THE ROLE OF GRADUATION PAPERS IN PROFESSIONAL FORMATION OF TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRERERS

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Abstract

A graduation paper of a translation student is an obligatory part of State Final Certification in Russian universities. It is traditionally viewed as a form of control, a way of assessing the degree to which a student's professional competences have been formed. This approach seems to be incorrect in two respects. First, the procedure of defending a graduation paper does not really give any chance to see a student's practical translation skills. They can and should be assessed at the state examination in translation, which unfortunately and inexplicably has received the status of optional. Second, limiting the function of a graduation paper to that of control seems to be an inexcusable waste of precious study hours, the shortage of which is a widespread problem common to all universities. Students work on their graduation papers for two years, so this work should be used as a means of teaching, of forming professional competences and shaping the students' professional mindset. This task requires careful choice of research topics. They should fit into the general paradigm of teaching translation, help to bring together all the professional competences for students to see how they are interconnected and how their assemblage forms a translator's professional personality.

1. Introduction

Russian Federal State Educational Standards envisage two forms of the State Final Certification, a state examination and the defence of the final research paper. The two forms have a different status. The exam is optional; the institutions are free to decide whether students should take it or not, while the defence of a graduation paper is obligatory.

Generally speaking, the purpose of the final certification is to check and evaluate the extent to which the programme has been mastered and all the necessary competencies have been formed. However, it does not seem reasonable to view graduation paper merely as a means of control. A student, whether at the bachelor, specialist, or master level, works on the paper for two years learning, researching, analysing, practicing academic writing. This process is supposed to involve acquiring new knowledge and developing new skills, thus adding to the formation of certain competences. The effectiveness of the graduation paper as a means of teaching, however, is often underestimated, which results in topics and (what is even more important) formats of such papers being sometimes – though not always – more or less convenient for control and practically devoid of educational value.

2. Problem Statement

The current situation with the State Final Certification of translation students is controversial if not paradoxical. On the one hand, the majority of Russian universities have chosen not to have any state exams and limit the certification procedure to the defence of the final research paper. It means that in fact practical skills of translating and interpreting cannot be assessed by the examination board. Potential employers, who are mandatory members of the board, have no chance to see if a student can translate set texts within set time or if they can interpret at all. Instead, they have either to listen to a discussion on some academic issues often having no bearing on practical translation or to the student's comments on a translation made by this same student at some unspecified time and with no guarantee of independence. Neither gives them any idea of whether the competences relevant to the potential employee's performance have been formed.

On the other hand, in those universities that opted for both a state exam and a research paper, the role of the latter in assessing the degree to which a student is prepared for professional work is not quite clear, primarily because it is not quite clear which particular professional competences can be demonstrated during the defence procedure.

This uncertain function of the graduation paper often results in the paper becoming a thing-in-itself, totally disconnected from aims and purposes of professional translator training. It is popularly believed that writing such a paper is aimed at developing purely academic research competences. Whether translators and interpreters need these competences is hotly debated both among translation teachers and in the professional translator community. Students mainly look upon this part of their curriculum as an obligatory formality, burdensome and absolutely useless. Describing the situation in

European universities Vandepitte (2013) writes, In those translation and interpreting institutions in which professional training had been the only aim until the Bologna Declaration, tensions have arisen in the face of two developments that now have to take place simultaneously: modernization of the

training for a profession which has become more complex than ever and the so-called academization of the education of future translators and interpreters," so "students do not only have to acquire more complex professional competences, which is their prime objective, but also the academic competences, which they had not really asked for themselves (emphasis added – O.P.). (p. 139)

Many professional translators also argue that they do not need research competences at all, same as the knowledge of Translation Theory. All they need is practical skills of translating and/or interpreting.

However, there is a different approach and a different understanding of why it is necessary to have this academic aspect in the process of training translators, even while preparing them for their purely practical work. Bobăilă et al. (2018) Please see the graduation paper as "an important stage in building translator competence because it establishes useful overlaps between research methodology and translation theory, practice and translation quality assessment" (p. 87). Quoting S. Vandepitt's opinion about a considerable amount of overlap between translation competences and research competences, Risku (2016) says they both share the assumption that research activities can allow students to gain an insight into concrete translation processes.

Since the graduation paper has always been an obligatory part of all higher education programmes in Russia, there is not any serious discussion in literature concerning the purposes of having it in the curriculum of a particular programme. Moreover, unlike in Europe and some other countries, where the academization of translation training provoked a discussion on the specific character of research in translation studies, of training translation researchers and of research competences in translation studies (Marco, 2009; Pym, 2013; Vandepitte, 2013), Russian universities mainly follow principles of research common for all humanities students.

