782 [Accessed 24 May 2012].

Newstead, S. and Hoskins, S. (2003) “Encouraging Student Motivation”, in Fry, H. et al. (eds.), *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Enhancing Academic Practice*. London: Kogan Page, p. 27-39.

O’Hagan, M. (2006) “Training for localization (replies to a questionnaire)” in Pym, A., Perekrestenko, A., Starink, B. (org.). *Translation technology and its teaching*. Servei de Publicacions: Tarragona, p. 39-44.

PACTE (2005) “Investigating Translation Competence: Conceptual and Methodological Issues” in *Meta*, 50 (2), p. 609-619.

Poupaud, S. (2006) “Summary of Discussion on Finding Qualified Trainers” in Pym, A., Perekrestenko, A., Starink, B. (org.). *Translation technology and its teaching*. Servei de Publicacions: Tarragona, p. 63-65.

Pym, A. (2003) “Localization and the Training of Linguistic Mediators for the Third Millennium”, in Oueijan N. and Sarru, B. (eds.), *The Challenges of Translation and Interpretation in the Third Millennium*, Beirut: Notre Dame University Press, p. 23-30.

Pym, A. (2010) “Interview on current issues in Translation Studies”, email interview for *Fedorov Readings*, April 2010. Available at http://usuaris.tinet.cat/apym/on-line/research_methods/2010_interview.pdf [Accessed 24 May 2012].

Toohey, S. (1999) *Designing Courses for Higher Education*, Buckingham: The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.

Vintar, Š. (2008) “Real-world projects in localization training”, in Rodica D. & Karl-Heinz, F. (eds.) *Translation technology in translation classes*, Iaşi: Institutul European, p. 160-174.

Zetzsche, J. (2010) “Machine Translation Enters the World of the Translator”, in *Translation Journal*, July 2010, 14 (3). Available at http://translationjournal.net/journal/53mt1.htm [Accessed 24 May 2012].