At the same time with the introduction of the competence-based approach to higher education, there appeared a great number of papers discussing specific professional competences of translation students. Until recently the list of these competences was rigidly prescribed by Federal State Educational Standards for each of the three levels – bachelors, specialists and masters. So the discussions mainly concerned the ways of developing particular skills and abilities necessary for the formation of a particular competence or approaches to the formation of the whole complex of such competences – hence the terminological variations of "competence" and "competency" (Dorokhov, 2008; Matveeva, 2008; Polyakova et al., 2016; Remezova, 2011; Vasilieva et al., 2014). The new Federal State Educational Standards do not prescribe any professional competences. Now universities are supposed to formulate them on the basis of professional standards. In our case, it is Professional Standard "Specialist in Translation". However, an attempt to somehow correlate the benefits of involving students in research with the formation of particular competences indicated in either educational or professional standards seems hopeless for a very simple reason. Each particular practical competence is acquired through a set of more or less standard exercises done according to some definite algorithms, while research presupposes critical thinking and is also a means of developing it.

Thus, graduation papers are not convenient for evaluating a translation student's professional competences at the final State examination and they can hardly be used as a means of forming professional

competences indicated in educational and professional standards. So, what are they doing in the translation curriculum?

3. Research Questions

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy describes critical thinking as a widely accepted educational goal (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Critical Thinking, 2018). Specifying the notion of critical thinking, they name abilities to understand the logical connections between ideas, identify, construct and evaluate arguments, detect inconsistencies and common mistakes in reasoning, solve problems systematically. They identify the relevance and importance of ideas, reflect on the justification of one's own beliefs and values (Critical thinking, 2021) and also intellectual values of clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness (Foundation). It is obvious that these qualities are highly desirable in any professional, but for a translator they are vital. So, working on their research papers students are not actually developing a particular professional translation competence but are rather creating a foundation for acquiring the whole complex of such competences.

The actual function of a graduation paper is shaping the student's thinking so as to make it a professional translation mindset (Ivanov & Sdobnikov, 2020) without which all the skills and techniques, however practised and honed, become useless.

Now the question is how the existing approaches to supervising students' research papers help in developing critical thinking and forming a professional mindset in translation students.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to see how the present-day practice of writing graduation papers in Translation Studies relates to the functions stated above and how the work on the papers fits in with the development of any particular professional competences.

5. Research Methods

For this purpose, topics and formats of graduation theses and dissertations from a number of Russian and foreign universities are analysed in the context of requirements of today's educational and professional standards and the translation market.

6. Findings

At the outset of our discussion, we note that we shall consider only those graduation theses topics that imply any kind of research. The reservation is necessary because in some Russian universities (though the cases are rare) scientific supervisors stick to the idea that a graduation paper must be written in the format of a commented translation. This means that students translate some texts (of various types) and then comment on the problems they encountered in the process of translation and the ways those problems were solved. In most cases, those ways and means of solving translation problems include various kinds of translation techniques. We strongly believe that, while translating, no translator thinks about what particular

technique (s)he is going to use. What (s)he is supposed to think about is how the idea, the content of the ST and the communicatively relevant formal features of the ST can be re-expressed in the target text with due account of the norms of the TL and particulars of the communicative situation. Moreover, it is not taken into account that the so-called "translation techniques" are predetermined by structural and lexical discrepancies between languages, and those discrepancies manifest themselves in *any* text regardless of its type or theme. The situation is aggravated when students are provided with a general scheme according to which the paper must be written and analysis of the "problems" must be done. Most frequently, students are expected to calculate the instances of using each particular type of translation techniques in their own translation and present them in the form of diagrams.

It is obvious that such format of a graduation thesis indoctrinates in students the false idea that translation is a merely technical process of modifying the form and content of the ST with the use of some standard techniques. Moreover, we argue that a graduation paper must not be expected to help to test students' skills of translating, for a final exam in translation serves this purpose most effectively.

A review of 534 topics of graduation theses from 10 Russian universities reveals their vast thematic diversity, which, to some extent, corresponds to the diversity of the translator profession. It is obvious that academia is trying hard to follow new trends emerging in the domain of translation. But a closer look at the distribution of topics into thematic groups shows that the situation is not as good as it might be.

Many scientific supervisors of bachelor and master students are still influenced by ideas and concepts rooted in the early translation theories, specifically, in the purely linguistic theory of translation. At the early stages of Translation Studies development, it was quite expedient and reasonable to investigate translation problems stemming from the grammatical and lexical differences between the languages that clash in the translation/interpreting process. Hence, a great attention to standard translation techniques, both lexical and grammatical, to means of rendering vocabulary that has no equivalents in the source language (SL), to means of rendering phraseological units, etc. True, it was not uncommon even for the early translation theory to rise above the purely linguistic problems and to analysis culture-specific issues of translation, such as rendering culture-specific metaphors and realia: the trend that later developed into what has been termed as "cultural turn" in Translation Studies (Gentzler, 2001; Snell-Hornby, 2006). We will say it again: it was quite reasonable to deal with these problems at the early stages of Translation Studies development. But not now. That is why it is only surprising that many graduation theses are still devoted to the issues that hardly can be treated as topical. Examples include: "Problems of translating non-equivalent vocabulary in economic texts", "Means of rendering non-equivalent vocabulary in technical texts", "Translation of abbreviations from English into Russian", "Methods of translating collocations of nouns with the indefinite article from French into Russian", "Peculiarities of rendering subjunctive mood in literary translation from German into Russian". There are also "Functions of English prepositions and translating them into Russian", "Metaphors in literary translation", "Methods of rendering non-equivalent vocabulary in translation from English into Russian", "Syntactical transformations in translating texts of Turkish economic discourse", "Lexical and semantic peculiarities of German texts on automotive transport and rendering them into Russian". (We shall note in passing, that translation is not about rendering any "lexical and semantic peculiarities" of the source text into another language; it is about translating texts, rendering ideas). And "Lexical and grammatical transformations in translating fiction from English into

Russian" is on the top in the list of irrelevant, outdated topics. These and similar topics are outdated and not worth any consideration for a very simple reason: these problems were solved in Translation Studies half a century ago. And the fact that they are faced in translating texts of various genres and types is not relevant at all: ways and means of solving them remain the same regardless of the target text type.

The same is true about rendering terminology. Young scholars (guided by their supervisors) pretend to explore some innovative topics though the topics are not innovative at all. Usually, the "innovative character" of the problem discussed is explained and justified by usage of terms in texts of different types – economic, technical, medical, legal, etc. Let us consider the examples: "Peculiarities of rendering terms in translating texts on mobile communications", "Peculiarities of rendering terms of the Arctic region ecological security", "Peculiarities of translating lexis in pulp and paper industry", "Peculiarities of rendering terms in the field of photography and photo-design", etc. It is striking that authors of graduation theses believe to discover some "peculiarities" in rendering terminology of different fields, and this is despite the fact that such peculiarities are non-existent.

It has been stated above that academia is trying hard to follow the new trends in the profession. The fact is revealed by many attempts to investigate peculiarities of relatively new types of translation as well as interpreting, including simultaneous interpreting. It is astonishing that the number of graduation theses and MA dissertations devoted to audiovisual translation (AVT) and even audio-description has skyrocketed in recent years. Such theses can be divided into two groups. Papers of the first group consider problems stemming from the very format in which the content to be translated is presented (movies, cartoons, video games). Examples include "Peculiarities of computer games localization", "Adaptation of audiovisual works to Russian laws", "Voice-over translation of documentaries". The second group includes papers which discuss various translation problems and difficulties without any regard to the format ("Difficulties of rendering Spanish colloquial speech in translating Spanish movies into Russian", "Proper names in localization movies about Garry Potter", "Means of preserving intertextuality in TV serial 'Once Upon a Time'", "Ensuring consistency of terminology in translating audiovisual works", "Translation of youth slang in audiovisual texts"). Topics in the first group seem to be most relevant to and consistent with the realities of the profession today. In the process of writing such theses students obtain knowledge about peculiarities of AVT predetermined by various formats of presenting audiovisual material, learn to single out specific problems related to a certain format and acquire ability to discover the best solutions of those problems. Topics in the second group are less valuable in terms of developing students' skills to deal with certain material. It is clear that "audiovisual material" is just a kind of "environment" in which traditional translation problems and difficulties are faced. The same problems (rendering colloquial speech, translation of proper names, preserving intertextuality, ensuring consistency of terminology) can be faced in translating texts of other formats and types (fiction, technical texts, etc.). Thus, using audiovisual material for analysis seems to be a tribute to fashion in such cases, which does not encourage new ideas in students.

But it is quite encouraging to see topics the value of which can hardly be overestimated. We mean the topics related to the use of information technologies in translation (CAT tools and machine translation (MT)): "Advantages and disadvantages of computer-aided and machine translation tools", "Machine translation of technical documentation", "Genre peculiarities of post-editing", "Methods of pre-editing information texts for enhancing the quality of machine translation", "Strategies of post-editing machine

translation". Another trend is to address the problem of translation quality assessment. It relates to assessing translations of various kinds but it is noteworthy that the papers from our review deal mostly with audiovisual material (assessing subtitles of movies, translation errors in AVT, comparative assessment of professional and fan subtitling of audiovisual material, etc.).

Still another trend is to investigate difficulties in translating texts of mass media, including speeches and interviews of political leaders ("Translation issues of political discourse as exemplified by speeches and interviews of Vladimir Putin", "Linguistic and stylistic peculiarities of political speeches of Donald Trump: translation issues"). Papers that discuss peculiarities of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting are very close to this group. Addressing problems of interpreting is congruent with the importance of this translation activity in the modern world. In most cases students investigate specific problems emerging in performing various types of interpreting ("Reproduction of stylistic peculiarities of ST in interpreting", "Rendering the implicit meaning in interpreting", "Lexical and grammatical redundancy in simultaneous interpreting", "Simultaneous interpreting of medical texts", "Problems of compression and expansion in interpreting"). Undoubtedly, such topics imply making some research, and for this very fact the topics can be seen as relevant to the task of enlightening students in the realities of the profession and developing their analytical skills.

Many topics of graduation theses are related to translation of texts of different types – technical, medical, legal, economic and, certainly, literary. Upon the whole, addressing problems of literary translation is a typical feature of graduation theses. By itself, it is not bad provided a paper's author is familiar with the particulars of literary texts per se, with the rules and laws of creative writing and has skills of analyzing real problems of literary translation. Unfortunately, not all students possess such skills and knowledge. It is not a tragedy when the purpose of investigation is to discover means and ways of rendering the colloquial character of the youth speech in translation, though, again, the problem has been discussed so often and for such a long time that it can hardly be considered topical now. It is much better when a paper is focused on reproduction images in translation of a literary work. But the thing is that very frequently investigation of problems of literary translation comes down to specifying what techniques "have been used to solve a given problem", be it translation of proper names or borrowed words.

A brief review of topics of MA dissertations written in foreign universities makes it possible to single out a common approach to how the main task of a MA dissertation is understood and formulated: dissertations discuss some theoretical problems (rendering repetitions, idioms, translation quality assessment, reproduction of the narrator's voice in translation) with the use of empirical material. Usually, some specific translation is used for the analysis. Only one topic has caught our eyes – "Acknowledging and establishing the hierarchy of expertise in translator-reviser scenarios as an aid to the process of revising translations" – as a very important in terms of organizing business process in translation companies, which is a topic issue now.

As preliminary result of our investigation, we state that the general picture of graduation students' research is far from being homogeneous. On the one hand, we note with satisfaction that very often graduation papers address problems that are relevant in terms of the realities of the translator profession. Writing a thesis on any of such topics helps the student develop both their analytical skills and professional competences. On the other hand, working on outdated and irrelevant topics – and they are numerous –

results in students acquiring warped conceptions and skewed impression of the translation process and translation activity as a whole, and prevents them from developing necessary professional competences.

There is one more aspect to this problem. Sometimes the topic itself seems to be quite relevant to the process of forming necessary competences and shaping the students' attitude to their profession. For example, there is absolutely nothing wrong about analysing problems encountered by translators and interpreters in different texts and in different communicative situations. A student is supposed to learn how to identify the problems, to see how they are solved by professional translators, to compare and analyse various approaches and tactics, possible means of solving a problem. All this is really helpful and valuable in training translation students. Analysis of some papers, however, shows that in many cases the problem itself and ways of solving it become sort of self-existent. They are torn from the translation paradigm in which students were professionally brought up, so to speak, throughout their training.

For instance, analysis of numerous instances of translating ideologically loaded texts can be very useful for a student. Indeed, it is a problem vastly covered and hotly discussed in literature (Munday, 2007; Shahbazi & Rezaee, 2017; Vozna, 2016; Zare-Behtash, 2016). Choosing one particular way of translating such texts (for instance, mitigation) can also be quite reasonable. But when the analysis turns into explaining the reasons why a translator might have chosen a particular form of mitigation and justifying this solution on the grounds of its correspondence to the translator's aim (say, to avoid a conflict between the communicators), the translation is no longer viewed in the context of a communicative situation, in the perspective of the status of a translator and the limits of altering the original. As a result, the student comes to the conclusion that the translator has the right to change the ideological character of the text as they think proper, and mitigation is announced to be an instrument of ideology.

Another example, no less illustrative. The topic is quite traditional, if somewhat truistic – "Translation as a secondary text". One can hardly expect any discoveries there, but the very idea of making a student acquainted with the theory, with different types of secondary texts, making them understand the essence of controversies concerning the function of a translated text seems to be quite fruitful. However, when the student comes to the paradoxical conclusion that translation is not always a secondary text just because there are elements in the TL text that are not explicitly present in the original (such as, e.g., additions in case of descriptive translation, or instances of modulation), a question arises: how does it relate to everything (literally everything) that students were taught and are supposed to understand after the three years of being exposed to Translation Studies? Erroneous understanding of the term "secondary text"underlying this conclusion is bad in itself. The very attempt to question the secondary nature of any translation seems strange. But what is most alarming here is absolute negation of everything students have been taught about the correlation of the original and its translation. How does it contribute to the formation of a professional translator?

At the outset of our discussion we noted that we proceed from the premise that a graduation thesis is supposed to be a means of developing (not testing) professional competences in novice translators/interpreters.

At Higher School of Translation and Interpreting of Nizhny Novgorod Linguistics University, the following list of professional competences (PC) has been compiled for the bachelor and specialist programs:

- PC1: Ability to use the methods of translation analysis, including analysis of a ST, the communicative situation in which the ST has been made and the communicative situation in which translation is performed;
- PC2: Ability to perform linguistic analysis of a text/discourse with the use of systemic knowledge of the present state and history of foreign languages;
- PC3: Ability to prepare for performing translation/interpreting including information search in reference books and Internet networks;
- PC4: Ability to use basic means of achieving adequacy in translation and the ability to apply basic translation techniques;
- PC5: Ability to apply research methods in professional activity, to analyze research materials in linguistics, cross-cultural communication and translation studies in compliance with bibliographic culture to fulfill professional tasks;
- PC6: Ability to identify and address the causes of discommunication in specific situations of cross-cultural interaction;
- PC7: Ability to use information technologies at all stages of the translation process:
- PC8: Ability to translate observing the norms and usage of the target language;
- PC9: Ability to do revision and self-editing of the target text;
- PC10: Ability to interpret consecutively and at sight observing the norms and usages of the TL and the rules of presentation;
- PC11: Ability to use interpreter's notes for consecutive interpreting;
- PC12: Ability to observe the norms of ethics, the rules of international courtesy and translator's behavior in various situations of interpreting.

The list of professional competences for master programs, besides the competences mentioned above, includes:

- ability to interpret simultaneously from language A into languages B and C and from languages B and C into language A and knowledge of the procedures of organizing simultaneous interpreting in international organizations and at international conferences;
- ability to use basic methods of audiovisual translation.

Strange as it might seem, *all competences* but one (PC11) *can be developed in the process of working on a graduation thesis* even though some of them imply purely practical skills (PC4, PC8, PC10) that must be acquired in practical classes of translation and interpreting. The explanation lies in the fact that a competence is a complex phenomenon that consists of knowledge, skills and acquired expertise. It means that to be able to perform some activity a person has to know how the given activity is usually performed, to gain expertise in performing it and to develop his or her skills to the level at which the activity can be performed automatically. Thus, it should be realized that writing a graduation thesis a student develops competences that are indispensable for both translation/interpreting and writing a thesis. In the latter case, when a graduation thesis implies analysis of translations, comparison of translations with their originals, analysis of the communicative situations, specification of the tasks translators/interpreters have to fulfill, students are supposed: to be able to see the ST and TT they analyze in the environments in which the texts have been produced. That is, they have to visualize the communicative situations (PC1); to perform

linguistic analysis of the texts (PC2); to searchfor necessary information about the communicative situations and their components in various sources (PC3); to have knowledge of methods of ensuring translation adequacy (PC4). They also must have knowledge of what can cause discommunication in the situation in which the ST or the TT has been produced (PC6); be able to use information technologies, including search engines, text corpora, etc. (PC7); have skills of performing translation and knowledge of norms of the TL (PC8). They should know the rules of TT revision and self-editing and to have skills of the both (PC9), know what tasks interpreter fulfill during consecutive interpreting and sight translation, know the norms of the TL and the rules according to which the TT must be presented (PC10). They have to know the norms of ethics, rules of international courtesy and translator's behavior in various situations of cross-cultural communication (PC12). PC5 is of paramount importance: it is both a prerequisite of successful research and a tool that must be produced during the research. And only PC11 stands apart: it implies purely technical skills that can be practiced either in class or independently. It is obvious that making in-depth analysis of the texts and the situations in which they have been produced (regardless of the graduation thesis topic) requires a huge amount of knowledge that has to be acquired and certain practical skills that have be developed while writing a graduation thesis.

It is noteworthy that the list of professional competences to be developed while writing a graduation thesis does not depend upon the topic; there are no inverse relations between the two. We will say it again: all professional competences must be developed regardless of the topic.

To justify the idea, we shall use some illustrations. The topic "Methods of rendering non-equivalent vocabulary in translation from English into Russian" is one of many notorious examples of outdated topics. By the time students begin their research on the topic they already now all methods of rendering non-equivalent vocabulary in translation practically from any language to any language (transcription, transliteration, loan translation, analogous translation, descriptive translation). Apparently, they will choose some texts in the SL and their translations or translate the texts themselves, as the case might be. They will single out non-equivalent words in the ST, specify how the words are "translated" and make calculations of various methods of rendering the non-equivalent words. The tasks set in the graduation paper will be solved. But what competences will be developed in the process? None. Students merely use knowledge of what they have learned before. It would be more expedient to alter the set of the tasks and, ultimately, to reformulate the topic. If the supervisor is still curious about "the methods of rendering non-equivalent vocabulary" (s)he would have to assign somewhat different tasks to students putting the texts to be analyzed in a broader context, expanding the scope of the analysis. And the methods of rendering non-equivalent vocabulary as they are will not matter. What matters here is the dependence of the choice of methods on the purpose of translation identified with due account of the specifics of the communicative situation in which the text in question is to be translated, and the character and knowledge of the TT recipients. There might be different situations each of which is interesting in itself, and, thus, different ways of solving the same problem. To solve the main task the student will have to develop many professional competences (PC1–PC9).

Another example is the topic "Translation of the youth slang in audiovisual texts". The problem itself is topical. It implies investigation into the methods of reproducing speech peculiarities of young people as a means of characterization. But from our experience we know that usually students tend to

compare different translations, state the differences between them and make assessments based on the principle "this is better" or "this is closer to the original". What matters here is the dependence of the selected method on the technique of AVT (subtitling, voice-over, dubbing). Thus, audiovisual translation is a dual-purpose activity (not to mention the pragmatic aspect of it): it implies both reproduction of the ST content and its formal features (when they are relevant; and slang is usually a relevant feature) and observation of technical requirements typical of a certain AVT technique. It means that the student is supposed to have certain abilities including knowledge of various techniques of AVT, of the requirements the translator and the TT must meet as well as the ability to expand their knowledge on the topic using all possible sources of information. So, in this case, to ensure development of necessary professional competences (PC1 – PC9 plus the ability to use basic methods of audiovisual translation) it is not the topic that should be reformulated but it is the set of the tasks to be fulfilled in the graduation paper that should be changed.

It goes without saying that the role of a scientific supervisor in developing professional competences in students is of paramount importance. When students start writing a graduation thesis they have no experience in research activities. In addition, it is only the scientific supervisor who can guide them in the right direction to achieve the best results. And again, "the best results" means acquiring a set of necessary professional competences.

7.   Conclusion

A graduation paper is an important part of translator/interpreter training curriculum. It is not so much an instrument for assessing the result of training as it is a way of forming professional competences – or rather, what it should be. Unlike practical classes, each of which has the aim of helping students to develop a particular competence or a certain set of such competences, two-year long research resulting at the graduation paper can help to form the whole complex of professional competences and in this way to shape the students' professional mindset. However, this purpose cannot be accomplished unless the topics of students' research are properly targeted. All the topics should be relevant to the task of developing full and clear understanding of the very essence of translation (both as a process and as a result), of the translator/interpreter functions, of their place and role in the situations of translator-assisted communication. No professional competence can exist in isolation from all the other skills and competences, the assemblage of which makes a person a professional. A graduation research helps to bring together all the competences and see how they are interconnected. And certainly, a study of a particular problem should never be allowed to deviate from the main target of training, i.e. forming a professional personality of a translation student.

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